

## February 17, 2022 – Giacomo Puccini's *La Fanciulla del West*

This week's Thursday Night Opera House features the "grandmomma of all spaghetti Westerns," Giacomo Puccini's *La Fanciulla del West* (*The Girl of the Golden West*), hosted by the late **Al Ruocchio** (1937-2007). Premiered at New York City's Metropolitan Opera on December 10, 1910, with **Arturo Toscanini** wielding the baton, its cast was headed by **Enrico Caruso**, **Emmy Destinn**, and **Pasquale Amato**.

The improbable story takes place during the California gold rush. Minnie (soprano **Renata Tebaldi**), the barkeeper of the Polka Saloon and friend and confidante to the gold miners, falls in love with the stranger Dick Johnson (tenor **Mario Del Monaco**), who turns out to be the fugitive bandit Ramirez. When Dick is wounded by a posse, Minnie hides him in her cabin, but sheriff Jack Rance (baritone **Cornell MacNeil**), who's in love with Minnie, discovers him there. Minnie and Rance agree to a game of poker to decide Johnson's fate, which she wins by cheating. The sheriff leaves but Johnson is captured by the miners and about to be hanged. Minnie begs them to spare the life of the man she loves and they release him. The lovers ride off to begin a new life together.

**Franco Capuana** conducts the Chorus and Orchestra of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia of Rome in this 1958 recording.

From a 1983 Covent Garden production, here's tenor **Plácido Domingo** singing Dick Johnson's aria "Ch'ella mi creda": <http://youtu.be/iM9dF4WodDY>.