

La Bohème

GIACOMO PUCCINI | 1896

SUNG IN ITALIAN
APPROXIMATE RUNNING TIME: 120 minutes

One can hardly remain untouched as the dramatic story of Mimi unfolds. This is, by far, Puccini's more heart-breaking opera, with such a pathos-rich music making it a masterpiece that can also be easily enjoyed by neophytes.

Heartened by the reception of his previous "Manon Lescaut", Puccini keeps up his partnership with Giuseppe Giacosa with whom he works on the adaptation of French Henri Murger's "La Vie de Boème". Centred on the evergreen topic of the impossible love, Puccini writes about the carelessness and the creativity of the Parisian artistic scene, the hard life of the working class, and the middle-class permanent dissatisfaction, simultaneously analysing the ability to enjoy small things as opposed to the general harshness of the time. Moving, heartbreaking as well as brilliant and lively at the same time, Boehme's popularity is steady despite receiving mixed reviews upon its first staging on 1st February 1896.



Roberto Alagna and Angela Gheorghiu
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MAIN CHARACTERS

Mimi, seamstress (soprano)
Rodolfo, poet (tenor)
Marcello, painter (baritone)
Musetta, singer (soprano)
Colline, philosopher (basso)
Schaunard, musicians (baritone)

THE PLOT

When young seamstress Mimi meets Poet Rodolfo in the squalid attic, situated in the Latin Quarter, where he lives with some students and colleagues, it's love at first sight. Mimi's delicate and sickly physical condition and Rodolfo's poverty hinder their love and eventually force them into abandoning their bohemian lifestyle and to part. The two lovers will get back together only upon Mimi's death.

Act 1

On Christmas'night, Marcello and his friends leave Rodolfo alone at home working on his opera. While the lots are away, Mimi gets in the attic asking for a candle and the two instantly fall in love with each other. They later join their friends at the café Momus.

Act 2

After reaching the festive Café, Rodolfo introduces Mimi to his friends but the happy gathering is interrupted by the arrival of Marcello's former mistress Musetta who, despite marrying a rich bourgeois, is still in love with Marcello. The group manages to get rid of the hideous man and Musetta and Marcello have time to get together and start a relationship.

Act 3

Both couples' relationships are quite volatile and tormented but Musetta and Marcello's continuous arguing actually strengthens their passion whereas Rodolfo's jealousy smothers Mimi, who is already weakened by poverty and tuberculosis. Rodolfo understands that, in order for the young girl to pull through, they need to break their relationship apart, however, winter is kicking in and since neither of them would survive in the street they decide to stick together until spring arrives.

Act 4

Some months later, Marcello and Rodolfo are sitting in the flat crying over their past loves when Musetta comes in to tell them Mimi is about to die. Selling all their belongings turns out to be useless and they don't manage to rise up enough to buy the medication to save Mimi, which ultimately dies surrounded by the affection and love of her friends and Rodolfo.

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reservation@music-opera.com

+33(0)1 53 59 39 29

16 rue Bleue – 75009 PARIS - France