

### Gianni Schicchi

# Opera can be funny

by Sheena Masson

From between the bed curtains the wave of a clenched fist goes unnoticed by a lawyer who prepares the last will. However it does produce paroxysms of rage in the group gathered around the death bed. This in turn delights the audience who are

not watching a horror show but the comic opera **Gianni Schicchi** performed by the Dal Opera Workshop.

The clenched fist belongs to Gianni Schicchi (John MacDonald) who hides in the bed of the newly departed Buoso Donati. Donati has left his fortune to a monastery and

his relatives are distraught. Gianni Schicchi, a shrewd local, offers to replace the dead man and dictate to the lawyer a new will dividing the properties among the present group. He reminds them of the penalty for their crime—exile and amputation of the fingers and they together sing

a fingerless farewell to Florence.

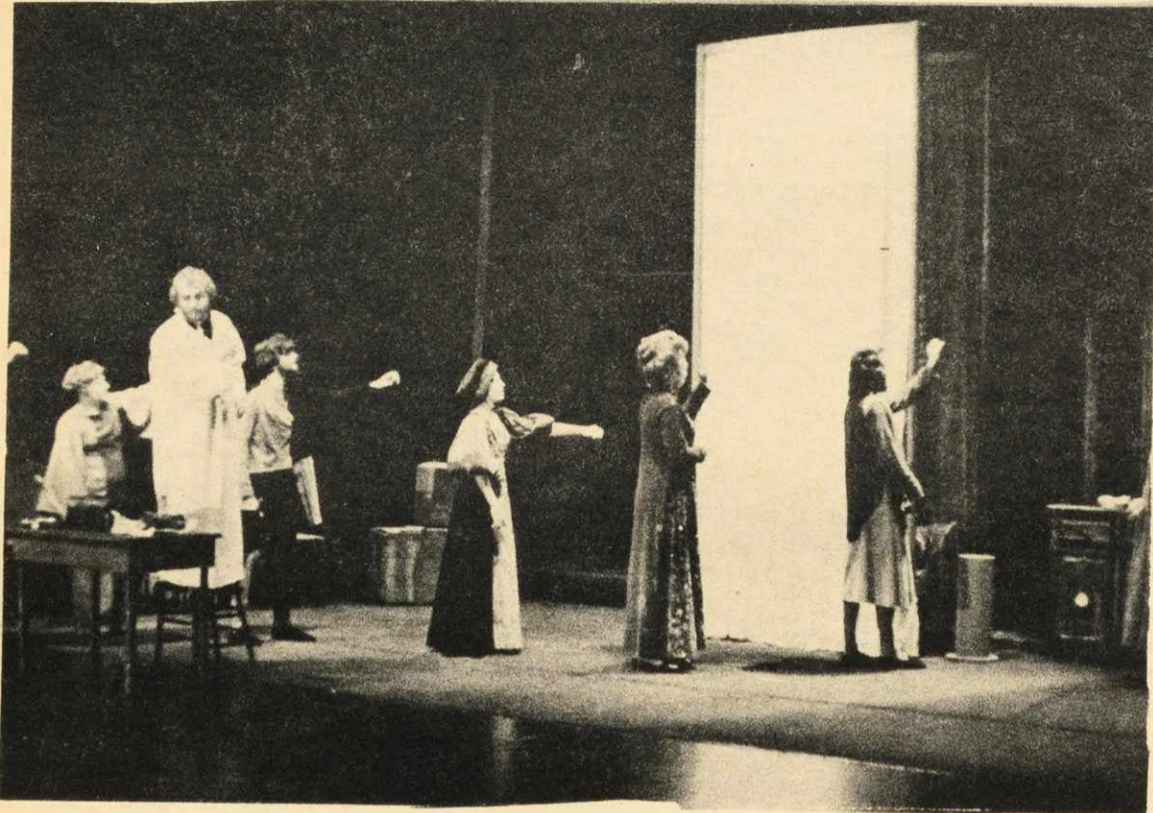
The lawyer is summoned and Gianni Schicchi, in a nasal whine, wills the bulk of Donati's fortune to himself. The clenched fist or fingerless hand which appears periodically keeps the relatives silent until the lawyer has gone. They then take a rude farewell while gathering up every movable object in Gianni Schicchi's new home.

The cast is required to sing throughout all this comic carrying on. Opera is a demanding art form and the Opera Workshop handled Puccini's score well. The group of fifteen performers consisted mainly of music students but also included a doctor, a french teacher and a music teacher. The Workshop is an open credit course although most of the class has had considerable training in opera. For the last three years, they have presented about two

operas a year.

Jefferson Morris, who teaches the class and directed **Gianni Schicchi**, feels that opera is the perfect form of artistic endeavor. "If done right," he said, "opera can beat any play or concert because it combines all the arts. I think everybody in the opera believed that."

The opera was produced in cooperation with the Theatre Department. Lynne Morris designed a simple but convincing set and David Overton gave much of his time to assist with the acting. Prof. Morris feels that it was a gratifying experience for all and says they plan another opera next term but have not decided which one. With a limited cast, it is necessary to fit the opera to the available voices. Despite these limitations, as well as financial burdens, Prof. Morris believes opera can really "take fire" in the Maritimes.



The cast of **Gianni Schicchi** wave a fingerless farewell to Florence.

## The folly of setting absolute standards in art

by Glen Walton

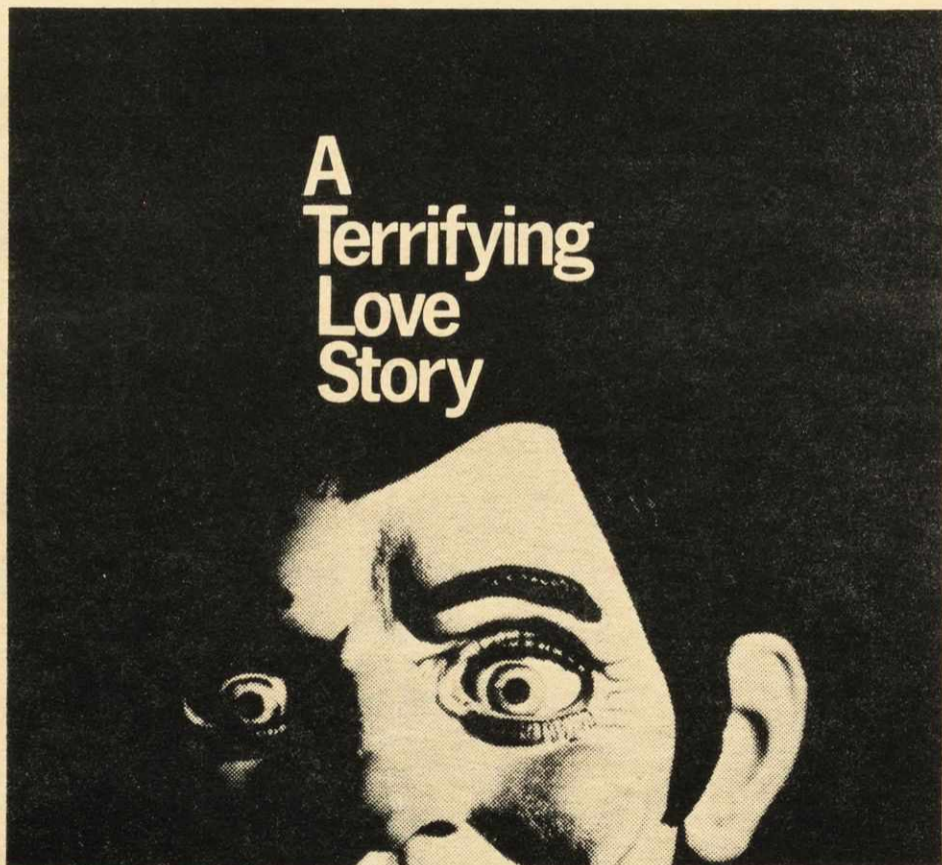
The artist in a sometimes hostile society was the theme of a talk and several films about the German Expressionist movement held last week at St. Mary's.

Robert Dietz, curator of the St. Mary's Art Gallery, pointed out that those who claim they already "know what they like" when viewing art; actually only "like what they know." This attitude, said Dietz,

helps to explain the hostility to the group **Die Bruecke**, which existed in Dresden for a few years before the First World War, and included such artists as Emil Nolde, Ernst-Ludwig Kirchner, and Erich Heckel.

The Expressionist movement was partly a reaction to the excesses and injustices of

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