

MASCAGNI
CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA

(Rustic Chivalry)

English Version by Donald Pippin

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Cast of Characters

SANTUZZA, a peasant girl, in love with Turiddu. Recently jilted, she has been excommunicated from the church apparently for their illicit relationship.

TURIDDU, now in love with Lola, a former flame recently reignited.

MAMMA LUCIA, his mother.

LOLA, once engaged to Turiddu, now wed to Alfio.

ALFIO, her unsuspecting husband.

INTRODUCTION

The action takes place on a village piazza, with a church on the left and Mamma Lucia's thriving tavern on the right – the two places where everyone goes when out on the town. It's Easter Sunday in Sicily, the holiest day of the year, a day of redemption, a day of rejoicing. Spring is in the air, the sun uncharacteristically mild and gentle; flowers are blooming, crops are ripening. Lucky villagers who live so close to the land and the rhythms of nature! From not far away a young tenor sings a love song to a girl named Lola, tender and idyllic, even as it hints of danger pending. For although all appears cheerful and serene, beneath the surface, like a molten volcano on the verge of erupting, there lurks an explosive mix of passion, jealousy, adultery, betrayal and vengeance. A gourmet recipe for grand opera.

On this most sacred day, what looks like the entire village is flocking into the church to celebrate. Here let me quickly insert a request from Shakespeare, who said to his audience: "For each person that you see, imagine a hundred." We are less demanding. Twenty five will do. Yet there is one person who stands apart, forbidden to enter. Santuzza: a single woman, orphaned we know not when, with not so much as an extended family to fall back on when needed. And God knows, that time is now. Banished from society! Declared guilty! Her crime? Passionately in love, seduced by handsome Turiddu with promises of marriage, she succumbed before the wedding knot was tied -- a sin that she cannot bring herself to repent. Frankly, among these famously hot-blooded folk I find it hard to believe that her premature surrender is so exceptional. Nonetheless, when word got about, it sufficed to bring down the holy wrath of the church crashing upon her head, unleashing the ultimate punishment: excommunication, everlasting hellfire and damnation, a rejection by no less than the Lord on high. Now a pariah, shunned and disdained by her neighbors, you have to wonder how many of these neighbors are qualified to cast the first stone.

Behind Turiddu's brief courtship there is a lengthy and troubled history. He has long been wild about Lola, whose name you may recall from his opening song. A few years ago when he left home to become a soldier, they exchanged vows eternal and became engaged. But when he returned, after a stint in the army, he found her married to another man. In bitterness, he turned to lonely, vulnerable Santuzza, partly for solace, but mainly to get back at Lola. It worked.

By now restless and bored with married life, Lola is spurred to action by Turiddu's apparently rapid recovery from what should have been a devastating blow. Envious, jealous of Santuzza, she sets out to lure him back, with gratifying results. Facilitated by the frequent absences of her husband, their romance soon takes up from where it left off, as if nothing had happened in the interim. Too bad for Alfio, her steady, good-natured husband. A teamster, or carrier, often as not out on the highway with his horses, rustling up a living, he is secure in the

knowledge that his devoted wife is sitting quietly at home pining for his return. But what to do about Santizza? In agony, obviously abandoned, at every point from beginning to end the action strongly suggests that she is pregnant, though, because of stringent censorship, the opera could not come out openly and say so. But with the thought in mind, I hand this knotted tangle of four intertwined lives over to you.

MASCAGNI

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SCENE: A piazza in a Sicilian village. At the back, a church; in the foreground, a tavern and the modest house of Mamma Lucia. Easter Day. Peasants – men, women, children – cross the stage and enter the church. Turiddu sings from outside.

TURIDDU (*from outside*)

My Lola! Like a rose, fragrant and tender,
Warmed by the sun when dawn wakens the meadow,
Give me again your soft kiss of surrender,
Lifting a long waiting lover out of the shadow.

Spilling of blood may loom on the horizon.
Ready to die for you, my love, remember:
Standing before the barred door into heaven,
Till we can walk in together, I shall not enter.

WOMEN (*also from outside*)

Ripening oranges perfume the valley,
And meadowlarks sing to the blossoming flowers.
Breezes are murmuring, playfully, tenderly
Tickling the trees with a thousand caresses.

Sounds of a fruitful day
Echo from shoreline to mountain;
Here God provides
From an eternal fountain.

MEN (*also from outside*)

While tilling fields for long and weary hours,
From home we hear your spinning wheel reminding
That toil and sweat are over with the setting sun;
We head for home and tender ties more binding,

With eyes for love, maybe tired, but ready and able,
Lighting up at the banquet there on the table.

WOMEN

Work for the wife is not over
When Vesper bells are chiming
To honor the Mother and Son.
Sounds of a fruitful day
Echo from shoreline to mountain;
Here God provides
From an eternal fountain.

Santuzza enters and approaches Lucia's house.

SANTUZZA, as Lucia enters
Hear me, Mamma Lucia.

LUCIA
So it's you! What is it?

SANTUZZA
Where is Turiddu?

LUCIA
As always, you come here looking for my son?

SANTUZZA
Mamma, you must forgive me.
I will leave when you tell me
Where I can find him.

LUCIA
Asking me! Asking *me!*
And how should I know?

SANTUZZA
Mamma Lucia, in tears I come to beg you ---
Remember the mercy taught us by our Savior ---
Tell me in heaven's name! Where is Turiddu?

LUCIA
He's gone to purchase wine in Francofonte.

SANTUZZA

No! Last night he was seen here in the piazza.

LUCIA

**Who said so? Who said so?
Why did he not come home to Mamma? *(after a pause)*
Come in, though.**

SANTUZZA

**Your honored house I cannot enter.
A fallen woman, soiled, forever tarnished,
Now excommunicated.**

LUCIA

Did my Turiddu get you into trouble?

SANTUZZA

(Pain has punctured my heart.)

(Behind the scenes cracking of whips and jingling of bells. The chorus enters, followed soon after by Alfio.)

ALFIO

**Horses raring, set to go;
People wave and whistles blow.
Now we are off and away!**

**Summer, winter, cold or hot;
Thunder, rain or snow -- so what?
Always a brand new day!**

**On the mark at break of dawn;
Friends and neighbors cheer us on.
Crack of the whip, ho ho!
We are off and away! Hooray!**

CHORUS

**For the lucky carrier
Life could not be merrier,
On top and riding high.**

**Wielding reins of power,
King if but for an hour,
A free and happy guy,
On top and riding high**

Beneath a (our) Southern sky!

ALFIO

**Alone and palpitating,
My faithful wife is waiting,
Home, waiting there for me.**

**Domestic and contented,
The way the Lord intended,
So beautiful to see!**

**Easter Sunday, here I am!
Home and happy as a clam,
My wife waiting there alone,
My Lola, my very own. All mine!**

BASSES

**What a lucky guy! Off and riding high
Beneath a blue and sunny sky.**

ALFIO

**Oh, ho! Let's go! We're off!
Hitch up the wagon, whip us the horses,
Off on the gallop, head for the highway, Giddyap!
I'm a happy guy,
Now over here, now over there.
Easter Sunday on the mark!
Home and singing like a lark. Hooray!**

CHORUS

**Now here, now there,
But home for Easter on the mark!
And singing like a lark!**

(The chorus disperses, some entering the church, others scattering in various directions.)

LUCIA

**Lucky man, neighbor Alfio.
Returning with a song and a smile.**

ALFIO

**Mamma Lucia, have you on hand
More of that fine old chianti?**

LUCIA

None left. Turiddu has gone to make a purchase.

ALFIO

**How can that be? I saw him just this morning,
Not far from my own house.**

LUCIA

Saw him?

SANTUZZA. quickly, to Lucia
(Stay quiet!)

ALFIO

I must be going.
Later, I'll see you in church. (exit)

HYMN TO EASTER

*(After a hymn in Latin, Santuzza alone, excommunicated from the church, is
unable to share the rejoicing of her neighbors.)*

SANTUZZA

**I alone am despised and excluded;
Not for me is this day of rejoicing,
Nor the father and son
And the coming of hope,
Joy and peace on earth.**

**Where for me is the message of hope and salvation?
Am I no longer the child of our father on high?**

**Where for me are the tidings of heavenly peace
And the coming of hope?**

O Lord! Am I no longer worthy of Thy love?

**I alone am despised and excluded;
Not for me is this day of rejoicing,
Scorned and hated, the least of God's children on earth,
Am I unworthy to pray to the Lord?
Ah! Is my prayer unheard?**

**Tell me, O Lord, where to turn? Where, O where?
Tell me where. O where?**

CHORUS, *sung simultaneously*

**Hail to Easter, a day of rejoicing
For the Savior who died not in vain.
From the grave he returns resurrected,
Crowned with glory forever to reign.**

**Joy and peace upon earth!
Easter Sunday, a day of rejoicing!
Praise the son who arose from the grave.
With his message of hope and salvation
He ascends by the grace of our father on high.**

**He ascends bearing tidings of peace upon earth
And the coming of hope.
To all on earth he bears a message of love.
Blessed father and son!
May forever they reign!
Sing of hope, sing of joy.**

**Praise the son of our father in heaven
Bearing tidings of peace,
Joy and peace upon earth.
Raise a song to the glory of God!
May no song go unheard.
Sing the praise of the Lord, our God!**

(All except Lucia and Santuzza enter the church)

LUCIA

So why then were you sending warning signals?

SANTUZZA

**Mamma, you may remember,
When he became a soldier,
Turiddu, wild about Lola,
Asked for her hand in marriage,
And Lola vowed that she was his forever.**

**Home again, finding her faithless,
Wed to a new admirer,
Disillusioned and angry,
Turning to me for comfort,
He told me he loved me.
I'd waited long to hear it!**

She envied me, hated to see me happy.
Fuelled by rancor and jealousy,
Brushing aside her husband,
Eyes set upon Turiddu,
Sly and remorseless,
From me she stole him.

Cheapened, stained and dishonored,
Scorned and despised, I have no one.
They are together, lovers again,
Openly strolling arm in arm.
While I sob alone.
Heartbroken, I sob alone.

LUCIA

Merciful heaven! I shouldn't even listen.
Such talk on Easter Sunday!

SANTUZZA

I face damnation! Hellfire eternal!
Oh, Mamma! Go, pray to God and to the virgin.
Light a candle for me.
I'll find Turiddu,
And plead, implore him for another chance,
I'll plead with him for just another chance.

LUCIA

Holy Mother in heaven!
Show her thy mercy. *(exit)*

TURIDDU, *entering,*
quickly turning away when he sees Santuzza
I might have known it!

SANTUZZA

I have to see you.

TURIDDU

On Easter you should be in church.

SANTUZZA

Not I. Stay here and listen.

TURIDDU

Mamma's home waiting.

SANTUZZA

Just for a moment.

TURIDDU

Not here! Not now!

SANTUZZA

(speaking) **Where have you come from?**

TURIDDU

(slight pause) **Why are you asking?**

(longer pause) **From Francofonte.**

SANTUZZA

That is a lie!

TURIDDU

Santuzza, cross my heart, I'd never lie to you.

SANTUZZA

Tell me another!

I've seen you prowling about on the sly.

And just this very morning

You were seen lurking around Lola's doorway.

TURIDDU

So! You were` spying!

SANTUZZA

No! No, I swear it.

I heard it from her husband,

From the hardworking husband you deceive.

TURIDDU

So that's the way you repay my devotion.

You want him to kill me!

SANTUZZA

No! No, how could you say so?

TURIDDU

Then stop pursuing, hounding me.

With me you're getting nowhere

By feeling always sorry for yourself.

SANTUZZA

Do you still love her?

TURIDDU

No!

SANTUZZA

You find her more attractive?

TURIDDU

Stop it! That's over.

SANTUZZA

Say it! Say it! A scheming harlot!

TURIDDU

Santuzza!

SANTUZZA

That tiger on the loose who stole you away from me!

TURIDDU

**Watch out, Santuzza! I'm no slave
To your jealous rages and wild accusations.**

SANTUZZA

**Hurt me, insult me, I love and forgive you.
Hate me, despise me, still I adore you.
Despised and hated, too much tormented,
I sob, I suffer.**

LOLA

(offstage, gradually approaching)

**My wild flower!
Shadowless angels crowned with golden halos
Pale beside your simple rustic beauty.**

**My wild flower!
I know a certain strong and sturdy fellow
Ready to risk his life for rustic beauty.
My wild flower!**

Turiddo, have you seen my husband?

TURIDDU

I've just arrived. Not as yet..

LOLA

Still at the forge, gabbing with the blacksmith.
He should be here shortly ...
Outside in the piazza, is this your place of worship?

TURIDDU (*embarrassed*)

Santuzza was just saying . . .

SANTUZZA (*with strong insinuation*)

She was saying that on Easter,
God is looking on, and knows all . . .

LOLA

But *you* will not be at mass?

SANTUZZA

Not I. None should attend
But those with nothing on their conscience.

LOLA

God be thanked, I've no problem,
Unlike some others.

SANTUZZA, *bitterly*

Ha! Unlike others, *you've* no conscience, no shame.

TURIDDU, *embarrassed*

The service has started!
Come, we are late already

LOLA, *ironically*

Stay! Why so impatient?

SANTUZZA

Do stay here. Stay here.
I still have much to tell you.

LOLA

If the Lord is watching,
Some should be worried. (*exit*)

TURIDDU

So, so clever! So uncalled for!

SANTUZZA

She had it coming. And so do you!

TURIDDU, *threatening*

I swear to God ...

SANTUZZA

Punish, chastise me!

TURIDDU

No!

SANTUZZA

Turiddu, don't leave me!

TURIDDU

Go!

SANTUZZA

My dearest! I implore you! Just for a moment ...

TURIDDU

Go!

SANTUZZA

**Dear, dear Turiddu!
Remember those moments together
And do not leave me alone, unwanted.**

TU RIDDU

**Why must you pester me?
Why prowl and spy on me?
I'm never free, even here in public.**

SANTUZZA

**No, no, Turiddu!
How can you leave me pleading and sobbing?
How can you break my heart?
No, no, Turiddu!
Do not leave me to sob unwanted.
Oh, Turiddu! My love, we can start all over.**

TURIDDU

Oh, why pursue me to spy? All is over.

SANTUZZA

**Come home to Santuzza, pleading and sobbing.
Can you ignore the fire and devotion,
My adoration?**

TURIDDU

**God give me patience! Fire turns to ashes.
After it dies it's gone forever.**

SANTUZZA

**No, my darling! Love me, don't leave me.
Dear Turiddu! In your arms hold me once again.**

TURIDDU

Go!

SANTUZZA

**Ah! Turiddu! Ah, no!
Remember those moments of rapture!
We can relive them again.**

TURIDDU

**Go! Go! Lost and gone are those moments of rapture,
Gone and forgotten while life goes on.
Fire has turned to ashes, gone forever.
Go! Go! Go!**

SANTUZZA

**Why? Why? Why?
Hear your Santuzza, pleading, imploring.
How can you leave her
Helplessly searching for answers?**

TURIDDU

**Go! I have told you.
So how many ways d'you want me to say it?**

SANTUZZA

**Hear your Santuzza, pleading, imploring.
Have you forgotten?
Have you no feeling for my tears and my pain?**

TURIDDU

Go! Must I say it again?

After love dies it's gone forever

SANTUZZA

**Ah, no! Remember those moments of rapture!
From the heart, I implore you.
My love, do not leave me!**

TURIDDU

**You're wasting your breath,
Love's turned into anger.**

SANTUZZA

I warn you!

TURIDDU

**I wash my hands of you forever!
*(he rushes into the church)***

SANTUZZA

Run off! But I'll be there, to curse you!

(Alfio enters)

SANTUZZA

Ah! The good Lord has sent you, neighbor Alfio!

ALFIO

Am I late for the service?

SANTUZZA

**Too late, I would say. Left unguarded,
Lola carries on with Turiddu.**

ALFIO

Are you suggesting . . .

SANTUZZA

**While you're on the highway, slaving and sweating
To earn an honest living,
Lola is making merry `with her lover.**

ALFIO

**Stop! You're driving me crazy!
You mean . . . Turiddu?**

SANTUZZA

Who else? And because of Turiddo I live without honor.
That viper seduced me, then left me forsaken.
It was your wife who lured him away from me.
Because of Turiddo I live without honor.

ALFIO

If you lie, heaven help you!
I will tear your heart out.

SANTUZZA

What would I gain by speaking falsely?
Never would I stoop to lie.
From shame and agony, in anger and sorrow,
I am compelled to speak and say what I know.
Compelled to speak of my shame, in anger and sorrow,
Because of Turiddo who soiled my honor.
And your own wife who lured him along.

ALFIO

You leave me shattered, but glad, grateful that you told me.

SANTUZZA

I blush and hate myself for speaking out.

ALFIO, *exploding*

Betrayed! Dishonored!
The two have made a fool of me
And thought they'd get away with it.

SANTUZZA

I hate myself for speaking out
But I cannot undo what I have done.
And what I said I had to say.

ALFIO

I'm out for blood. I'll have revenge
Before this day is done.
And starting now, I'll live to see them suffer.
They'll pay in blood for what they've done to me.
My love they've turned into disgust and hate.
I swear to God I will make them pay.
The two will pay.

INTERMEZZO

MEN (*leaving the church*)

**The platters of pasta are calling
To home and family.
So no more stalling. Come on!**

**A time for pleasure!
After prayer and piety
Let the revels begin!**

WOMEN (*also leaving the church*)

**The ovens and kettles are calling
To home and family
So no more stalling. Come on!**

**No time for leisure,
Only toil and drudgery
While the men have the fun.**

TURIDDU, *coming from the church with Lola*
**Must you be going? Stay and greet your neighbors.
Join us for friendly conversation.**

LOLA

I must hurry, I'm concerned about my husband.

TURIDDU

**I wouldn't worry. Keep him waiting,
(turning to the crowd)
Come join us, here we are!
A toast to wine and pleasure!**

**Sweeter than the sound of laughter,
Better than rewards hereafter,
Through the ages folk have found
It's wine that makes the world go round.**

**Cheers for wine that warms the spirit!
Fog or fury, wine can clear it.
Pleasure in whatever shape
We owe to that fermented grape.**

TURIDDU, *to Lola*

To your admirers!

LOLA

And may you thrive and prosper!

TURIDDU

Your health!

CROWD

**Bravo! I'm ready for another!
Some more! Some more!
I'm ready for another!
Here's to wine, food of love,
Gift of God from above.
Have some more! Have some more!
From God above a gift of love.**

ALFIO, entering

Everybody so cheerful!

CHORUS

And to you a warm welcome.

TURIDDU

**Come and join us – a round or two together.
Try it – excellent chianti.**

ALFIO

**Thank you, but I cannot accept your wine.
It would turn into poison if I swallowed.**

TURIDDU

Take it or leave it. (*tosses it away*)

LOLA

(The calm before the storm.)

CHORUS

**Come with us, Lola. No place for women here.
(*the women all leave*)**

TURIDDU

Do you have something to tell me?

ALFIO

Me? Nothing.

TURIDDU

In that case, I am ready when you are.

ALFIO

Right now!

TURIDDU

Right now!

(They embrace; Turiddu bites Alfio's right ear.)

ALFIO

Take care, Turiddu. That bite may cost you dearly.
I see we've come to a perfect understanding.

TURIDDU

Wait, Alfio ---

You've every right to hate me.

I have done you wrong, and I know in my heart

Like a rabid dog I well deserve to die.

But if you kill me . . .

What of poor Santuzza?

Destitute and lonely,

Forced to go begging ...

She who loved me greatly,

Even when abandoned,

She who loved me greatly,

Ah! Whom I abandoned ...

(suddenly, impetuously)

So with my dagger I will pierce your heart!

ALFIO

(coldly) So be it.

Why waste our time in talking?

You will find me in the orchard, waiting . . . *(exit)*

TURIDDU, calling

Mamma! *(she enters)* Mamma!

I maybe had one too many . . .

A bit unsteady ... No, no!

I'll take a walk till I feel better ...

Maybe down to the orchard.

Before I leave, though,

Let me have your blessing

Like when I left you to become a soldier.

And listen . . . Mamma, do listen . . .

I may be leaving never to return.
Comfort poor Santuzza, console her in sorrow.
Unto God, I promised we would someday get married.
Love her as a mother would love a daughter,
An only child ...

LUCIA

What gloomy talk is that, my darling boy?

TURIDDU

Oh, nothing . . .
The wine has got me talking crazy.
It's the wine that is talking.
Oh pray to God for mercy!
Oh God, oh God, forgive me!
Dear Mamma, dearest Mamma.
Kiss me again, and yet another ... Goodby!
Remember your promise,
Look after poor Santuzza,
And bless you, Mamma ... Goodby!
(He runs off in desperation)

LUCIA

Turiddu! What has happened?
Turiddu! Turiddu! Ah!
Santuzza! *(Santuzza enters)*

SANTUZZA

Mamma, O Mamma!
(Lucia throws her arms around her. The stage gradually fills. Agitation is on the face of all, as they question each other anxiously. In the distance, a confused murmur. A woman enters crying.)

A WOMAN

(spoken) Down at the orchard Turiddu lies bleeding!

ANOTHER WOMAN

Mamma Lucia, your son is dead.
All cry out in shock and horror. Both Lucia and Santuzza fall in a swoon. All are stricken dumb.

THE END

