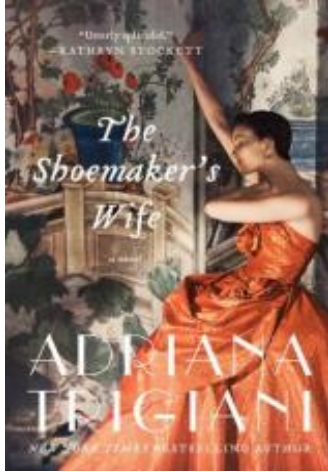


The Shoemaker's Wife

by Adriana Trigiani



About the Book

The majestic and haunting beauty of the Italian Alps is the setting of the first meeting of Enza, a practical beauty, and Ciro, a strapping mountain boy, who meet as teenagers, despite growing up in villages just a few miles apart. At the turn of the last century, when Ciro catches the local priest in a scandal, he is banished from his village and sent to hide in America as an apprentice to a shoemaker in Little Italy. Without explanation, he leaves a bereft Enza behind. Soon, Enza's family faces disaster and she, too, is forced to go to America with her father to secure their future.

Unbeknownst to one another, they both build fledgling lives in America, Ciro masters shoemaking and Enza takes a factory job in Hoboken until fate intervenes and reunites them. But it is too late: Ciro has volunteered to serve in World War I and Enza, determined to forge a life without him, begins her impressive career as a seamstress at the Metropolitan Opera House that will sweep her into the glamorous salons of Manhattan and into the life of the international singing sensation, Enrico Caruso.

From the stately mansions of Carnegie Hill, to the cobblestone streets of Little Italy, over the perilous cliffs of northern Italy, to the white-capped lakes of northern Minnesota, these star-crossed lovers meet and separate, until, finally, the power of their love changes both of their lives forever.

Lush and evocative, told in tantalizing detail and enriched with lovable, unforgettable characters, *THE SHOEMAKER'S WIFE* is a portrait of the times, the places and the people who defined the immigrant experience, claiming their portion of the American dream with ambition and resolve, cutting it to fit their needs like the finest Italian silk.

This riveting historical epic of love and family, war and loss, risk and destiny is the novel Adriana Trigiani was born to write, one inspired by her own family history and the love of tradition that has propelled her body of bestselling novels to international acclaim. Like *LUCIA, LUCIA*, *THE SHOEMAKER'S WIFE* defines an era with clarity and splendor, with operatic scope and a vivid cast of characters who will live on in the imaginations of readers for years to come.

Discussion Guide

1. The novel is split into three parts: Italian Alps, Manhattan and Minnesota. How would you characterize Ciro and Enza in each of these sections? How do they adapt to their new homes? In what ways did they change over the course of the novel? In what ways did they remain the same?
2. How would the course of both Ciro's and Enza's lives have been different if they hadn't gone to America? Do you think they would have ended up together if they had stayed on the mountain?
3. Enza and Ciro shared their first kiss beside Stella's grave. In what ways did digging the grave open up Ciro's heart?
4. When Ciro opened up his duffle bag on the ship to America, "the fragrance of the convent laundry – lavender and starch – enveloped him, fresh as the mountain air of Vilminore" (p. 120). What other aspects of convent life stayed with Ciro and Eduardo after they left? What did they learn from the sisters?
5. Enza "found a best friend in Laura, but so much more" (p. 195). What do you think made Laura and Enza's bond so deep from the beginning? In what ways did they support one another?
6. Did anything surprise you about the characterization of Enrico Caruso? How would you describe his relationship with those around him? How did the time he spent with Enza and Laura affect them, even decades later?
7. How does **The Shoemaker's Wife** portray the immigrant experience? Do any of your own families have a similar immigrant history? Did they have a different experience?
8. Enza and Ciro have different views of religion. In what ways do their beliefs shape their actions and relationship?
9. How do you think Enza's life would have turned out if she had married Vito? If Ciro had married Felicitá? What did Vito and Felicitá offer them and what did they lack?
10. Carlo Lazzari warned Eduardo to "beware the things of this world that can mean everything or nothing". In what ways did this advice ring true throughout the novel?
11. What effect did fighting in the Great War have on Ciro? Do you believe he returned to Manhattan a changed man, or did the war just force him to acknowledge what he had known all along?

12. When *Ciro* saw *Enza* on the steps of Our Lady of Pompeii church, moments away from marrying *Vito*, ?it seemed like fate was on his side.? Do you believe that fate brought *Ciro* and *Enza* together on that day? Overall, do you believe that *Ciro* and *Enza* were destined to be together?

13. *Enza* once said to *Ciro*: ?I remind you, I imagine, of things you?d rather not think about.? What do you believe *Enza* meant by this? What challenges did *Ciro* and *Enza* face in their relationship? How did they differ in their ways of communicating?

14. How did *Ciro*, *Enza* and *Antonio* each react to *Ciro*?s diagnosis? What were *Ciro*?s fears and hopes for his family? In what ways will *Enza* and *Antonio* fulfill his dreams?

15. At the end of the novel, *Enza* agrees to return to Italy with *Antonio* and *Angela*. How do you imagine the reunion between *Enza* and her family? How will *Schilpario* be different for *Enza* when seen through *Angela* and *Antonio*?s eyes?

Author Bio

Adriana Trigiani is the *New York Times* bestselling author of 21 books of fiction and nonfiction. Her work has been published in 38 languages around the world. An award-winning playwright, television writer/producer, and filmmaker, Trigiani wrote and directed the major motion picture of her debut novel, *BIG STONE GAP*; adapted her novel, *VERY VALENTINE*, for television; and directed the documentary, *Queens of the Big Time*, among others.

In 2023, President Sergio Matterella of Italy awarded Trigiani the *Cavaliere dell?Ordine della Stella d?Italia*. The Library of Virginia bestowed their highest honor, the *Patron of Letters* degree, to Trigiani in 2024. She received the 2025 Ellis Island Medal of Honor for her significant contributions to literature, culture, and community.

Trigiani grew up in Appalachia, in the mountains of Virginia, where she co-founded The Origin Project, a year-round, in-school writing program that has served over 25,000 students since its inception in 2014. Trigiani is proud to serve on the New York State Council on the Arts. She lives in Greenwich Village with her family.

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