

28 XIX The March to the Castle (Chorus)
The Townsfolk complain of the slowness of the working of God's law. They will judge those who live and condemn those who love. They will respect only what fashion blesses and what is clever.

29 XX Twelfth Madrigal: *As they enter the Castle, the Townsfolk see the Man in the Castle lying on his deathbed, surrounded by the Unicorn, the Gorgon and*

the Manticore (Chorus)
The Man sings of how the Townsfolk have killed the poet's dreams and of the comfort which the Unicorn, the Gorgon and the Manticore have given him during his life. He loved them all equally, and all remain in the poet's heart. He does not fear death in their arms.

David Patmore

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Gian Carlo MENOTTI The Saint of Bleecker Street The Unicorn, the Gorgon and the Manticore



Gabrielle Ruggiero • Gloria Lane • David Poleri
Leon Lishner • Catherine Akos • Maria Di Gerlando
Orchestra and Chorus
Thomas Schippers



MENOTTI CENTENARY EDITION

Gian Carlo
MENOTTI

(1911-2007)

The Saint of Bleecker Street

Opera in Three Acts • Libretto by the Composer

Annina	.....	Gabrielle Ruggiero (soprano)
Michele, her brother	.....	David Poleri (tenor)
Desideria, Michele's mistress	.....	Gloria Lane (mezzo-soprano)
Carmela	.....	Maria Di Gerlando (soprano)
Don Marco, a priest	.....	Leon Lishner (bass)
Assunta	.....	Catherine Akos (mezzo-soprano)
Maria Corona, a newspaper vendor	.....	Maria Marlo (soprano)
Her dumb son (about 16 years old)	.....	Ernesto Gonzales Salvatore
	.....	David Aiken (baritone)
Concettina, a child	.....	Lucy Becque
A young man	.....	Richard Cassilly (tenor)
A young woman	.....	Elizabeth Carron (soprano)
First guest	.....	Keith Kaldenberg (tenor)
Second guest	.....	John Reardon (baritone)
Barman	.....	Russell Goodwin (baritone)

Orchestra and Chorus
(Chorus director: Walter Baker)
Thomas Schippers

Recorded February - March, 1955 in New York City
First released on RCA Victor LM-6032

Reissue Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn

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The Unicorn, the Gorgon and the Manticore

Synopsis

- 10** I Introduction (Chorus)
The Chorus sings of a strange Man who lives in a Castle and who shuns society.
- 11** II Interlude One: *The Dance of the Man in the Castle* (Instrumental Ensemble)
- 12** III First Madrigal (Chorus)
The Chorus describes the Sunday afternoon walk of local society and the conversational inanities that take place then.
- 13** IV Interlude Two: *Promenade* (Instrumental Ensemble)

First Sunday

14 V Second Madrigal: *Enter the Man in the Castle and the Unicorn* (Chorus)

One Sunday afternoon the Man who lives in the Castle joins the crowds with a Unicorn on a silver chain. They pour scorn on him by suggesting what he might do other than raise a Unicorn.

15 VI Third Madrigal: (Chorus)

The Man advises the Unicorn to stay close to him and to beware the virgin sleeping under the lemon tree: her kiss is poison. Home is safer.

16 VII Fourth Madrigal: (Chorus)

The Count asks his wife the Countess why she is sad. She replies that she cannot go through life without a Unicorn. The Count swears to acquire a Unicorn for her.

17 VIII Interlude Three: *As the Count and the Countess appear with a Unicorn, the Townsfolk stare at them in surprise. Soon everyone in town imitates them until every respectable couple is seen promenading with its own Unicorn* (Instrumental Ensemble)

Second Sunday

18 IX Fifth Madrigal: *Enter the Man in the Castle with the Gorgon* (Chorus)

Behold the proud and stately Gorgon who sees neither crowds nor enemies as he mixes with the elite. Fearless, he fascinates and frightens.

19 X Sixth Madrigal: (Chorus)

The Townsfolk ask the Man what he did with the Unicorn. He replies that he killed and cooked it. They condemn him: 'Wicked is Man, Patient is God, / All He gives Man to enjoy Man will destroy.'

20 XI Seventh Madrigal: *The Countess has just secretly poisoned her Unicorn* (Chorus)

The Countess tells the Count that her Unicorn is very ill. He says that they can acquire another one. She replies that they are so commonplace now that she wants a Gorgon instead. Initially shocked the Count eventually relents in the face of the Countess's entreaties and agrees to find a Gorgon for her.

21 XII Interlude Four (Instrumental Ensemble).

Third Sunday

22 XIII Eighth Madrigal: *Enter the Man in the Castle with the Manticore* (Chorus)

The Man warns against caressing the lonely Manticore: he is shy and is lost in dreams. He may kill what he loves best.

23 XIV Ninth Madrigal (Chorus)

The Townsfolk, after seeing the Manticore, ask what happened to the Gorgon. The Man confesses that he caged and then killed him.

24 XV Interlude Five: *The Countess secretly stabs her Gorgon* (Instrumental Ensemble)

25 XVI Tenth Madrigal (Chorus)

The Count asks the Countess why she is so sad. She replies that her Gorgon is lost. She asks for a Manticore. They bicker and, after the Countess has slapped him, the Count eventually agrees.

26 XVII Interlude Six: *As the Count and the Countess appear with a Manticore, the Townsfolk stare at them in great surprise. Soon all the Gorgons in town are killed and every respectable couple is now seen promenading a Manticore.*

27 XVIII Eleventh Madrigal (Chorus)

The Townsfolk have noticed that the Man in the Castle is no longer seen on Sundays with his Manticore. Suspicious, they decide to explore his Castle and find out what he has done with the Manticore.

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summons up the courage to tell him that she is dying. She will take the veil very soon. He says that she cannot do this in his hour of need.

2 Maria Corona confirms Michele's fate from the horoscopes in the newspapers. Annina confirms that she can no longer help him. She cannot resist the voice of God. She tells him that this is goodbye for ever. He runs up the stairs: Annina tries to restrain him but she pushes him away. She collapses at the foot of the stairs where Maria Corona comforts her.

3 Interlude, leading to:

Scene 2

The tenement flat, as in Act 1, scene 1. It is late afternoon. Annina, wrapped in a shawl, lies in her armchair, her face very pale. A nun sits close by. Don Marco stands by the front door, as if waiting for someone. Carmela, who has been crying, sits in a corner of the room, comforted by Salvatore. In another corner, a group of women, among them Maria Corona and Assunta, are kneeling.

4 The group of women chants the *Agnus Dei*. Annina opens her eyes and asks Carmela if there is any news – she hopes to take the veil as soon as possible as she does not think she will live for long; but if permission comes she will have nothing to wear. Carmela fetches her wedding dress for here to wear and leaves it by the chair next to Annina. A young priest rushes in and hands Don Marco a letter. He looks at it and then approaches Annina.

5 Don Marco tells Annina that the Church has granted Annina's wish to take the veil. Exhausted Annina says she must rest. Don Marco signals to the women to leave, and Carmela guards the door. Don Marco kneels in front of the altar.

6 Annina sings of her joy and urges death to hold back for a little while. She gets up and after a moment of hesitation, leaning on Carmela's arm, she walks slowly into her room, followed by the nun

carrying the white dress.

7 Don Marco clothes himself in preparation for the ceremony. Assunta tells Maria Corona and Salvatore that Michele has been seen close by: all he is interested in is dragging Annina to hell with him. Don Marco tells Salvatore to keep Michele out if he sees him. He places candles by the altar and lights them. All sing of what Annina has had to suffer because of Michele. Dressed as a bride Annina appears, apprehensive, in the doorway of her room. The nun walks over to her.

8 The chorus sings the *Gloria*. Annina bows to the nun and is led across the stage to a screen in the corner of the room. She stands behind the screen, but is visible to the audience. Annina knocks three times against the screen and Don Marco commences the investiture ceremony. The nun leads Annina to the centre of the room where she kneels. She then prostrates herself on the floor; her extended arms form a cross. The nun covers her with a black cloth. Don Marco renames her as Sister Angela. The nun removes the black cloth and helps her to her knees. At this moment Michele bursts in. He is restrained by Salvatore; everyone turns to him, except Annina who, transfixed, stares at the altar.

9 Michele pleads with Annina to return to this world where he needs her love. Annina remains motionless. Don Marco tells Michele that he is too late: she can no longer hear him. He resumes the investiture ceremony. The nun removes the white veil from Annina. Michele, watching, bursts into loud weeping. As the ceremony continues he regains control of himself and watches. As the ceremony reaches its conclusion Annina, by now desperately weak, takes a few steps towards Don Marco, but then suddenly sinks to the floor. Carmela who has been carefully watching, catches her as she collapses, and kneels down with Annina in her arms. Don Marco lifts her lifeless arm and places the gold ring on her finger as the curtain falls.

CD 1

Act 1

Scene 1

- | | | |
|---|--|------|
| 1 | <i>Rosa Mystica</i>
(Assunta, Chorus, A Young Man) | 3:34 |
| 2 | <i>Well ... I'm tired of waiting!</i>
(Maria Corona, Assunta, Carmela, Chorus, A Young Woman) | 3:11 |
| 3 | <i>The vision has begun</i>
(Don Marco, Chorus) | 3:37 |
| 4 | <i>Oh, sweet Jesus, spare me this agony</i>
(Annina, Chorus) | 8:04 |
| 5 | <i>Look, the stigmata!</i>
(Chorus) | 0:55 |
| 6 | <i>Stop it! Out of here, all of you!</i>
(Michele, Carmela, Chorus, Don Marco) | 4:27 |
| 7 | <i>Ah, poor Michele, it is not I your rival</i>
(Don Marco) | 2:43 |
| 8 | Interlude –
(Orchestra) | 2:00 |

Scene 2

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 9 | <i>Canta nanna, canta nanna al mio bambino</i>
(Assunta, Carmela, A Woman, A Girl, Concettina) | 2:42 |
| 10 | <i>Annina, I've something to confess to you</i>
(Carmela, Annina) | 5:23 |
| 11 | <i>Annina, Annina!</i>
(Maria Corona, Assunta, Annina, Maria's Son) | 2:16 |
| 12 | <i>Michele, Michele!</i>
(Annina, Michele) | 4:28 |
| 13 | <i>Sister, I shall hide you and take you away</i>
(Michele, Annina) | 1:48 |
| 14 | <i>Veglia su di noi</i>
(Chorus, Annina, Michele) | 5:07 |

Act 2

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 15 | <i>Hai l'occhio nero nero della quaglia</i>
(First Guest, Chorus, Second Guest, Michele, Annina, Carmela, Salvatore, A Guest) | 6:14 |
| 16 | <i>Where is Michele?</i>
(Desideria, Barman, Michele) | 3:48 |

79:30

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 17 | <i>Eh già che I giovinotti</i>
(Chorus, Desideria, Michele) | 3:20 |
| 18 | <i>Ah, Michele, don't you know that love can turn to hate</i>
(Desideria) | 3:02 |
| 19 | <i>You will regret it</i>
(Michele, Don Marco, Chorus, Annina, Salvatore) | 1:31 |
| 20 | <i>I know that you all hate me</i>
(Michele) | 3:53 |
| 21 | <i>You are wrong, Michele</i>
(Don Marco, Annina, Michele) | 1:27 |
| 22 | <i>Yes, Michele, go home</i>
(Desideria, Michele, Annina, Chorus) | 6:00 |

CD 2

76:18

Act 3

Scene 1

- | | | |
|---|--|------|
| 1 | <i>There she is. Be careful, Michele, try not to upset her</i>
(Don Marco, Maria Corona, Annina, Michele) | 6:33 |
| 2 | <i>Weeping, these, for him, are days of weeping</i>
(Maria Corona, Annina, Michele) | 4:56 |
| 3 | Interlude –
(Orchestra) | 2:32 |

Scene 2

- | | | |
|---|---|------|
| 4 | <i>Agnus Dei</i>
(Assunta, Chorus, Annina, Carmela) | 3:42 |
| 5 | <i>Annina, Annina, prepare yourself for a great joy</i>
(Don Marco, Annina, Carmela) | 1:48 |
| 6 | <i>Oh, my Love, at last the hour has come</i>
(Annina, Carmela) | 3:38 |
| 7 | <i>Maria, Salvatore!</i>
(Assunta, Maria Corona, Salvatore, Don Marco) | 1:40 |
| 8 | <i>Gloria tibi Domine</i>
(Chorus, Don Marco, Annina) | 5:57 |
| 9 | <i>Annina, Annina!</i>
(Michele, Salvatore, Don Marco, Carmela, Maria Corona, Assunta, Chorus) | 5:16 |

Gian Carlo
MENOTTI

(1911-2007)

The Unicorn, the Gorgon and the Manticore

or The Three Sundays of a Poet
A Madrigal Fable for Chorus, Ten Dancers and Nine Instruments
Text by the Composer

Sopranos: Jean Heisey, *Betty Hodges, *Hallie Nowland, Rosemarie Radman,
Martha Reynolds, Eva Wolff
Contraltos: Nancy Hall, *Mary Hensley, Anna Julia Hoyt, Carol Jones,
Laurel Miller, Jan Ruetz
Tenors: Charles Anderson, Lindsey Bergen, *Frank Karian, Clifton Steere,
Lee Wade, Robert Yeager
Basses: Howard Kahl, Raymond Michalski, John Parella, Carols Sherman,
Peter Sliker, Marvin Solley

*soloists

Instrumental Ensemble:

Julius Baker (flute); Theodore Weis (trumpet); Harry Shulman (oboe)
Charles McCracken (cello); Walter Lewis (clarinet); Stuart Sankey (bass)
Loren Glickman (bassoon); Stanley Koor (percussion); Gloria Agostini (harp)

Chorus Master: Walter Baker

Thomas Schippers, conductor
Recorded in 1957 in New York City
First issued on Angel 35437

Reissue Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn

and frees Michele. She kneels next to him and passionately kisses him.

Act 2

The setting is a nearby Italian restaurant, the following May. At the front of the stage are a few tables and chairs. At the back an empty area which serves as a dance-floor, with a juke-box. Separate doors lead off to the kitchen and the Banqueting Room. A third door serves as the main entrance. Carmela, dressed as a bride, and Salvatore are having their photograph taken. They are surrounded by relatives and guests, including Annina, Michele, Assunta, Maria Corona and her son. **15** The photograph having been taken, the group breaks up with shouts of laughter. A young man, glass in hand, toasts the bride, followed by another guest, everybody and then Michele. As the guests slowly walk into the Banqueting Room, Carmela and Salvatore remain behind, while Annina looks tenderly at Carmela. She urges Salvatore to take care of Carmela. Salvatore and Carmela leave to join the other guests.

16 Desideria enters, and asks the Bartender where Michele is. After he leaves she pours herself a drink. Michele enters. Desideria tells him that her mother has turned her out of their house. She is upset because she is the only one who has not been invited to the wedding celebrations. She wants Michele to commit himself to her. **17** To prove his love, Desideria asks him to take her into the wedding celebrations. Michele says he cannot do this – Carmela is Annina's best friend. Desideria urges him to live with her and to abandon Annina. Michele responds by saying that Annina is sick and needs him, she is his sister.

18 Desideria urges Michele to be open about his love for her – to do otherwise may invoke risks.

19 Michele leads Desideria to the Banqueting Room but they are barred from entering by Don Marco. He pleads with Michele not to antagonise the guests by taking Desideria into the celebrations. Michele is about to hit Don Marco when he is held back by Annina who has rushed out of the Banqueting Room followed by the guests. Michele pushes Annina away and faces the angry crowd.

20 Michele asks the guests what right do they have to judge him? They live like strangers in their new land and are afraid to call themselves Italians. He would like to see the old country and would be proud to say 'I am Italian'. He throws his wine at the guests and collapses at a table. Some of the guests leave.

21 Don Marco tells Michele that he is wrong. Annina asks Carmela to forgive Michele. Led by Don Marco the bridal couple leaves. Michele asks Annina to forgive him and suggests they go home.

22 Desideria comes forward, and sneeringly tells Michele that he is in love with Annina and not her. Michele accuses Desideria of lying and urges her to take back what she has said. Annina presses him to leave. Michele suddenly seizes a knife and stabs Desideria in the back. He runs out of the restaurant, while Annina seeks to help Desideria through prayer. They pray together. Desideria dies in Annina's arms.

CD 2

Act 3

Scene 1

The setting is a vast, dimly-lit passage in a subway station in the early morning. At the back of the stage a stairway leads up to the street. On one side of the stage is a newspaper kiosk run by Maria Corona, and on the other a turnstile from the station platform below. Snow is piling up on the stairs from the station. A few, chilled, passengers emerge intermittently and make their way out of the station. Annina is standing near the street exit, waiting for someone. A train rumbles by. Maria Corona, after bundling her son off with the morning papers, approaches Annina and invites her to sit with her. She leads Annina into the kiosk and they sit by the fire there. Annina dozes off leaning against Maria Corona's shoulder.

1 Don Marco enters from the street stairway, looks around, goes back and returns with Michele. He urges Michele not to upset Annina and departs. Annina and Michele embrace. Annina tells Michele to give himself up but he refuses, only she is left to him. Annina

Gian Carlo Menotti (1911-2007)

The Saint of Bleecker Street • The Unicorn, the Gorgon and the Manticore

The Saint of Bleecker Street

By the time Menotti came to compose what is probably his best-known work, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, which was first performed in 1951, he was torn between the fruits of material success and increasing spiritual doubt. As a young boy growing up in Italy, his faith in the teachings of the Catholic Church had been carefully nurtured by a local priest. This faith had been shaken slightly when Menotti went to Milan to study, and after his move to America in 1928 it decayed further. Menotti's increasing worldly success as a composer was counterpointed by the growth of doubts concerning his religious beliefs and of feelings of sin and guilt. When he eventually reached the point at which he questioned the concept of sanctity, Menotti sought out a saint. In the winter of 1951 he visited Padre Pio, the Capuchin friar reputed to be able to work miracles, in the town of San Giovanni Rotondo, located in the foot of Italy. Padre Pio suffered from the stigmata, with bleeding from both his hands, which he covered with rough woollen mittens. When Menotti finally managed to see Padre Pio the priest condemned his visit as driven by curiosity. Menotti was severely shaken, and out of his confusion grew his opera *The Saint of Bleecker Street*.

The Saint of Bleecker Street opened on Broadway in New York City on 27th December 1954. The general critical opinion was positive, with critics hailing it as 'the best new opera... since Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*'. They praised the opera as 'an experience no one should miss' and felt that Menotti had breathed new life into the operatic form and had 'lit it with faith'. Some critics were less positive: the opera's setting of Little Italy in New York City brought comparisons with the world of *verismo* opera, such as Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*, and from there it was just a short step to condemning the opera as a sensational pastiche of Puccini and his veristic colleagues. The initial production ran for 92 consecutive performances, and in

1955 the opera won for Menotti the Pulitzer Prize for Music and the New York Drama Critics Circle award for Best Musical. The Broadway production was recorded by RCA Victor in February and March 1955, with Thomas Schippers conducting. *The Saint of Bleecker Street* has been frequently revived, notably by the New York City Opera, in 1965 and in 1975 when *The New York Times* felt that 'The older it gets, the less anachronistic it will seem'. For the 1997 production by the Central City Opera of Denver, a perceptive local critic wrote: 'it's hard to imagine a more relevant opera in a world racked by religious divisions and mindless violence.'

The opera combines two key themes which together proved to be highly combustible in dramatic terms: immigrant life in New York, with its tradition as one of America's great social melting pots during the early and middle parts of the last century, and a display of deeply-felt religious fervour. Underlying these themes is the sense of urban alienation which was deeply explored in the 1940s and 1950s by artists such as Edward Hopper and George Tooker. Tooker's iconic painting of alienation *The Subway* (1950) was in fact the basis of the design of the original Broadway production. The success of this influenced later productions of the New York musical theatre, such as Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story* of 1957. The opera's central character, the 'Saint of Bleecker Street', is Annina. She is reputed to have the stigmata. Her sceptical brother Michele seeks to save Annina from their more fervent neighbours, who react against him with violence. Matters are complicated by Michele's mistress, Desideria, who is jealous of Michele's love for Annina. When she accuses him of loving Annina but not her, with the strong implication of incest, Michele stabs her and she dies. When Annina then tells Michele that she is seriously ill and is about to take the veil and become a nun, he seeks desperately to stop her. Unsuccessful, she is made Sister Annina, after which she drops down dead.

The Unicorn, the Gorgon and the Manticore

The Unicorn, the Gorgon and the Manticore was commissioned by the Library of Congress for the twelfth chamber-music festival of the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation. Casting around for a suitable form and subject, Menotti turned to the story-telling madrigal cycles of Orazio Vecchi, a sixteenth century Italian composer whose most famous work is *L'Amfiparnaso*. Menotti combined Vecchi's madrigal structure with a script he had previously written after reading *The Book of Beasts*, and so began to create a work that is part masque, part ballet, and part chamber music. The actual composition was left very much to the last minute, with Menotti sending madrigals to the choreographer of the first performance, John Butler, as he finished them. He did not complete the final one until a week before the première, and the work's first run-through came only four days before the public was to see it. As a result the scheduled conductor of the first performance, Thomas Schippers, had to announce that he could not conduct because, as Menotti admitted, 'he has to conduct at the Met next week, and still has half of my work to learn.' In his place Paul Callaway, the organist of Washington Cathedral, was drafted in at short notice to conduct the première. This took place on 21st October 1956 in the Coolidge Auditorium of the Library of Congress, and was deemed to be highly successful. The New York première was given by the New York City Ballet at the New York City Center of Music and Drama on 15th January 1957, the year in which the American branch of EMI, Angel Records, recorded the work, this time under the direction of Schippers.

Menotti's fable focuses on a well-to-do but eccentric poet who lives in a castle. It presents his life in three stages: his youth, middle, and old age. Three unusual pets symbolize these stages – a Unicorn, a Gorgon, and a Manticore. These animals and their behaviour mirror Menotti's own career, and his idea of artists in general. The Unicorn, the young artist, is capricious, foolish, and susceptible to temptation, but beautiful all the while. The Gorgon, the artist at mid-life, having achieved some success, is loud, proud, and fearless, ignores the critics, and can be unpleasant. As this stage of development is reached, the Unicorn, or youth, dies. Interpreted symbolically this can be taken to mean that youth is killed off by mankind and its critics, with youthful creativity worn down by criticism and fickleness. (During his life Menotti constantly railed against the numerous critics of his works). The Manticore, the aging artist, is lonely – perhaps payment for his previous behaviour as the Gorgon – and shy, avoiding contact as much as possible. He regrets his earlier ways, and although he means well, he often hurts those around him, having been embittered by the years of criticism. Passing into old age the Gorgon, as with the Unicorn, fades away. Throughout the piece, each appearance of the poet in the town with a new beast sets off a series of events, with many of its citizens copying the poet and his adoption of these strange animals. At the work's conclusion, the townspeople find the poet on his deathbed, with the three creatures at his side. Rejecting all those who live through fashion and social convention, the poet suggests that society will find redemption only in the artist, for it is the artist who lives by and for truth.

David Patmore