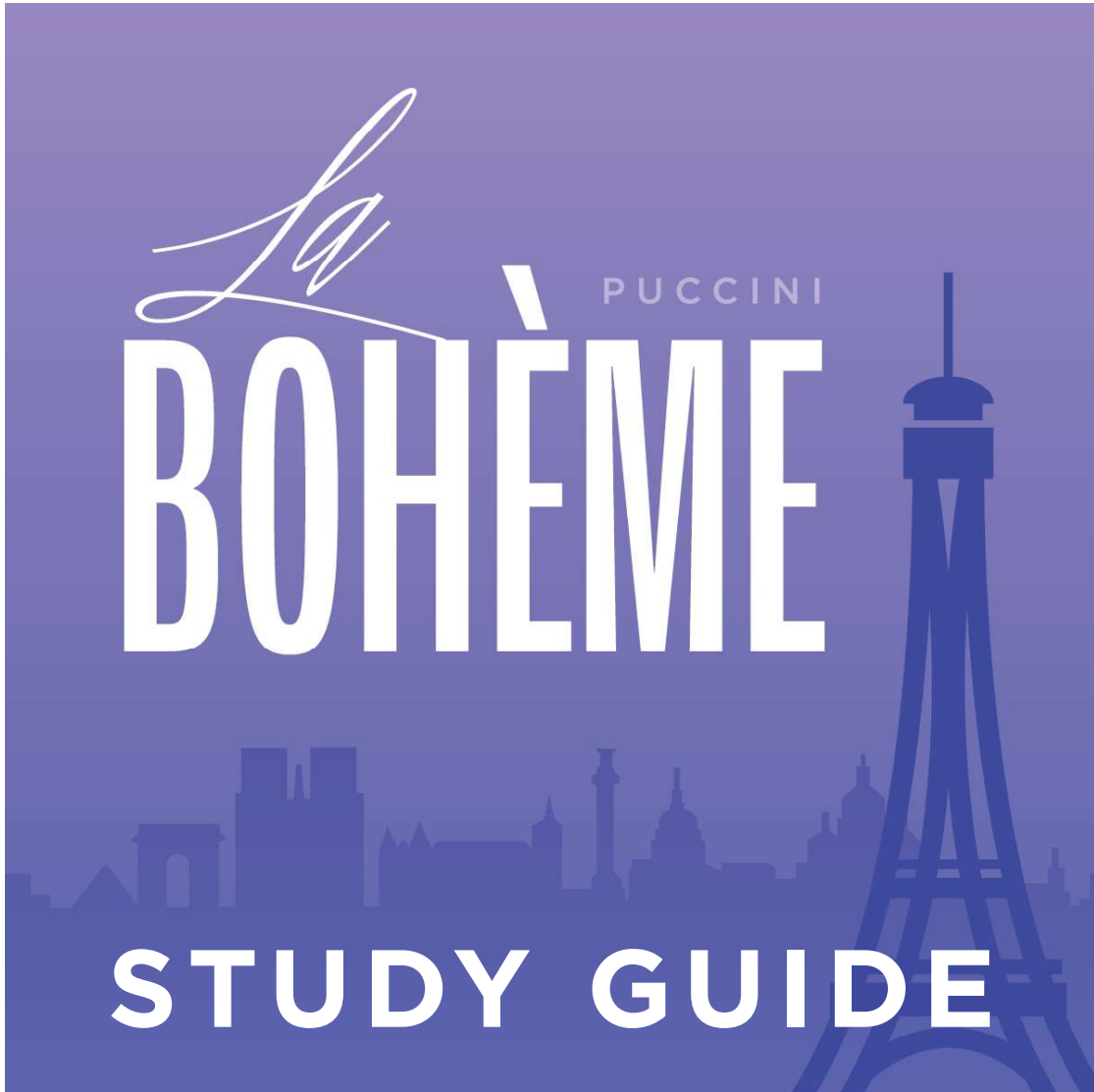




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2024/25 STUDY GUIDE

LA BOHÈME

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La Bohème, 2014. Manitoba Opera. Photo: R. Tinker.

FAST FACTS

- “*La Bohème* has been referred to as the perfect opera. It’s just the right balance of comedy, spectacle, pathos, and drama – not to mention beloved characters who take us along on their journey.” - Giuseppe Pietraroia, conductor
- 19th-century opera audiences were used to larger-than-life characters whose passions had dramatic and far-reaching consequences. *La Bohème* introduced audiences to characters who were realistic, ordinary people experiencing the kinds of joys and struggles that they could recognize in their own lives.
- *La Bohème* is based on *Scènes de la vie de bohème*, a semi-autobiographical novel by French writer Henri Murger. The text was adapted for Puccini’s opera by librettists Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa, who had worked with the composer on his hugely successful *Manon Lescaut*. Their collaboration would yield two more masterpieces: *Tosca* and *Madama Butterfly*.
- Composer Claude Debussy is alleged to have remarked that “he knew of no one who had described the Paris of the 1830s as well as Puccini had in *La Bohème*.”
- Legendary conductor Arturo Toscanini led the premiere performance of *La Bohème*.
- The famous aria “Musetta’s Waltz” from Act 2 of *La Bohème* was adapted by songwriter Bobby Worth and recorded by singer Della Reese in the 1959 hit single “Don’t You Know.”
- The opera closes with the tragic death of Mimì, who succumbs to tuberculosis. Despite being a leading cause of death for much of human history, tuberculosis was for centuries associated with poetic and artistic qualities, and even romanticized in art and literature.



Daniele Pastin (Mimì). *La Bohème*, Manitoba Opera, 2014. Photo: R. Tinker.

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

April 5, 9, 11

Dress Rehearsal / Student Night: April 3, 2025

Centennial Concert Hall

Music composed by Giacomo Puccini

Libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa

Based on the novella *Scènes de la vie de bohème* (1851) by Henri Murger.

Approximately 2 hours 54 minutes

(including a 5-minute pause and two 20-minute intermissions)

Premiere Performance: Teatro Regio, Turin, February 1, 1896

Sung in Italian with projected English translations

Conducted by Tyrone Paterson

Directed by Anna Theodosakis

PRINCIPAL CAST

Mimi	Soprano	SUZANNE TAFFOT
Rodolfo	Tenor	ZACHARY RIOUX
Marcello	Baritone	HUGO LAPORTE
Musetta	Soprano	CHARLOTTE SIEGEL
Schaunard	Baritone	CLARENCE FRAZER
Colline	Bass-Baritone	ALEX HALLIDAY
Benoît/Alcindoro	Bass-Baritone	DAVID WATSON

MANITOBA OPERA CHORUS & CHILDREN'S CHORUS

WINNIPEG SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



INTRODUCTION & SYNOPSIS

INTRODUCING *LA BOHÈME*

Puccini's masterpiece embraces the verismo style with realistic characters in real-life situations - loyal friends, rocky relationships; passion, poverty, insecurity, and inspiration.

La Bohème is at its heart the story of a group of young people navigating the ups and downs of love and loss set against the backdrop of the crowded and class-divided 1830's Paris. United at first by an innocent joie de vivre, they have the sobering experience of confronting the uncertainties of life when tragedy shakes the foundations of their youthful optimism.



Eric Fennel (Rodolfo) and Danielle Pastin (Mimi), *La Bohème*, 2014. Manitoba Opera. Photo: R. Tinker.

SYNOPSIS

Place: Paris **Time:** Around 1830

ACT I.

Paris, Christmas Eve, c. 1830.

In a tiny attic in Paris, two friends, Marcello, a painter, and Rodolfo, a poet, try to stay warm by burning pages from Rodolfo's latest play. Soon, their friends arrive: Colline, a philosopher, and Schaunard, a musician who has just earned some money and brings food, firewood, and cash. The friends celebrate their small fortune, but the landlord, Benoît, interrupts to collect the overdue rent. They offer him wine, coax him into bragging about his romantic escapades, and then pretending to be outraged, kick him out without paying.

The group heads to a café to continue the celebration, but Rodolfo stays behind to finish an article. A little while later, Mimì, a neighbor, knocks on his door. Her candle has gone out, and she needs help. Mimì feels faint, so Rodolfo offers her wine and relights her candle. When she drops her key, they search for it together, but both of their candles go out. In the moonlight, they talk about their lives—Rodolfo shares his dreams, and Mimì tells him about her quiet life making embroidery. Drawn to each other, they leave together to join the others at the café.

ACT II.

The streets near the Café Momus are lively with vendors and children. Rodolfo buys Mimì a bonnet and introduces her to his friends. They all sit down for dinner, while a toy seller, Parpignol, walks by, surrounded by excited children.

Marcello's ex-girlfriend, Musetta, makes a dramatic entrance with her new companion,

THE PRODUCTION

an older, wealthy man named Alcindoro. Musetta wants Marcello's attention, so she sings a flirtatious waltz and pretends her shoe is hurting her. She sends Alcindoro off to buy new shoes and then reunites with Marcello. The group sneaks away with Musetta, leaving Alcindoro behind to pay the bill.

ACT III.

On a snowy morning outside Paris, Mimì searches for Marcello, who now lives with Musetta. She is upset and tells him that Rodolfo has become so jealous that she thinks they need to break up.

Rodolfo wakes up inside the tavern, and Mimì hides. When Marcello asks why he and Mimì are having problems, Rodolfo admits that he's afraid for her. Mimì is very sick, and their poor, difficult life is making her worse. Still, he loves her deeply. Mimì overhears this and steps forward, ready to say goodbye. As they talk, they remember the good times they've had together. Meanwhile, Marcello and Musetta have a heated argument and decide to part ways. Mimì and Rodolfo, however,

agree to stay together until spring.

ACT IV.

Months later, back in the attic, Rodolfo and Marcello are heartbroken, missing Mimì and Musetta. Colline and Schaunard bring a small meal, and the friends distract themselves with playful jokes and games.

Their fun ends abruptly when Musetta rushes in with terrible news: Mimì is downstairs, too weak to climb the stairs. Rodolfo runs to her, and they bring her upstairs to rest. Musetta sells her earrings to buy medicine, and Colline pawns his coat to get food.

Left alone for a moment, Rodolfo and Mimì reminisce about the early days of their love. Mimì becomes weaker and struggles to breathe. When the others return, Musetta gives her a muff to warm her hands and prays for her recovery. Quietly, Mimì passes away. As Schaunard realizes she is gone, Rodolfo runs to her, crying her name in despair.



THE PRINCIPAL ARTISTS & ROLES

*denotes Manitoba Opera debut



SUZANNE TAFFOT*
MIMI (a seamstress)

Canadian-Cameroonian soprano Suzanne Taffot has earned acclaim as Mimi in Puccini's *La Bohème* at Munich's Gärtnerplatztheater and venues in Shenzhen, Xiamen, and Kosice. Last season she debuted two world premieres: *Le Flambeau* by David Bontemps and *Yourcenar: une île de passions* by Marie-Claire Blais and Helen Dorion. At the 2022 International Competition of African Opera Voices, she won multiple awards, leading to performances at Opéra de Tours, Montpellier, and Toulon. A lawyer and founder of Herriot Attorneys, promoting equity and diversity, Taffot holds a music master's from the University of Montreal and is a Canadian bar-admitted attorney.



ZACHARY RIOUX*
RODOLFO (a poet)

Canadian tenor Zachary Rioux, praised as a “show-stopping tenor” (*Ludwig van Toronto*), is a member of the Bayerische Staatsoper Opera Studio in Munich. This season, his roles included the title role in *Max und die Superheld:Innen*, Parpignol (*La Bohème*), Gastone (*La traviata*), and Gherardo (*Gianni Schicchi*). A prizewinner at Neue Stimmen 2022, he earned a Talent Development Award, second prize at the Mario Lanza Competition, and Gold Medals at competitions in Berlin and Vienna. As a Resident Artist at the Academy of Vocal Arts, he performed as Rodolfo (*La Bohème*) and Lensky (*Eugene Onegin*).

THE PRINCIPAL ARTISTS & ROLES

*denotes Manitoba Opera debut



HUGO LAPORTE*
MARCELLO (a painter)

Canadian baritone Hugo Laporte, celebrated for his elegant singing, velvety timbre, and stage charisma, has won prestigious awards, including the Teatro alla Scala Prize (Belvedere Competition) and the Grand Prize at the OSM Competition. In 2023, he debuted at Teatro alla Scala as Hermann/Schlémil (*The Tales of Hoffmann*). With over 25 roles to his credit, notable performances include Figaro (*The Barber of Seville*), Count Almaviva (*The Marriage of Figaro*), Marcello (*La Bohème*), Escamillo (*Carmen*), and Lord Ashton (*Lucia di Lammermoor*). Laporte also champions new works, such as *Yourcenar, an Island of Passions, The Man Who Laughs, and Miguela*.



CHARLOTTE SIEGEL*
MUSETTA (a singer)

Charlotte Siegel is a soprano and singer/songwriter from Toronto. She is currently a member of the Canadian Opera Company's (COC) Ensemble Studio and made her debut as Second Lady in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, and as Manon in Ian Cusson's *Fantasma* for the COC. Charlotte was a Buffalo/Toronto District winner for the 2021 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and made CBC's 2021 list of "30 Hot Classical Musicians Under 30". During the pandemic she participated in Pacific Opera Victoria's online residency as part of their Civic Engagement Quartet. Upcoming COC credits include Musetta (*La Bohème*), Donna Elvira (*Don Giovanni*), Lead Hen/Innkeeper's Wife (*The Cunning Little Vixen*), and Handmaiden 1 (*Medea*).

She is a co-founder and co-director of the Toronto-based non-profit the Marigold Music Program, which aims to close the accessibility gap between marginalized youth and music education.

THE PRINCIPAL ARTISTS & ROLES

*denotes Manitoba Opera debut



CLARENCE FRAZER*
SCHAUNARD (a musician)

Canadian-Korean baritone Clarence Frazer, praised for his “full and powerful” voice (*Schmopera*), is an alumnus of the Canadian Opera Company’s Ensemble Studio and Calgary Opera’s McPhee Artist Development Program. This season in Winnipeg he joined soprano Tracy Dahl with Flipside Opera in *Love Languages: Songs & Pictures on Wolf’s Italienisches Liederbuch*. Also this season, Clarence returns to Vancouver Opera as the Steward in *Flight* and performs the role of Eadric in Opera Nuova’s world premiere of *Silence*. Recent roles include Papageno (*The Magic Flute*), Silvio (*Pagliacci*), Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*), and El Payador (*María de Buenos Aires*).



ALEX HALLIDAY*
COLLINE (a philosopher)

Bass-baritone Alexander Halliday, praised for his “beautiful balance between strapping and lyric” (*Globe and Mail*), is a rising talent from St. John’s, Newfoundland. This season he will be performing Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony with the Cathedral Bluffs Symphony, and covers Méphistophélès in the Canadian Opera Company’s new production of *Faust*. Recent performances include Rossini’s *Petite messe solennelle* and Handel’s *Messiah*. A graduate of Memorial University and the University of Toronto, Alex is also an alumnus of the Canadian Opera Company’s Ensemble Studio.

THE PRINCIPAL ARTISTS & ROLES



DAVID WATSON

BENOÎT (a landlord)

ALCINDORO (a state councillor)

David Watson's operatic career began here in Winnipeg when he appeared in Manitoba Opera's 1979 production of *La Traviata*. He has since performed on concert and operatic stages throughout Canada, including over 50 roles with Manitoba Opera.

THE ARTISTIC TEAM

*denotes Manitoba Opera debut



ANNA THEODOSAKIS*
DIRECTOR

Anna Theodosakis is a rising figure on the operatic scene, with critically acclaimed productions featuring “crisp and dynamic treatment” (*Opera Ramblings*) and “clean and uncluttered direction” (*Opera Canada*). Anna’s 2024/25 season includes *Don Giovanni* with Calgary Opera, *Così fan tutte* at the University of Toronto, and a return to Opera Theatre of Saint Louis as Resident Assistant Director.

She has directed across the country and is passionate about working with emerging artists. Anna teaches acting and dance for the University of Toronto’s Opera Division. She served as a sessional lecturer in Theater Techniques and Staging & Directing for the University of British Columbia. She has also

been an invited guest stage director and lecturer of acting, movement, and digital techniques with nine universities.

Anna holds a Bachelor of Music and Master of Music in Opera Performance from the University of British Columbia, as well as an Artistic Diploma in Operatic Stage Performance from the University of Toronto. During her tenure at U of T, Anna was the first student in the program’s history to direct a mainstage opera production.



TYRONE PATERSON
MUSIC ADVISOR & PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR

Canadian conductor Tyrone Paterson is proud to be Manitoba Opera’s (MOA) Music Advisor and Principal Conductor. He has led performances throughout Europe, the US, Asia, and with the majority of Canada’s opera companies.

Highlights include *Otello* (Germany); *Rigoletto* (Montreal); *Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci* (Edmonton); *Don Giovanni* (Hawaii); *Medea* (Il Teatro Greco, Italy); *Fidelio* (MOA); *Manon* (Calgary); *Salome* (MOA), *Turandot* (Vancouver); *Eugene Onegin* (Ottawa); *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Carolina); *Aïda* (Nashville); *Prince Igor* (National Theater of Moravia-Silesia); *La Traviata* and *Rigoletto* (Romania); *Tosca* (Austria); *Jenufa* (Hukvaldy Festival); *Blue Beard’s Castle* (Czech Republic);

The Magic Flute (Beijing); *Susannah* (MOA); concerts in San Remo (Italy) and Opera Cracow (Poland).

He previously served as Principal Conductor/Artistic Director for Opera Lyra Ottawa and as Resident Conductor for Calgary Opera.

THE COMPOSER



GIACOMO PUCCINI

Giacomo Puccini was born in Lucca, Italy, in 1858. Born into a long line of musicians and composers, Puccini was trained as an organist after studying music with his uncle. At

the age of 18, after hearing a performance of *Aida*, Puccini resolved to become an opera composer. He soon earned a diploma from the Institute of Music in Lucca, and later graduated with honours from the Milan conservatory. While in Milan, Puccini was surrounded by compositional geniuses: one of his instructors was Amilcare Ponchielli (composer of the opera *La Gioconda*). He and Ponchielli shared accommodations with Pietro Mascagni (composer of the opera *Cavalleria Rusticana*). In 1882, Puccini entered his first opera *Le villi* into a competition run by the publishing firm of Sonzogno. It didn't win, but it garnered the attention of the publisher Giulio Ricordi, with whom Puccini was to enjoy a lifelong association.

After several moderately successful operas, his first major international success was *Manon Lescaut*, which premiered in 1893 in Turin. After the success of this opera, he built himself a villa in a small town near Lucca. Music publisher Giulio Ricordi connected him with Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica, who would come to write the libretti for three of his greatest works: *La Bohème*, *Tosca* and *Madama Butterfly*. *La Bohème*, one of Puccini's most famous

works, premiered in 1896 and was not a great success when it was first produced. It has since become one of the most loved and performed operas in the world. *Tosca*, another one of Puccini's best-loved operas, premiered successfully in Rome in 1900.

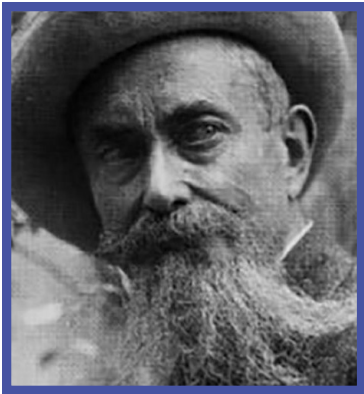
During a visit to London in 1900, Puccini saw David Belasco's one-act play *Madam Butterfly*, which served as the inspiration for his opera. *Madama Butterfly* premiered at La Scala in Milan in 1904.

There was a long break before his next premiere, partly due to a tragedy in his domestic life. In 1906, Puccini had begun living with a married woman, Elvira Gemignani, and was only able to marry her himself when her first husband died. Their marriage was not an easy one and eventually Elvira accused Puccini of having an affair with a servant girl. The tension in the household became intolerable and the girl died by suicide. A court case determined that she had not had an affair with Puccini and Elvira was jailed for five months. The resulting publicity caused Puccini to withdraw from the public eye for a time, and also to separate from his wife. They later reconciled, but their marriage was permanently damaged.

In 1910, Puccini composed *La Fanciulla del West* for the Metropolitan Opera in New York; his trio of one-act operas *Il Trittico* also premiered at the Met, in 1918. He died in 1924 of throat cancer before he could finish the final scene of his last opera, *Turandot*. The opera was eventually completed by Franco Alfano and premiered in 1926 at La Scala.

Article courtesy of Canadian Opera Company.

THE LIBRETTISTS



LUIGI ILLICA

Luigi Illica was an Italian librettist who wrote for Giacomo Puccini (usually with Giuseppe Giacosa), Pietro Mascagni, Alfredo Catalani, Umberto Giordano, Baron Alberto Franchetti and other important Italian composers.

His most famous opera libretti are those for *La Bohème*, *Tosca*, *Madama Butterfly* and *Andrea Chénier*.

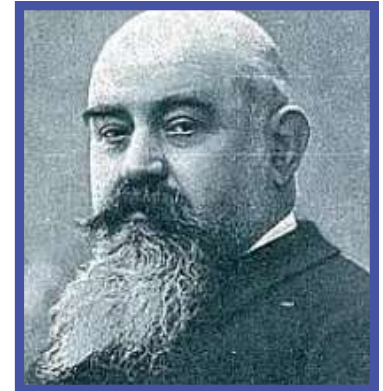
Illica was born at Castell'Arquato. His personal life sometimes imitated his libretti. The reason he is always photographed with his head slightly turned is because he lost his right ear in a duel over a woman. When silent films based on Illica's operas were made, his name appeared in large letters on advertisements because distributors could only guarantee that his stories would be used, and not that they would be accompanied by the music of the appropriate composer.

As a playwright of considerable quality, he is today remembered through one of Italy's oldest awards: the Luigi Illica International Prize which was founded in 1961, and goes to world famous opera singers, opera conductors, directors, and singers.

GIUSEPPE GIACOSA

Giuseppe Giacosa began his professional life, not as a writer, but as a lawyer. He graduated in law from Turin University and immediately joined his father's firm in Milan. He moved

permanently into the literary world, however, when his one-act verse comedy, *Una partita a scacchi*, became a popular success. From 1888-1894 Giacosa held the chair of literature and dramatic art at the Milan Conservatory. He collaborated with Luigi Illica on the libretti for *La Bohème*, *Tosca*, and *Madama Butterfly*. Illica provided the dialogue, which Giacosa crafted into verse.



WHAT IS A LIBRETTO?

Libretto means "little book" in Italian. It refers to the written text of an opera set to music by the composer. Today, we commonly refer to an opera as being "by" the composer of the music, but the text is a vital component and is normally written first. In earlier times it was often regarded as more important than the music, and it was common for audience members to purchase the libretto to read.

Early composers were usually contracted to set music to a pre-existing text. Only later did composers (such as Mozart and Verdi) work in close collaboration with their librettists. A few composers - notably Wagner - wrote their own texts.



MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS

O SOAVE FANCIULLA (Act I)

Rodolfo and Mimì sing to one another of the sudden and surprising connection they feel. Arm in arm, they depart to join Rodolfo's friends at Café Momus.

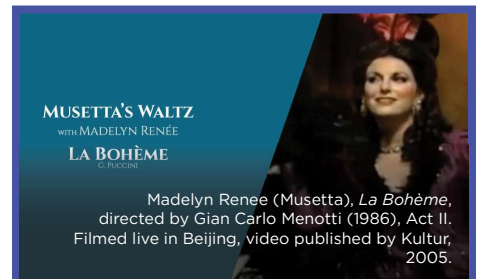
Watch Luciano Pavarotti (Rodolfo) and Fiamma Izzo d'Amico (Mimì) perform this famous duet (1986):
bit.ly/4iaSP3D



QUANDO M'EN VO (Act II)

Commonly called “Musetta’s Waltz,” “Quando m’en vo” is perhaps the most famous aria from *La Bohème*. To goad her on-again off-again lover Marcello to jealousy, Musetta sings about how she loves the attention she receives from people who think she’s beautiful.

Enjoy “Musetta’s Waltz” performed by Madelyn Renee:
<https://bit.ly/3EXnGSG>



VECCHIA ZIMARRA, SENTI (Act IV)

Preparing to pawn his favourite coat to buy medicine for the dying Mimì, Colline sings this song that can be seen as a farewell to youthful optimism, and a realization that things can never again be the way they once were.

Hear the aria sung by American bass-baritone Brandon Cedel, with the Canadian Opera Company: <https://bit.ly/41ofGmx>



LA VIE BOHÈME

Unlike many of Puccini's operas, *La Bohème* is named not for a girl, but for an almost mythical place – a time of life, a state of the heart.

We follow the lives of young people as they struggle to make ends meet, flirt, fall in love, and break up – until the end, when the friends gather round to take care of the dying Mimi.

It is such a slight story. The characters are ordinary, unimportant.

The action was more than something that could have happened: most of it actually had happened, not only in the life of Henri Murger, but a great deal of it also in the life of the composer who set Murger's novel (*Scènes de la vie de bohème*) to music.

The opera is taken from Henri Murger's *Scènes de la vie de bohème*, a semi-autobiographical novel about life in the Latin Quarter of Paris during the 1840s. Murger (1822–1861) was still in his 20s when he began to write a succession of satirical sketches based on his own experiences and serialized in an obscure magazine called *Le Corsaire*.

The character of Rodolphe in *Scènes* is a disarmingly frank self-portrait of Murger. Like Rodolfo in the opera, Rodolphe/Murger wrote for a hatmakers journal. Unlike the romantic youth in the opera, Murger's Rodolphe is prematurely bald and sports a comb-over.

Puccini poured into the opera some of his own memories of student days in Milan, when he shared a room with a baker's son named Pietro Mascagni (composer of *Cavalleria Rusticana*), and they pooled their pennies to buy the score of *Parsifal*, cooked beans in the only pot available – their washbasin – and marked a city map with areas to avoid because they might run into

creditors. Like Colline in the opera, Puccini even pawned his coat at one point (not to help a dying friend, but, allegedly, to take a young ballerina with an unreasonable appetite out to dinner).

Murger's novel is thoroughly entertaining, especially if we are familiar with the opera. It brims with cynical, trenchant observations on the folly and charm of these characters.

In his preface Murger wrote "Bohemia is a stage in artistic life; it is the preface to the Academy, the Hôtel Dieu, or the Morgue." Eventually, like Murger, most of his characters make their escape into the next stage of life – respectability.

At the end of the novel, Colline inherits money, marries a rich woman and devotes his attention to giving soirées and eating cake. Schaunard becomes a successful writer of popular songs. Marcello lands an exhibit of his paintings, sells one to an ex-lover of Musetta's, and moves to a better apartment. Rodolfo publishes his first book and launches a writing career. Even Musetta, the freest spirit of them all, settles down.

Adapted from Bohemia: A State of the Heart, written by Maureen Woodall, Pacific Opera Victoria (2018). Full article available online at pacificopera.ca



Eric Fennel (Rodolfo), Giles Tomkins (Colline), and Keith Phares (Marcello). *La Bohème*, Manitoba Opera 2014. Photo: R. Tinker

TUBERCULOSIS IN OPERA AND LITERATURE

During the 1830's, when *La Bohème* is set, tuberculosis was a common contagious disease. It was often called consumption. Consumption was so common its symptoms were often romanticized. The phrase "femme fatale" means, literally, fatal women or women destined to die. The term was coined during this time and came to also mean dangerous women. These fragile flowers with delicate health brought out the protector in men of the time. Women had few choices in life and often if they were unmarried, those choices were rife with illness, poverty, and death. Often they needed a male protector. Mimì appeals to Rodolfo because of her illness and her vulnerability. Mimì is a composite character based on the characters Mimì and Francine from Murger's novel (*Scènes de la vie de bohème*). In the novel, Mimì is a flirt and courtesan who falls in love with Rodolfo and leaves him for a wealthier man. Francine is a demure young woman dying from tuberculosis. She lives upstairs from the Bohemians. In the opera, the librettists Giacosa and Illica take the best of both characters and create Mimì, the consumptive seamstress. Mimì is described as beautiful with "pale cheeks red with their flush, pale skin, her consumptive cough, and her wasted frame." All of these characteristics were evidence of her condition. The first time Rodolfo and Mimì meet he knows she is ill and he fears her illness, both because of the risk of his poverty to her health and of contracting the disease from her. His fears, of course, were not unfounded, but what is tuberculosis?



La Bohème, Manitoba Opera 2014. Photo: R. Tinker

Tuberculosis is an infectious disease caused by the bacteria *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. The disease is highly contagious and is contracted by breathing in infected sputum or drinking infected milk (this is very uncommon). Tuberculosis primarily affects the lungs, although as the condition advances, it can affect other organs, the brain and the spine being most common. An infected person may not have evident symptoms because the immune system encases the bacteria in scar tissue and prevents them from spreading. Should old age or other factors (like illness, hunger or exposure) weaken the immune system, symptoms of the disease present themselves. Symptoms include night sweats, fever, fatigue, and weight loss. Eventually, the infected individual infected will cough up blood-flecked sputum caused by the eroding blood vessels of the lung. At the final stages of the disease, these blood vessels rupture and the patient dies in extreme pain.

Tuberculosis is credited with killing a billion people in the last 200 years and is responsible for the largest number of deaths in history. In 1945, streptomycin, a new antibiotic, was discovered and TB all but disappeared in the West. Incidences are on the rise again throughout the world, however, and more frighteningly, new strains which are resistant to regular course antibiotics are becoming more common.

Article written by Alexis Hamilton and re-published with the permission of Portland Opera.

ACTIVITY #1 USING THE FIVE C'S

HAVE YOUR STUDENTS ANALYZE THE OPERA AS DRAMA

CHARACTERS

Are they interesting? Believable? Are their actions, words, thoughts consistent?

CONFLICT

What conflicts are established? How are they resolved?

CLIMAX

To what climax does the conflict lead?

CONCLUSION

How well does the conclusion work? Is it consistent? Satisfying? Believable?

CONTEXT

What are the historical, physical, and emotional settings? Sets and costumes?

DIRECTIONS

- Give students the synopsis to read and have them re-tell the story after they have read it.
- Ask comprehensive questions.
- Present and discuss the composer and librettists.
- Listen to excerpts from the opera. Watch a video of the opera. Have students identify and recognize recurring themes.
- Discuss the historical background, emphasizing the visual and performing arts and history-social science frameworks. Discuss the results of certain events. Whom did they affect? How? Why? Did any changes occur as a result?
- Review the glossary of terms.
- Have the students watch for references to themes in the opera in their everyday lives. The internet, radio, TV, magazines, and movies often refer back to classics.

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 1.2.1; 2.1.2; 5.2.2

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-M2; DR-C1; DR-R3

Music Curriculum Connections: M-M2; M-C2; M-R1

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Curriculum Connections to the Manitoba Curriculum Frameworks for Grade 9 - 12 are provided below each activity. For a more in-depth look at the connections, view our Manitoba Curriculum Connections documents at <http://mbopera.ca/school-programs/study-guides/>

ACTIVITY #2 CREATE A PRODUCTION

- Choose a time and place to set your production.
- Have the students design a poster for *La Bohème* including such details as the date, the time, and the people involved.
- Have them draw a set for a production of the opera.
- They might also sketch a costume, wig, and makeup for a character in *La Bohème*.
- Have the students write a media release about *La Bohème* including the date, the time, the people involved, and why it would be exciting or fun to attend.
- Have the students create an ad for the opera. Include whatever you feel is the biggest “selling point” of the opera - what makes it exciting? Why should people come to see it?

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 2.3.5; 2.3.4; 4.1.2

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-C2; DR-C3

Music Curriculum Connections: M-C2; M-C3

ACTIVITY #3 A REVIEW

STEP 1 THINK-GROUP-SHARE

Individually, students will write, in point-form, the answers to the following questions:

- What did you like about the opera? What did you dislike?
- What did you think about the sets, props, and costumes?
- If you were the stage director, would you have done something differently? Why?
- What were you expecting? Did it live up to your expectations?
- What did you think of the singers' portrayal of their characters?

Break the students into groups to discuss their feelings and reactions to the production. Have the students write on poster papers their answers or important points of their discussion. Encourage the students to go beyond the questions posed.

STEP 2 CLASS DISCUSSION

Have the whole class examine the poster papers and discuss the different ideas from each group.

STEP 3 OUTLINING YOUR REVIEW

Go over the essential aspects of a review including a clearly stated purpose, a coherent comparison/contrast organizational pattern, a summary paragraph capturing the interest of the reader, precise nouns, and revision for consistency of ideas. You might give your students a few samples of reviews for arts events – or ask them to bring in some reviews they find themselves. Have the students fill out the review outline, then complete a rough draft.

- Purpose (why are you writing this and who is your audience?)
- Paragraph 2 (compare and contrast things you liked or didn't like)
- Plot Synopsis (including who sang what role, etc.)
- Paragraph 3 (compare and contrast things you liked or didn't like)
- Paragraph 1 (compare and contrast things you liked or didn't like)
- Summary/Closing Paragraph

STEP 4 PEER CONFERENCING

Students will exchange reviews to critique and edit. Encourage the students to focus on effective coordination of ideas in sentences and the correct use of grammar and punctuation.

STEP 5 CREATING THE FINAL DRAFT

Have students make the appropriate adjustments to their reviews. You could also have the students type the pieces and organize them into a newspaper.

Language Arts Curriculum Connections:

1.1.1; 1.1.2; 1.2.2; 3.1.3; 3.3.1; 4.1.3; 4.3.1; 4.3.2; 4.3.3; 4.4.1; 4.2.2; 5.2.1; 5.1.1

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-R1; DR-R2; DR-R3; DR-R4

Music Curriculum Connections: M-R1; M-R2; M-R3; M-R4

ACTIVITY #4 ACT OUT THE STORY

Have students consider the characters and the role they play in the story. Choose one of the following:

MIMÌ / RODOLFO / MARCELLO / MUSETTA / SCHAUNARD / COLLINE

If you were going to play this character, you would have to discover, create, and imagine background, personality, and physical qualities. Some clues are provided in the story and the music and some you need to make up yourself.

**PRETEND YOU ARE THAT CHARACTER
AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:**

- What motivates you? How does this affect your actions? What obstacles stand in your way?
- What steps in the opera do you take to achieve your objectives? What are the results?
- What obstacles are beyond your control (laws, social status, others' actions)?
- What are your (character's) greatest strengths? Greatest weaknesses?
- What is your relationship to the other characters?
- How is your character's personality expressed through the music of the opera?
- Can you think of a modern-day character who has similar characteristics and traits?
- If your character were alive today, how would s/he be more or less successful?
- What different steps would s/he take to achieve an objective?

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 1.1.1; 2.1.2; 3.3.2

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-M1; DR-M2; DR-M3

ACTIVITY #5 WRITE A LETTER

Have the students choose a moment in the story and have one character write a letter to another. Explore how they would be feeling about the events of the day.

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 1.1.2; 1.1.3; 2.3.5; 4.2.2; 4.1.2; 4.1.3; 5.2.2

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-R3

ACTIVITY #6 CAST *LA BOHÈME*

Have the students cast modern-day singers or actors as the performers in *La Bohème*. Who did you choose? What are their costumes like? What did you base your decisions on?

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 2.3.1; 2.2.1; 2.2.2; 4.1.2; 5.2.2

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-M1; DR-C3; DR-R3

Music Curriculum Connections: M-C2; M-R4

ACTIVITY #7 RESEARCH AND REPORT

Have the students study the history and politics of Italy at the time that Puccini was writing *La Bohème*. What authors were popular? What scientific discoveries were being made? How did the social and political life in Italy compare to that in Canada at the time?

Language Arts Curriculum Connections:

2.2.1; 2.2.2; 3.3.1; 3.3.3; 3.2.2; 3.2.3; 4.3.1; 4.3.2; 4.3.3; 4.2.2; 4.2.3; 5.2.2

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-C2

Music Curriculum Connections: M-C2

ACTIVITY #8 *LA BOHÈME* MOOD BOARD

Often before artists and designers create their work, they make a mood board to set the tone for the piece. This is usually a poster-sized piece of paper covered in images and words, usually from the pages of magazines and newspapers, that together communicates the complex mood of the piece in a way that words can't. It's the same as making a collage, except a mood board is for the purpose of communicating a focused concept.

Have your students go through a stack of old magazines and newspapers to create a mood board for *La Bohème*. They can create one each or work together on a large one for the class. Consider elements like colours, textures, phrases, faces, patterns, and images that represent the opera.

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 2.3.5; 2.3.4; 2.2.3; 4.1.1; 4.1.2; 4.1.3; 4.4.1; 5.1.1

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-M3; DR-R3

Music Curriculum Connections: M-R2

ACTIVITY #9 MUSICAL INTERPRETATION OF LITERATURE**STEP 1 PREPARE A MUSICAL OUTLINE**

Working in small groups, have your students choose a play, novel, or story that they've read and think about how they'd go about adapting it into an opera. Have them write out an outline and try to structure the beginnings of the opera. Which parts of the drama would be highlighted with which types of music? Would they have a large chorus to back up the principal singers or would the opera be more intimate? Which singing voices (soprano, baritone, tenor, etc.) would best suit each character?

STEP 2 COMPOSE AND PERFORM AN OVERTURE

How could the elements of music (ie., rhythm, pitch, dynamics, etc.) be used to communicate the mood of the piece within the overture? Which instruments would be used? Allow students some time to work on composing their overture based on their answers to these questions. Students can then perform their overture for the class either as a composed and rehearsed piece or improvised. Alternatively, they may choose to present their overture by describing the characteristics of the elements of the music within their piece.

Language Arts Curriculum Connections:

1.1.2; 2.3.5; 2.2.1; 3.1.2; 3.1.3; 4.1.2; 4.4.3; 4.4.2; 4.2.5; 5.1.1; 5.1.2; 5;1;4

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-CR2; DR-M1; DR-M2

Music Curriculum Connections: M-CR2; M-CR3; M-M3

ACTIVITY #10 ACTIVE LISTENING

Play the first few minutes of *La Bohème*. Ask your students to listen closely to the music and jot down their thoughts, feelings, and first impressions. Then have your students share their reactions with the classroom. Ask them to listen again and pay close attention to the elements of music (rhythm, pitch, dynamics, etc.) then explore questions such as the following:

- What are the instruments used to make the music?
- How does this music make me feel?
- What is the mood of the piece?
- What type of emotions do the singers bring forth?
- Does the music have a steady beat or pulse?
- What is the size of the ensemble?
- What do the singing voices tell us about those characters?

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 1.1.1; 1.1.2; 1.2.2; 2.3.1; 2.2.3; 4.4.3; 5.2.1

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-R1

Music Curriculum Connections: M-R2

ACTIVITY #11 OPERA POP QUIZ

- 1 _____ A theatrical production incorporating both vocal and instrumental music, drama, and sometimes dance.
- 2 _____ The lowest male vocal range.
- 3 _____ An instrument introduction to an opera.
- 4 _____ The area where the orchestra is seated.
- 5 _____ Considered the first opera.
- 6 _____ A song for solo voice in an opera.
- 7 _____ The highest female vocal range.
- 8 _____ A song for two voices.
- 9 _____ The lowest female vocal range.
- 10 _____ The Italian word meaning “little book.”
- 11 _____ The middle male vocal range.
- 12 _____ The person who is in charge of all the action on stage.

ACTIVITY #12 *LA BOHÈME* POP QUIZ

- 1 Who is the composer? _____
- 2 Who wrote the libretto? _____
- 3 In what year did the premiere performance take place? _____
- 4 In what language is the opera performed? _____
- 5 Where did the opera premiere? _____
- 6 Where is the opera set? _____
- 7 The role of Mimi is sung by what voice part? _____
- 8 The role of Rodolfo is sung by what voice part? _____
- 9 What does Mimi lose when she meets Rodolfo? _____
- 10 What is the name of the café the friends frequent? _____
- 11 What does Colline pawn to buy medicine for Mimi? _____
- 12 From what illness does Mimi suffer? _____

ANSWER KEY POP QUIZ #11 & #12

OPERA

1. Opera
2. Bass
3. Overture
4. Orchestra Pit or “The Pit”
5. Daphne
6. Aria
7. Soprano
8. Duet
9. Contralto
10. Libretto
11. Baritone
12. Stage Director

LA BOHÈME

1. Giacomo Puccini
2. Luigi Illica & Giuseppe Giacosa
3. 1896
4. Italian
5. Teatro Regio
6. Paris
7. Soprano
8. Tenor
9. Her key
10. Café Momus
11. Coat
12. Tuberculosis

Manitoba Opera would be pleased to receive a copy of any work related to this opera produced by your students. Please forward to:

Scott Miller

Education and Community Engagement Coordinator
Manitoba Opera, 1060-555 Main St., Winnipeg, MB R3B 1C3

or
smiller@mbopera.ca

WINNIPEG PUBLIC LIBRARY

BOOKS

Opera : the definitive illustrated story

Riding, Alan.
New York, NY : DK, 2022.
Call Number:
782.1 RIDING 2022

The lives and times of the great composers

Steen, Michael.
Thriplow, Cambridge : Icon Books, 2003.
Call Number:
780.922 STE

ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

Puccini: *La Bohème*

[electronic resource]
Carreras, José.
[United States] : Universal Classics & Jazz : Made available through hoopla, 1994.
Call Number: STREAMING

CDS

La Bohème *[sound recording]*

Puccini, Giacomo, 1858-1924.
Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra ; Herbert von Karajan, conductor.
London, 1973.
Call Number:
CD OPERA PUCCINI BOH Scores

***La Bohème* [music] / : an opera in four acts**

Puccini, Giacomo, 1858-1924.
New York : G. Schirmer, [1954]
Call Number:
SCORE 782.1 PUC

Rent [music] : movie vocal selections

Larson, Jonathan.
[London] : EMI Music Publishing, [2006]
Call Number:
SCORE 782.140263 LARSON 2006

MANITOBA OPERA

BOOKS

Famous Puccini Operas

Spike Hughes

The Complete Operas of Puccini

Charles Osborne

The Complete Operas of Puccini

Charles Osborne

The Complete Guide to *La Bohème*

Rebecca Knaust

CDS

La Bohème

Rome Opera Orchestra and Chorus Featuring Anna Moffo, Richard Tucket, Mary Costa, Robert Merrill, Giorgio Tozzi, Philip Maero

La Bohème

Orchestra e coro dell'Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Rome Featuring Renata Tebaldi, Carlo Bergonzi, Ettore Bastianini

La Bohème

Berliner Philharmoniker
Featuring Freni, Pavorotti, Harwood, Panerai, Maffeo, Ghiauro

If you need recommendations for additional resources, contact:

Scott Miller, Education & Community Engagement
Coordinator
smiller@mbopera.ca

STUDENT NIGHT

EDUCATE THROUGH LIVE EXPERIENCE

Give your students the opportunity to experience the timeless art form of opera through Manitoba Opera's Student Night at the Opera.

Student Night at the Opera occurs at the final dress rehearsal before Opening Night and is an opportunity for students to experience a fully staged professional opera production at a greatly reduced price.



STUDENT NIGHT FOR *LA BOHÈME* THURSDAY, APRIL 3, 7:30 PM

Tickets: \$15

GROUP TICKETS K-12 schools, home schools, or youth groups.

INDIVIDUAL TICKETS Full-time post-secondary students (must provide valid student ID).

All performances, including the dress rehearsals, take place at the Centennial Concert Hall.

OPERA CLASS

Recommended for Grades 3-6

A FREE CLASSROOM WORKSHOP LED BY A PROFESSIONALLY TRAINED OPERA SINGER

Bring an opera singer to your classroom! Students will participate in hands-on learning activities which explore storytelling through music and experience the power of live operatic singing.

Opera Class connects to all four essential learning areas of the K-8 Manitoba Music curriculum framework.

FREE OF CHARGE | **LENGTH:** 45 minutes
MAXIMUM # OF STUDENTS PER WORKSHOP: 30



TO BOOK: Scott Miller, Education & Community Engagement Coordinator
204-942-7470 | smiller@mbopera.ca

OPERA IN A TRUNK

Recommended for grades K-6

Opera Trunks are a simple, fun, and informative way to introduce your students to the world of opera.

Each trunk is filled with costumes, props, activities, books, DVDs, CDs, and a study guide that will bring opera to life for your students.

Free of Charge | Can be borrowed for three weeks at a time



OPERA TRUNKS

HANSEL AND GRETEL

Humperdinck

Based on the classic Brothers Grimm fairy tale, Humperdinck's musical retelling of the story of two mischievous children who discover a delicious gingerbread house hiding a wicked secret combines fantasy, adventure, catchy folk-type songs, and beautiful music.



THE DAUGHTER OF THE REGIMENT

Donizetti

A feisty orphaned tomboy raised by French soldiers must convince her "fathers" to let her marry a peasant. A comedy with a happy ending, featuring vocal acrobatics such as the show-stopping "Ah! Mes amis" ("Ah! My friends").

CARMEN

Bizet

Music that pulsates with the spirit of Spain, including many opera favourites such as the famous Habanera, and the rousing Toreador Song.

THE MAGIC FLUTE

Mozart

A fanciful fairytale about a prince out to win his princess with the help of a merry bird catcher.

AIDA

Verdi

The grandest of grand operas, *Aida* is an epic love story about an Ethiopian princess who longs to be with Radames, leader of the Egyptian army that conquered her homeland.

LA BOHÈME

Puccini

One of the most romantic operas of all time, a coming-of-age story about love and loss in the Latin Quarter of Paris in the 1830s.

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ABOUT MANITOBA OPERA

Manitoba Opera was founded in 1969 by a group of individuals dedicated to presenting the great works of opera to Manitoba audiences. Manitoba Opera is the province's only full-time professional opera company. The company attracts internationally renowned artists, highlights the best local talent, and features by the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra.

CHORUS

The Manitoba Opera Chorus, under the direction of Chorus Master Tadeusz Biernacki, is hailed for their excellent singing and acting abilities. The chorus boasts a core of skilled singers who give generously of their time and talents. Some are voice majors at university, a few are singing teachers, but most work in jobs that aren't music related.

STAFF

Tadeusz Biernacki

Chorus Master & Assistant Music Director

Evan Maydaniuk

Director of Development

Michael Blais

Director of Operations

Elizabeth Miller

Annual Giving Manager

Bethany Bunko

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WORKS CONSULTED

This study guide was compiled accumulatively and includes information from the following sources accessed since 2000:

BehindTheNames.com
Bellevue University
The Billboard Illustrated Encyclopedia of Opera
britannica.com
The Canadian Opera Company
cia.gov
ClassicalMusic.about.com
Dmitry Murashev's Opera Site libretti & information
Encyclopedia of Manitoba
Encyclopedia of the Opera by David Ewen
Fort Worth Opera Study Guide
GradeSaver.com
Interlude
La Scena
Lyric Opera of Kansas City
Manitoba Archives
Metropolitan Opera
musicwithease.com
Music.MSN.com
New York City Opera
The New York Times
Opera America Learning Centre
Operabase
operabuffa.com
Opera Anecdotes
Opera Columbus Study Guide
Opera News
Opera Offstage
Operas Every Child Should Know
Opera Lyra Ottawa Study Guide
Opera Today
Orchestra London Study Guide
Pacific Opera
San Diego Opera Study Guide
San Francisco Opera Guild Study Guide
schubincafe.com
A Season of Opera
Skeletons from the Opera Closet
TheBiography.us
TheGuardian.com
timelines.com
Tulsa Opera Study Guide
University of Chicago Press
University of Manitoba
University of Texas
University of Waterloo
Rimrock Study Guide
Virginia Opera Study Guide
The Washington Post
Wikipedia
The World's Great Operas