

“Bella siccome un angelo” (Lovely beyond your wildest dream),  
DON PASQUALE, Act I; music by Gaetano Donizetti, libretto by Giovanni  
Ruffini. 1843.

SYNOPSIS: Don Pasquale, an aged wealthy bachelor, wants to get married, and sends Dr. Malatesta (meaning “Bad head,” so he’s not very honest), to find him a bride. Malatesta is a close friend of Pasquale’s nephew, Ernesto, who is in love with Norina, recently widowed, but not at all in mourning. The doctor decides to pass Norina off as his sister, and with her consent, he plots to make her the old man’s “wife,” using this glowing description of the “perfect woman,” as yet unseen by Pasquale, to entice him.

MALATESTA:

Bella siccome un angelo  
in terra pellegrino.  
Fresca siccome il giglio  
che s'apre sul mattino.  
Occhio che parla e ride,  
sguardo che i cor conquide.  
Chioma che vince l'ebano  
sorriso incantator.  
Sorriso incantator.

Lovely beyond your wildest dream,  
purer than even angels seem;  
fresher than lilies glowing white,  
greeting the morning brightness.  
Sparkling eyes laughing sweetly,  
glances that win completely;  
hair dark as deepest ebony,  
enchantment lives in her smile,  
her charming, magic smile.

Alma innocente ingenua,  
che sè medesima ignora;  
modestia impareggiabile,  
bontà che v innamora.  
Ai miseri pietosa,  
gentil, dolce, amorosa,  
il ciel l'ha fatta nascere  
per far beato un cor,  
beato un cor.  
Il ciel l'ha fatta nascere  
per far beato un cor  
per far beato un cor.  
Il ciel l'ha fatta nascere  
Per far beato, beato,  
Per far beato un cor.

Spirit as pure as falling snow,  
timid, although she doesn’t know;  
her simple unassuming ways  
deserve a poet’s praises.  
Giving the poor her pity,  
as gentle as she is pretty,  
dear Heaven sent her down to earth  
to captivate a man,  
to captivate a man.  
Dear Heaven sent her down to earth  
to captivate a man,  
to captivate a man.  
Dear Heaven sent her down to earth  
to captivate a man. Ah!  
Yes, she will make his life divine.

--From a translation of DON PASQUALE, © 1976, Miriam Ellis