

**PUCCINI'S TIMELESS STORY OF LOVE AMONG YOUNG ARTISTS IN PARIS** can stake its claim as the world's most popular opera. With all the joy and sadness of romance, with comedy and tragedy, with scenes ranging from the intimate to the grand, *La Bohème* depicts the full scope of human experience: wealth and poverty, art and commerce, deception and devotion. But at the center of it are the small, often subtle, personal moments that make up our everyday lives.

In *La Bohème*, students will meet some of the most famous characters in opera—including Rodolfo, the writer; Marcello, the painter; delicate, sensitive Mimì; and brassy, seductive Musetta. Puccini's musical portrayal of the Parisian world of garrets, cafés, and nights of ribaldry remains vivid more than a century after it was created, and his depictions ring true to this day.

This guide is designed to help students appreciate both the sentiment and the craft of *La Bohème*. With a variety of activities aimed at enhancing the experience of the Met's *Live in HD* transmission, the guide will help young people connect not only with Puccini's characters, setting, and music, but also discover some of the tricks of the composer's trade.

Production a gift of Mrs. Donald D. Harrington

Revival a gift of Rolex

## THE WORK *LA BOHÈME*

An opera in four acts, sung in Italian

Music by Giacomo Puccini

Libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica, based on the novel *Scènes de la Vie de Bohème* by Henri Murger

First performed on February 1, 1896 in Turin, Italy

## PRODUCTION

Stefano Ranzani, Conductor

Franco Zeffirelli, Production

Peter J. Hall, Costume Designer

Gil Wechsler, Lighting Designer

## STARRING

(in order of vocal appearance)

**Massimo Cavalletti**

MARCELLO (baritone)

**Vittorio Grigolo**

RODOLFO (tenor)

**Oren Gradus**

COLLINE (bass)

**Patrick Carfizzi**

SCHAUNARD (baritone)

**Donald Maxwell**

BENOIT/ALCINDORO (bass)

**Anita Hartig**

MIMÌ (soprano)

**Susanna Phillips**

MUSETTA (soprano)



HARTIG



GRIGOLO



PHILLIPS



CAVALETTI

The guide includes four types of activities. Reproducible student resources for the activities are available at the back of this guide.

**CLASSROOM ACTIVITY:**

a full-length activity, designed to support your ongoing curriculum

**MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS:**

opportunities to focus on notable moments in *La Bohème* to enhance familiarity with the work

**PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES:**

to be used during *The Met: Live in HD* transmission, calling attention to specific aspects of this production

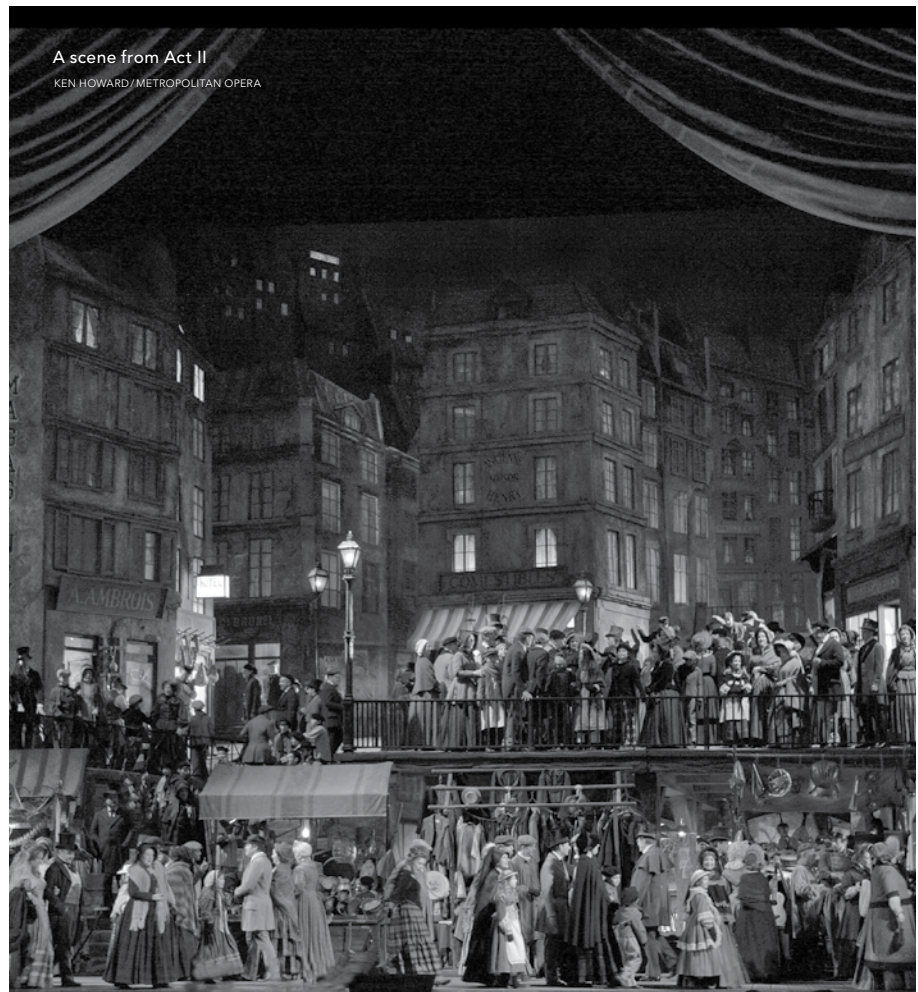
**POST-SHOW DISCUSSION:**

a wrap-up activity, integrating the *Live in HD* experience into students' wider views of the performing arts and humanities

The activities in this guide address several aspects of *La Bohème*:

- Puccini's use of vocal and instrumental music to depict his central characters and their relationships
- The recurrence of musical themes in the opera
- The opera as a unified work of art, involving a wide range of creative decisions by the composer, the librettists, and the artists of the Metropolitan Opera

The guide is intended to cultivate students' interest in *La Bohème* whether or not they have any prior acquaintance with opera. It includes activities for students with a wide range of musical backgrounds, seeking to encourage them to think about opera—and the performing arts in general—as a medium of entertainment and as creative expression.



**ACT I** *Christmas Eve, in a tiny room at the top of a house in Paris's Latin Quarter.* The poet Rodolfo and the painter Marcello feed the stove with pages from Rodolfo's latest drama, just to stay warm. Their two other roommates arrive: Colline, a philosopher, and the musician Schaunard, who brings food, fuel, and a bit of money—just in time for the landlord, Benoit, to come ask for the rent. But instead of paying, the four get the old man drunk enough to tell tales of his flirtations, then they throw him out, accusing him of cheating on his wife.

All but Rodolfo head off to the Café Momus. He wants some time to write. But before he gets started, a pretty neighbor, Mimi, knocks at the door. The draft in the stairway has blown out her candle. Mimi feels faint and stumbles. Rodolfo rouses her with a glass of wine, then helps her to the door and relights her candle. She realizes she doesn't have her key and must have dropped it when she fainted. As Rodolfo and Mimi look for it, both their candles are extinguished. Rodolfo finds the key—and slips it into his pocket. Then he takes Mimi's cold hands and tells her of his dreams. She responds by talking about her life and how she sits in her own room, waiting for the spring. Rodolfo's friends are heard calling from the street, asking him to join them. Happy to have found each other, Mimi and Rodolfo set out for the Café Momus, arm in arm.

**ACT II** *Café Momus and the surrounding streets.* In the crowded streets around the café, vendors are selling their wares. Schaunard is inspecting musical instruments and Colline old books, while Marcello flirts with passing girls. Rodolfo stops to buy Mimi a bonnet. Colline and Schaunard complain about the crowds. Children run by, chasing a man selling toys. Seated at last, the friends tease each other, toast, and chat about love. Marcello's former girlfriend, Musetta, makes a grand entrance with



## VOICE TYPE

Since the early 19th century, singing voices have usually been classified in six basic types, three male and three female, according to their range:

### SOPRANO

the highest-pitched type of human voice, normally possessed only by women and boys

### MEZZO-SOPRANO

the female voice whose range lies between the soprano and the contralto (Italian “mezzo” = middle, medium)

### CONTRALTO

the lowest female voice, also called an alto

### COUNTERTENOR

a male singing voice whose vocal range is equivalent to that of a contralto, mezzo-soprano, or (less frequently) a soprano, usually through use of falsetto

### TENOR

the highest naturally occurring voice type in adult males

### BARITONE

the male voice lying below the tenor and above the bass

### BASS

the lowest male voice

her new suitor, a rich old man named Alcindoro. Musetta flirts with Marcello. When the embarrassed Alcindoro tries to stop her, she sends him to buy her a new pair of shoes, then promptly hooks up with Marcello. The bill arrives and Musetta leaves it for Alcindoro to pay. A military guard marches by and the crowd, including Rodolfo, Mimì, and their friends, falls in behind.

**ACT III** *A tavern at the gates of Paris.* On a snowy morning a few weeks later, Mimì comes to a tavern at the gates of the city, looking for Marcello, who lives there with Musetta. Marcello comes out to meet her, but she won't go in, because Rodolfo is inside too. Mimì says Rodolfo's jealousy has become unbearable: they need to break up. She is coughing badly. Marcello sees Rodolfo coming over and Mimì pretends to leave but hides instead. Now Rodolfo tells Marcello he needs to break up with Mimì. He says he's bored with her, but before long admits that he's worried his freezing apartment is making her sicker than ever. He blames himself for Mimì's illness. Mimì, who has overheard it all, comes forward and says goodbye to Rodolfo. Meanwhile Marcello gets into a fight with Musetta over her flirtatious behavior and they part. But Mimì and Rodolfo, still plainly and painfully in love, decide to stay together at least until spring.

**ACT IV** *Rodolfo's apartment in the Latin Quarter.* Months have passed, and Rodolfo and Mimì are separated. He and Marcello are back in their old apartment, trying to work, talking about their ex-girlfriends as if they didn't care. Colline and Schaunard come in with a meager dinner, and the four pretend to feast like nobles, dance, and stage a mock duel. Their game is cut short when Musetta rushes in, followed by Mimì, who is by now seriously ill. The men prepare a bed. Marcello and Musetta go off to buy a muff to keep Mimì's hands warm. Colline decides to pawn his old overcoat for money to help her and leaves with Schaunard. Alone at last with Mimì, Rodolfo produces the bonnet he bought her by the Café Momus. The others return, bringing the muff and a bit to drink. They have summoned a doctor as well. Mimì seems to fall asleep, but Schaunard notices the sad truth: she has died. The opera ends with Rodolfo's cry of grief.

## WHO'S WHO IN LA BOHÈME

CHARACTER		PRONUNCIATION	VOICE TYPE	THE LOWDOWN
Rodolfo	A poor young writer	row-DOLL-foe	tenor	Rodolfo falls head over heels for Mimì, but jealousy trips him up.
Mimì	A poor young seamstress	mee-MEE	soprano	Mimì is a quiet young woman suffering from tuberculosis.
Marcello	A poor young painter	mar-CHELL-o	baritone	Rodolfo's friend and roommate, Marcello loves Musetta but her flirting drives him away.
Musetta	A party girl	moo-ZETT-ah	soprano	Musetta may just want to have fun, but deep down she's generous and kind.
Alcindoro	A rich old man	ahl-chin-DOE-row	bass	Alcindoro is the typical old fool who'll buy anything if his girlfriend agrees to stick around.
Colline	A would-be philosopher	col-LEAN-nay	bass	Rodolfo's friend and roommate
Schaunard	A musician	show-NARR	baritone	Rodolfo's friend and roommate
Benoit	A landlord	ben-WAH	bass	An elderly man who likes to drink and boast about his flirtations

## Getting to Know Her—and Him: Assessing Two Characters in *La Bohème*

### IN PREPARATION

For this activity, students will need the reproducible resources available at the back of this guide as well as the audio selections from *La Bohème* available online or on the accompanying CD.

### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Language Arts (Character development)

Music (Composition and ear-training)

Social Sciences (Psychology)

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To explore the creation of a character, including the choices a composer or librettist makes in introducing that character to the audience
- To identify some of Puccini's specific musical choices and the compositional devices at his disposal
- To practice critical listening skills, including paying distinct attention to different characteristics of the same piece of music
- To prompt curiosity about the Met's approach to this opera

Six characters feature prominently in *La Bohème*—four men, roommates in a Paris garret, and two women, the on-and-off girlfriends of two of the men. The plot is simple: The two couples fall (or have fallen) in love, out of love, and back in love again until, at the end, one of the women dies. Within this simple scenario, Puccini depicts personalities and interpersonal relationships in intricate detail. This activity offers students guidance in examining Puccini's musical craftsmanship as they meet Rodolfo, the artist, and Mimì, his lovely but sickly girlfriend—and as Rodolfo and Mimì meet each other for the first time. Students will:

- listen closely to two related arias
- consider the implications of Puccini's choices of tone, tempo, dynamics, and orchestration
- independently assess the personalities of two characters
- try their hand at creating their own character introductions in prose

### STEPS

When Rodolfo and Mimì meet, in the middle of *La Bohème*'s first act, each behaves “in character” and as the conventions of the time would have expected them to. As often happens in real life, time passes before either understands the signs that, upon reflection, were there from the start. Audience members watching their story may have a similar experience—at last, in Act III, understanding the implications of something a character said or did earlier in the opera. This activity invites students to listen closely to Rodolfo and Mimì's first meeting. By tackling it in “slow motion,” so to speak, they can determine exactly how Puccini's introductory arias manage to convey so much information about the characters.

### STEP 1: GETTING TO KNOW YOU

#### COMMON CORE CONNECTION

#### SPEAKING AND LISTENING: Comprehension and Collaboration

Students will effectively engage in collaborative discussions, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

In a free discussion, encourage students to reflect on what it's like to meet someone for the first time—especially someone you like right away.

- What do you say to introduce yourself? What *don't* you say?
- What might you want people to know about you, without your actually saying it?
- What tone of voice do you use?
- Are people in this situation concerned about projecting a particular image of themselves?
- Have you ever gotten carried away and said more than you might have wished? How did that feel? How might a person follow up after that?

## STEP 2: THE GANG IN THE GARRETT

### COMMON CORE CONNECTION

#### **SPEAKING AND LISTENING: Comprehension and Collaboration**

Students will analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats.

Introduce *La Bohème*, outlining the situation as the opera begins: Rodolfo, Marcello, Schaunard, and Colline share a cold, cramped attic apartment in Paris. Marcello has recently broken up with his girlfriend, Musetta. Mimi lives in the apartment next door, but none of the men have met her yet.

Distribute the reproducibles *Getting to Know Rodolfo* and *Getting to Know Mimi*. Have students fold back the far-left column, then turn the sheet over so only that first column—the original Italian text—is visible. Without looking at the English translation, but following along with the Italian, listen to the two arias: **Track 1**, in which Rodolfo introduces himself to Mimi, then **Track 2**, in which Mimi responds. Ask students for their first impressions. What do they think of the characters, just from the sound of their voices? (Rodolfo is proud, strong-minded, unashamed of the poverty he endures for his art. Mimi is delicate and more quiet.) What do they think each of the characters might think of the other? (Probably not much, yet: they are each busy explaining themselves.)

## STEP 3: COMPOSITIONAL CLUES

### COMMON CORE CONNECTION

#### **SPEAKING AND LISTENING: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas**

Students will present their findings in a coherent manner with relevant evidence and well-chosen details.

Have students unfold the activity sheets. Look at the headings across the top, indicating six different aspects that might (or might not!) convey information to the listener:

- the meaning of the words (in English)
- the timbre, or specific quality/characteristics of the singer's voice
- the tempo, or speed, of the singing
- the dynamics, or loudness/softness, of the singing
- the instruments playing alongside the singing, and
- the interplay between the music of the singer and that of the orchestra

## COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND LA BOHÈME

This activity will help your students meet English Language Arts Common Core Standards for **SPEAKING AND LISTENING** and **WRITING**. They will develop abilities in **COMPREHENSION AND COLLABORATION**, reflecting on the opera's ideas that are under discussion. Students will practice skills related to **TEXT TYPES AND PURPOSES**, particularly in writing narratives.



Then, one by one, listen to **Tracks 3–9** and **10–21**. Each of these tracks contains just one line from either of the two arias. After listening to each track, students should analyze that track according to the six qualities on the activity sheet. For example:

- What do they make of the melody to which Rodolfo sings of poverty in **Track 4**? (The music is rich and romantic, indicating that his words are true: a poet's poverty feels like wealth to him.)

In po-ver-tà mia lie - ta scia-lo da gran si-gno - re... ri-meed in-ni dà -

*pp dolce e legato* *pp*

- What might Puccini be suggesting through orchestral accompaniment when Mimì mentions spring in **Track 18**? (Perhaps the slow blossoming of the orchestra through various instruments and layered entries paints a musical picture of spring emerging after a long winter.)
- Are the sounds different when Mimì talks of real flowers (in **Track 19**) vs. the artificial ones she embroiders (in **Track 20**)? (Her voice soars singing of real flowers, then becomes lower and more prosaic singing of the flowers she makes.)

*poco rit.*  
Mai fior ch'io fac - cio, ahi - mè! — i fior ch'io fac - cio, ahi - mè, non han-no o - do - rel

*ppp* *poco rit.* *rall.* *ppp*

Note that students need not fill in every box on the grid. The clues at the top of each column are meant to help them focus their listening, to pay attention to specific aspects of the music. Indeed you may want to play certain tracks more than once to give students a chance to shift their focus.





After considering each track, students can write down their general idea of the character, based on that line of music, in the far-right column. (Some students may prefer to consider each line together with all the preceding lines).

- Does the character appear or sound forceful? Boastful? Pensive? Dreamy? Indecisive?
- Which characteristic of the music conveys that information?

## Seeing Sounds: A Quick Activity for Elementary Students



The Musical Highlight *Pictures in Sound* discusses several moments in *La Bohème* in which Puccini uses his compositional skills to musically describe settings, illustrate characters' thoughts, or provide sound effects to accompany actions being performed on stage. Simply recognizing such moments can enhance students' enjoyment of the opera. But students may enjoy using Puccini's music as a springboard for their own artistic efforts—whether creating drawings, paintings, or even sculptures in clay.

Have your students listen to **Track 22** and ask them to draw or paint what they hear. Where do they think this scene might be set? Indoors? Outdoors? What kind of mood or time of year do the sounds imply? What do they imagine when they hear this music?

In the opera, this passage represents the snowy morning outside the tavern where Musetta and Marcello have found employment (a photo of the Met production can be seen above). The sharp, powerful notes that open the track are

followed by the delicate sounds of flute and harp. Encourage your students to think about what sensations or colors these tones bring to mind. What sense of space do students feel is evoked by this music?

Try the same exercise with **Track 2** from the Classroom Activity and **Track 23** from the same Musical Highlight (both present Mimì's Act I aria "Mi chiamano Mimì.") What do they think she is singing about? When they hear the flute answer Mimì's thoughts of spring, it may not be Puccini's bird that they add to their graphic interpretation, but a shape, a color, or a visual texture.

Any experience of art will always be deeply personal, both for creators and audiences. The story and music of *La Bohème* have moved thousands of people but it's unlikely that any two have felt precisely the same way at precisely the same time. By responding to Puccini with their own artistic creations, students can make *La Bohème* part of their personal cultural heritage.

These are, of course, subjective matters. The point is not to get them “right,” but to practice close listening and analysis, no matter what conclusion a student might draw.

After analyzing the two arias line by line, your students may want to listen to them again, complete, in **Tracks 1** and **2**. Does the music sound different now that they’re familiar with its details? Have their opinions of Rodolfo and/or Mimì changed? If Puccini had meant Mimì or Rodolfo to be different, how might he have changed the arias?

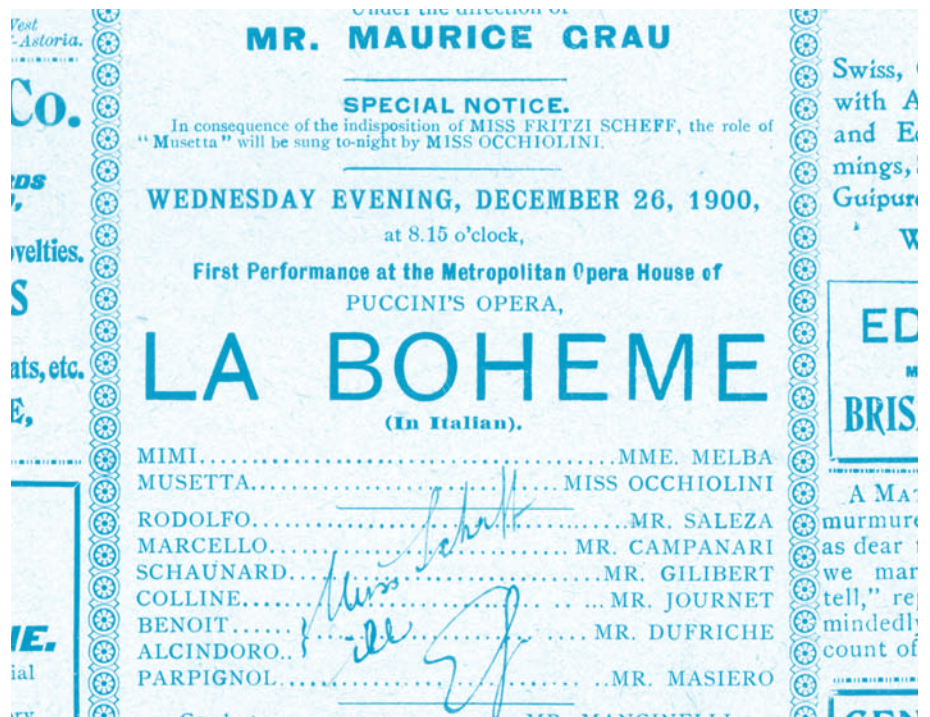
#### STEP 4: LETTER TO A FRIEND

##### COMMON CORE CONNECTION

###### WRITING: Text Type and Purposes

Students will write narratives to develop imagined experiences or events using effective technique.

Now that students have analyzed the introductory arias, they are prepared to assess if Puccini and his librettists have convincingly depicted their two main characters. Invite them to imagine themselves as Rodolfo or Mimì. Aware of the character’s personality, each student can write a letter in that character’s voice, telling a friend about the new neighbor they met today. What’s he/she like? Why did he/she feel attracted to the other person? Might they have a future together? What did they see or hear that made them feel this way? (If there is not enough time for this exercise in class, feel free to use it as a summative homework assignment.)



## Pictures in Sound: A Close Look at Music and Narrative in *La Bohème*

Discussions of opera often center on vocal aspects and singers, neglecting to examine the connective tissue that binds everything together—the orchestra. It creates the musical structure the story of an opera rests on, accompanying, supporting, and reinforcing the vocal parts. Some composers even assign the orchestra a narrative role: commenting on, emphasizing, and even taking part in the doings on stage.

Puccini was a genius when it came to connecting and embellishing on-stage action with musical scene painting by the orchestra. Sometimes the connection is symbolic: **Track 22** is taken from the beginning of Act III—a snowy early morning outside a Paris tavern. The selection begins with sounds of darkness—two sharp orchestral beats, then a soft, sustained bass note—but soon enough we hear little snowflakes falling, depicted by the flutes and harp. The notes and melody representing the snowflakes are suffused with a sad, isolated quality, much like Mimì's feelings as she heads to the tavern. Earlier in the opera, the composer evokes nature in a more literal way in the middle of the aria "Mi chiamano Mimì" (Track 2 in the Classroom Activity). As Mimì's thoughts turn to spring (**Track 23**), Puccini has a flute chime in with the song of a bird.

Occasionally, such musical pictures tell their own little story. In **Track 24**, from early in Act I, Rodolfo tosses pages from his manuscript into the fire. At that precise moment, the orchestra becomes the flames, jumping and growing as the manuscript begins to burn. A few moments later, in **Track 25**, the paper has been consumed, and the fire audibly dies down.

Sometimes Puccini's instruments simply "play themselves." Early in Act II, Schaunard checks out a horn in the marketplace by Café Momus. A real horn, played by a member of the orchestra, makes the prop horn's awful sound (an out-of-key E).

### MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS ARE BRIEF OPPORTUNITIES TO

- help students make sense of opera
- whet their interest in upcoming transmissions of *The Met: Live in HD*

Each focuses on audio selections from *La Bohème* available online at [metopera.org/education](http://metopera.org/education) or the accompanying CD. For selections with texts, text and translation are provided on reproducibles in the back of this guide.

These "mini-lessons" will in practice take up no more than a few minutes of class time. They're designed to help you bring opera into your classroom while minimizing interruption of your ongoing curriculum. Feel free to use as many as you like.



As if he'd produced the sound himself, Schaunard comments on its unpleasantness, heard in **Track 26**. Another example comes at the very end of the opera (at the end of Track 27), when the horns take up a bell-like toll announcing Mimi's passing.

**Track 27** illustrates not only the specific, "visual" use of instruments, but also the power of well-deployed moments of near-silence. By indicating the exact moment and length of time a composer wants silence from singers and the orchestra, a startling message can be sent, having the audience on the edge of their seats in anticipation of the next note. As this track begins, with Mimi lying on her deathbed, Rodolfo says, "*Io spero ancora*" ("I still hope"). Then Puccini quiets the music. In spoken words, Rodolfo observes how peacefully she's sleeping. It's the deafening silence that follows that reveals his mistake: Mimi has died. A stunned second passes, then the orchestra cuts in with full force and Rodolfo cries out his lover's name while the horns mimic funeral bells. As the music slowly dies down, the curtain descends. In the vocal parts, the orchestration, and even in silence, the final moments of *La Bohème* demonstrate the range of sonic expression available to an opera composer.



## The Truth of Verismo

Giacomo Puccini worked with many different kinds of stories in a variety of settings—from *Tosca*'s Rome to the Japan of *Madama Butterfly*, to America's Wild West in *La Fanciulla del West*. But despite the multitude of places and themes, a common thread runs through most of his work—an approach to opera known in Italian as verismo. Often translated as "realism," the term describes a style that rapidly became very popular in the last decade of the 19th century, though it had largely gone out of fashion by the 1920s. As opposed to the subjects of many other earlier operas, in verismo it would be everyday people and the little things in life that filled the stage—like the artists and street urchins of *La Bohème*. Tragedy didn't have to involve the destruction of kingdoms, and comedy didn't need tricksters or fools. The scores of these works reflect the "realistic" approach through a more naturalistic way of musical storytelling, often including short but very passionate arias.

Puccini was by far the most prominent of verismo composers. Others whose works are still heard today include Pietro Mascagni (*Cavalleria Rusticana*), Ruggero Leoncavallo (*Pagliacci*), and Umberto Giordano (*Andrea Chénier*). While the music and stories of these operas might seem highly polished and comparatively traditional today, they stirred a lot of excitement in their time with their raw and straightforward depiction of passion, violence, and the truth of daily experience.

## Calling Cards: A Close Look at the Use of Melodic Themes Representing Characters

Many composers convey meaning by reprising or reworking certain musical themes throughout an opera. In *La Bohème*, Puccini assigns melodies or fragments of them to some of his characters, then employs them as musical calling cards. Listen to the themes for the four bachelor roommates, Mimì, Rodolfo, and Musetta, as they are introduced. The roommates' theme—a very rhythmic, distinctive short phrase—begins the opera (**Track 28**). On **Track 29**, Rodolfo uses his theme to complain about the lack of fuel in the apartment's stove. Mimì takes up hers, quite appropriately, as she tells Rodolfo, "*Sì, mi chiamano Mimì*" ("Yes, they call me Mimì"), heard in **Track 30**. Then, in Act II, at the Café Momus, Musetta appears, flirting with Marcello and confusing Alcindoro. In **Track 31**, she sings "*Quando me'n vo' soletta per la via, la gente sosta e mira*" ("When I walk down the street, all by myself, people stop and stare"). What better setting for such a self-centered thought than Musetta's very own personal waltz theme!

To test one's acquaintance with the themes, there's no better passage than the opening of Act III, where Puccini weaves an intricate tapestry of these four musical themes in one scene. Shortly after the curtain rises, we hear Musetta's voice singing her trademark waltz (**Track 32**).

A musical score snippet for Track 32. The top staff is a vocal line in G major, starting with a melodic phrase and the lyrics "Ah! Ah!". The bottom two staves are piano accompaniment, marked "pp armonioso", featuring a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand.

Looking for Rodolfo at the tavern, the frail Mimì arrives to the strains of her melody (**Track 33**).

A musical score snippet for Track 33. The top staff is a vocal line in G major, marked "espressivo". The bottom two staves are piano accompaniment, marked "pp", with dynamic markings "rit." and "allegro". The piano part features a complex rhythmic texture with triplets and sixteenth notes.

**FUN FACT** One of the biggest Broadway hits of recent decades, the musical *Rent* is a rock adaptation of *La Bohème*, set in 1980s New York City.

**FUN FACT** Although Murger's book was his main source for the story of *La Bohème*, Puccini drew on experiences from his own youth for the atmosphere of *La Bohème*. He famously remembered playing the piano very loud to keep his landlord from hearing the sounds of cooking, which was forbidden in the tiny flat where he lived.

Moments later, in **Track 34**, the orchestra strikes up the roommates' theme, recalling the high spirits of Act I.



Marcello comes out to meet Mimì. After discussing the recent end to her and Rodolfo's romance, Marcello gestures to the window. Rodolfo's theme wells up in **Track 35**; though Mimì may not be able to see through the early morning frost and the thick smoke within, the music tells a tale that Marcello confirms—Rodolfo is inside and has just awoken.



## Bohemia or France?

*La Bohème* takes place in the city of Paris, France. Why then is the opera named for a swath of land in what is now the Czech Republic and eastern Germany?

During the late Middle Ages, members of the Roma people, a wandering community, began making their temporary homes in Europe. Many of those who moved to France had previously resided in Bohemia. As time went on, the French referred first to the Roma, then to any group of people living on the margins of society, as bohemians.

In particular, the term became associated with the students and artists who gravitated to the neighborhoods around the Sorbonne, the great Parisian university on the left bank of the Seine River. In the late 1840s, Henri Murger wrote a set of literary sketches about these colorful, impassioned, mostly poor free-thinkers. His *Scènes de la Vie de Bohème* ("Scenes from the Bohemian Life") were published first in newspapers, then in a popular book that became the inspiration for Puccini's opera.

No one perhaps did more to associate Bohemia with starving artists than this composer. *La Bohème*'s enduring popularity forever linked the term "bohemian" to a romantic image of independent, creative, and young people living on the edge of bourgeois society, committed to truth, self-expression, a good time, and, more often than not, getting by on luck and dreams.

## Taking Control: A Close Look at Ensemble Writing in Act II's "Quando me'n vo"

One of the most interesting and theatrically exciting aspects of opera is the possibility of having several characters express different thoughts at the same time in simultaneous lines of melody and harmony. In the hands of the right composer, this can be an amazing tool to manage the audience's attention, to create a musical moment or scene that has greater impact than the sum of individual performers singing individual parts.

Puccini's mastery of this technique shines in the episode built around "Quando me'n vo," Musetta's waltz song in Act II (see the Musical Highlight *Calling Cards*, above). A close look at this scene will reveal its clever construction. (Some may prefer to listen to the entire section, straight through in **Track 47** before diving into the "play by play" that follows.)

The scene is set in the Café Momus. Shortly after Mimi, Rodolfo, and their friends have taken seats for a drink, Marcello's former girlfriend, Musetta, shows up with her current patron, the elderly Alcindoro. They quarrel for a bit, then the episode begins as Musetta initiates her move on Marcello. She grabs the spotlight, musically speaking, for a short self-promoting aria (**Track 36**). It's a song directed at the people in the café as much as at the audience in the theater. Puccini punctuates Musetta's introductory statement with comments from two interested parties: Marcello and Alcindoro. The past and present boyfriends each reveal their feelings toward Musetta in a single line. Marcello is romantically aroused, Alcindoro scandalized, by her performance (**Track 37**). For the audience, these remarks draw attention to the vertices of this love triangle (**Track 38**).

Having laid this firm foundation, Puccini layers viewpoints on top of one another in **Track 39**. While Musetta is beginning her next phrase, Alcindoro complains about her vulgarity. As soon as he's done, Mimi is heard across the room defending Musetta to Rodolfo. Meanwhile, Musetta is seducing Marcello by singing that she knows he wants her back so desperately he could die.

The men take over from Mimi and Musetta in **Track 40**. Alcindoro is allowed another solo moment to express his outrage one more time. Then Rodolfo responds to Mimi, outlining Marcello and Musetta's past history. Here, instead of having characters sing simultaneously, Puccini uses call and response, with Schaunard



**BOTTES** satin anglais em-  
peignes chèvre, broderies



**BOTTES** mout., mégis,  
pattes droites, doubles



**BOTTES** tige veau mé-  
gis, empeignes vernies,



**BOTTES** chèvre du Levant,  
doubles semelles, article

### FUN FACT

Puccini wasn't the first composer to set Henri Murger's *Scènes de la Vie Bohème* to music. When he started work on the score, he knew that Ruggero Leoncavallo was already writing his own adaptation. But Puccini worked fast and got his opera mounted first. Its overwhelming success all but eclipsed Leoncavallo's version, which is hardly known today.

and Colline expressing their opinions quite literally between the lines of Rodolfo's passage. The variety in the way the composer structures the café chatter, from simultaneous voices to alternating ones, not only communicates each character's viewpoint, but also heightens the audience's overall sense of a busy, bustling café.

In **Track 41**, Schaunard and Colline each have brief solos, just before all hell breaks loose in **Track 42**. It's nearly impossible to untangle the six parts here. Everyone but Marcello joins in. Mimì is moved to tell Rodolfo she loves him. Rodolfo believes Marcello will seek vengeance, not renewed love. Colline muses that he would fall for Musetta himself. Schaunard predicts Marcello will fall any minute now. But Puccini whirls the chaos to an end with the single voice of the woman who set it off. Musetta's brief tantrum "*non seccar!*" ("don't bother me!") leaves no doubt that she has turned the whole café into her personal party.

A rest follows, just long enough for Puccini to convey that Musetta is talking to herself, not singing to the crowd, as she decides to abandon Alcindoro (**Track 43**). In a brief, comically melodramatic exchange, she complains of foot pain to the cluelessly empathic Alcindoro (**Track 44**).

Now Puccini pulls out all the stops. **Track 45** begins with the musical equivalent of a split-screen. On one side, Musetta pursues her strategy to chase out Alcindoro. Since this is a continuation of the event in Track 44, it holds part of the audience's attention. At the exact same moment, Marcello sings out for the first time since Musetta's grand provocation—an outburst with the pent-up energy of a whistling tea kettle. To make sure everyone knows whose spell he's under, Puccini sets Marcello's thoughts to Musetta's waltz.

The crowd goes crazy. Alcindoro explodes. Schaunard and Colline laugh with delight. Puccini ties up the musical proceedings with a satisfying bow in **Track 46**, as Musetta and Marcello rush into each other's arms.

This whole episode unfolds in about four short minutes, over the course of which Puccini masterfully leads the listeners' attention through the emotional funhouse that is the Café Momus. (The scene can be heard without interruption in **Track 47**.)





## Supporting students during *The Met: Live in HD Transmission*

Thanks to print and audio recording, much about opera can be enjoyed long before a performance. But performance itself brings vital layers of sound and color, pageantry and technology, drama, skill, and craft. Performance activities are designed to help students tease apart different aspects of the experience, consider creative choices that have been made, and sharpen their own critical faculties.

Each Performance Activity incorporates a reproducible activity sheet. Students bring the activity sheet to the transmission to fill out during intermission and/or after the final curtain. The activities direct attention to characteristics of the production that might otherwise go unnoticed. Ratings matrices invite students to express their critique: use these ratings to spark discussions that call upon careful, critical thinking.

The basic activity sheet is called *My Highs & Lows*. Meant to be collected, opera by opera, over the course of the season, this sheet points students toward a consistent set of objects of observation. Its purposes are not only to help students articulate and express their opinions, but to support comparison and contrast, enriching understanding of the art form as a whole.

For *La Bohème*, the other activity sheet, *Objects of Attention*, prompts students to consider the importance to *La Bohème*'s plot of several objects used by the characters.

The Performance Activity reproducibles can be found in the back of this guide. Either activity can provide the basis for class discussion after the transmission. On the next page, you'll find an activity created specifically for follow-up *after* the *Live in HD* transmission.

## The Composer’s Vision: The Production Style of *La Bohème*

### IN PREPARATION:

This activity requires no preparation other than attendance at *The Met: Live in HD* transmission of *La Bohème*.

### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Language Arts and Social Studies  
(Change and Continuity in Culture;  
Artistic Decision-Making)

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To acquaint students with the production history of *La Bohème*
- To explore the creative opportunities in any opera production and their implications for audience experience
- To provide students with the opportunity to express their views and opinions in prose



### COMMON CORE CONNECTION

#### SPEAKING AND LISTENING: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

Students will present their findings in a coherent manner with relevant evidence and well-chosen details.

### COMMON CORE CONNECTION

#### WRITING: Production and Distribution of Writing

Students will produce clear writing in which the organization and style are appropriate to purpose and audience.

Students will enjoy starting the class with an open discussion of the Met performance. What did they like? What bothered them? Did anything surprise them? What would they like to see or hear again? What would they have done differently? This discussion will offer students an opportunity to review the notes on their *My Highs and Lows* sheet, as well as their thoughts about this Met production—in short, to see themselves as *La Bohème* experts.

That expertise holds special currency since very few operas are produced more frequently, in more theatres around the world, than this one. The Metropolitan Opera Company first performed *La Bohème* while on tour in Los Angeles in November 1900. The Met Archives hold a set of designs (left) produced by Puccini’s original publisher, meant to show directors exactly what the characters should wear.

The Met followed those guidelines throughout the first half of the 20th century. Then, over the course of three decades, audiences got to enjoy three different Met productions, culminating in 1981 with the Franco Zeffirelli staging your students experienced in HD.

Zeffirelli’s beloved production is a grand and spectacular affair, with sets and costumes designed to realistically and in great detail depict 19th-century Paris. Such an approach is becoming less and less common, both for economic and artistic reasons. (At the other end of the interpretive spectrum, the Met’s critically acclaimed 2010 production of Verdi’s *La Traviata* features a single set decorated almost entirely in white, black, and red, as well as contemporary costumes, bringing a stunning immediacy and timelessness to a classic story.)

It can be useful for students to identify specific details of a production, then to use them as evidence in characterizing its overall style. That characterization might involve terms like realistic, symbolic, traditional, or contemporary, or it might use terms from students’ own critical vocabularies. Students can use their *My Highs and Lows* sheets and their notes on props to develop a characterization of the HD production they experienced—not based on opinion but on critical descriptions.



Once they have articulated their sense of this production, it's time to introduce them to possibilities explored in other production styles: changing an opera's setting in time or place, while maintaining a degree of realism; creating a more symbolic setting; and so forth. You'll find a wide range of images from current and recent Met productions in the company's online database at [archives.metoperafamily.org](http://archives.metoperafamily.org). Discuss these images, encouraging students to apply the same type of critical description before distinguishing among or characterizing the different approaches.

Having held back their opinions to first identify the "facts," now students can address the overriding question: an opera production can adhere to the composer and librettists' initial vision, or today's artists can search for new meanings, designing sets and costumes that create a dramatically different experience and reveal contemporary relevance in a time-honored story. Which approach does more justice to an opera? Which better serves the audience?

If appropriate in your classroom, this can be a fine topic for a formal debate. Alternatively, you might invite students to "contribute" to an academic journal publishing a special issue on the topic, exercising their skill in persuasive writing. Either way, in preparing their presentations, students should feel free to use materials on the Met web site to shape and support their arguments.



Photos from the Met archives showing Geraldine Farrar and Enrico Caruso, who sang the roles of Mimi and Rodolfo in the Met's 1907 production.



LA BOHÈME

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Getting to Know Rodolfo

(Track 1 presents the performances on Tracks 3–9, below, without interruption.)

**TRACK 3**

*Chi son, chi son?  
Sono un poeta.  
Che cosa faccio? Scrivo.  
E come vivo? Vivo.*

Who am I? Who am I? I'm a poet. What do I do? I write. And how do I live? I live.

TONE OF VOICE	TEMPO	DYNAMICS	INSTRUMENTS	INTERPLAY BETWEEN VOICE AND ORCHESTRA	WHAT DOES THIS TELL YOU ABOUT RODOLFO?

**TRACK 4**

*In povertà mia lieta  
scialo da gran signore  
rime ed inni d'amore.  
Per sogni e per chimere e  
per castelli in aria...*

In my happy poverty, I squander poems and love songs like a rich man spends money. In dreams, in fantasies, and in castles in the air...

TONE OF VOICE	TEMPO	DYNAMICS	INSTRUMENTS	INTERPLAY BETWEEN VOICE AND ORCHESTRA	WHAT DOES THIS TELL YOU ABOUT RODOLFO?

**TRACK 5**

*l'anima ho milionaria.*

I have the spirit of a millionaire.

TONE OF VOICE	TEMPO	DYNAMICS	INSTRUMENTS	INTERPLAY BETWEEN VOICE AND ORCHESTRA	WHAT DOES THIS TELL YOU ABOUT RODOLFO?

**TRACK 6**

*Talor dal mio forziere  
ruban tutti i gioielli due  
ladri: gli occhi belli.*

Sometimes two thieves steal all the jewels from my strongbox: a pair of pretty eyes.

TONE OF VOICE	TEMPO	DYNAMICS	INSTRUMENTS	INTERPLAY BETWEEN VOICE AND ORCHESTRA	WHAT DOES THIS TELL YOU ABOUT RODOLFO?

LA BOHÈME

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Getting to Know Rodolfo (CONTINUED)

**TRACK 7**

*V'entrar con voi pur ora,  
ed i miei sogni usati e i bei  
sogni miei tosto si dileguar!*

They just came in with you now, and all my lovely old dreams immediately vanished!

TONE OF VOICE	TEMPO	DYNAMICS	INSTRUMENTS	INTERPLAY BETWEEN VOICE AND ORCHESTRA	WHAT DOES THIS TELL YOU ABOUT RODOLFO?

**TRACK 8**

*Ma il furto non m'accora,  
poichè, poichè v'ha preso  
stanza la dolce speranza!*

But their theft doesn't upset me, since sweet hope has taken their place!

TONE OF VOICE	TEMPO	DYNAMICS	INSTRUMENTS	INTERPLAY BETWEEN VOICE AND ORCHESTRA	WHAT DOES THIS TELL YOU ABOUT RODOLFO?

**TRACK 9**

*Or che mi conoscete, parlate  
voi, deh! parlate. Chi siete?  
Vi piaccia dir?*

Now that you know me, it's your turn to speak. Talk! Who are you? Tell me?

TONE OF VOICE	TEMPO	DYNAMICS	INSTRUMENTS	INTERPLAY BETWEEN VOICE AND ORCHESTRA	WHAT DOES THIS TELL YOU ABOUT RODOLFO?

LA BOHÈME

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Getting to Know Mimì

(Track 2 presents the performances on Tracks 10–21 without interruption.)

**TRACK 10**

*Sì. Mi chiamano Mimì, ma il mio nome è Lucia.*

Yes. They call me Mimì, but my name is Lucia.

TONE OF VOICE	TEMPO	DYNAMICS	INSTRUMENTS	INTERPLAY BETWEEN VOICE AND ORCHESTRA	WHAT DOES THIS TELL YOU ABOUT MIMI?

**TRACK 11**

*La storia mia è breve. A tela o a seta ricamo in casa e fuori...*

My story is brief. I embroider cloth or silk, inside my house or outside.

TONE OF VOICE	TEMPO	DYNAMICS	INSTRUMENTS	INTERPLAY BETWEEN VOICE AND ORCHESTRA	WHAT DOES THIS TELL YOU ABOUT MIMI?

**TRACK 12**

*Son tranquilla e lieta ed è mio svago far gigli e rose.*

I'm tranquil and happy, and my pastime is to make lilies and roses.

TONE OF VOICE	TEMPO	DYNAMICS	INSTRUMENTS	INTERPLAY BETWEEN VOICE AND ORCHESTRA	WHAT DOES THIS TELL YOU ABOUT MIMI?

**TRACK 13**

*Mi piaccion quelle cose che han sì dolce malìa, che parlano d'amor, di primavera, che parlano di sogni e di chimere... quelle cose che han nome poesia.*

I love things that have irresistible charm, that talk of love, of spring, that talk of dreams and of fantasies... those things called poetry.

TONE OF VOICE	TEMPO	DYNAMICS	INSTRUMENTS	INTERPLAY BETWEEN VOICE AND ORCHESTRA	WHAT DOES THIS TELL YOU ABOUT MIMI?

THE MET: LIVE IN HD  
**LA BOHÈME**

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CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Getting to Know Mimì (CONTINUED)

**TRACK 14**

Do you understand me, Sir?

*Lei m'intende?*

TONE OF VOICE	TEMPO	DYNAMICS	INSTRUMENTS	INTERPLAY BETWEEN VOICE AND ORCHESTRA	WHAT DOES THIS TELL YOU ABOUT MIMI?

**TRACK 15**

They call me Mimì, I don't know why.

*Mi chiamano Mimì, il perchè non so.*

TONE OF VOICE	TEMPO	DYNAMICS	INSTRUMENTS	INTERPLAY BETWEEN VOICE AND ORCHESTRA	WHAT DOES THIS TELL YOU ABOUT MIMI?

**TRACK 16**

All alone, I cook for myself. I don't always go to church, but I very often pray to God.

*Sola, mi fo il pranzo da me stessa. Non vado sempre a messa, ma prego assai il Signor.*

TONE OF VOICE	TEMPO	DYNAMICS	INSTRUMENTS	INTERPLAY BETWEEN VOICE AND ORCHESTRA	WHAT DOES THIS TELL YOU ABOUT MIMI?

**TRACK 17**

I live alone, all alone, up there in a tiny white room. I look out at the rooftops and the sky.

*Vivo sola, soletta, là in una bianca cameretta: guardo sui tetti e in cielo,*

TONE OF VOICE	TEMPO	DYNAMICS	INSTRUMENTS	INTERPLAY BETWEEN VOICE AND ORCHESTRA	WHAT DOES THIS TELL YOU ABOUT MIMI?





THE MET: LIVE IN HD  
**LA BOHÈME**

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CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

**Getting to Know Mimì (CONTINUED)**

**TRACK 18**

*Ma quando vien lo sgelo il primo sole è mio. Il primo bacio dell'aprile è mio!*

But when spring comes, the sun's first rays are mine. April's first kiss is mine!

TONE OF VOICE	TEMPO	DYNAMICS	INSTRUMENTS	INTERPLAY BETWEEN VOICE AND ORCHESTRA	WHAT DOES THIS TELL YOU ABOUT MIMÌ?

**TRACK 19**

*Germoglia in un vaso una rosa... Foglia a foglia la spio! Così gentil il profumo d'un fior!*

A rose blooms in a vase... petal by petal, I watch it. How lovely is the perfume of a flower!

TONE OF VOICE	TEMPO	DYNAMICS	INSTRUMENTS	INTERPLAY BETWEEN VOICE AND ORCHESTRA	WHAT DOES THIS TELL YOU ABOUT MIMÌ?

**TRACK 20**

*Ma i fior ch'io faccio, ahimè, non hanno odore!*

But the flowers that I make, alas, have no scent!

TONE OF VOICE	TEMPO	DYNAMICS	INSTRUMENTS	INTERPLAY BETWEEN VOICE AND ORCHESTRA	WHAT DOES THIS TELL YOU ABOUT MIMÌ?

**TRACK 21**

*Altro di me non le saprei narrare. Sono la sua vicina che la vien fuori d'ora a importunare.*

I wouldn't know what else to say about myself. I'm your neighbor, who's come to disturb you at this outlandish hour.

TONE OF VOICE	TEMPO	DYNAMICS	INSTRUMENTS	INTERPLAY BETWEEN VOICE AND ORCHESTRA	WHAT DOES THIS TELL YOU ABOUT MIMÌ?

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT

Calling Cards

TRACK 28

Instrumental

TRACK 29:

**RODOLFO:** Nei cieli bigi  
guardo fumar dai mille  
comignoli Parigi,  
e penso a quell poltrone  
di un vecchio caminetto igannatore  
che vive in ozio come un gran signore.

In the gray skies  
I look out at Paris and  
the smoke of a thousand chimneys,  
and then I think about this  
good-for-nothing woodstove,  
loafing around like a lord of leisure.

TRACK 30

**MIMI:** Sì, mi chiamano Mimi.

Yes, they call me Mimi.

TRACK 31

**MUSETTA:** Quando me'n vo,  
quando me'n vo soletta per la via  
la gente sosta e mira,

When I go out  
on the street all by myself,  
everyone stops and stares,

TRACK 32

**MUSETTA:** Ah!  
Se nel bicchiere sta il piacer  
in giovin bocca sta l'amor!

Ah!  
Pleasure may be in the wineglass  
but love lives on the lips of the young!

TRACK 33

Instrumental

TRACK 34

Instrumental

TRACK 35

**MARCELLO:** Si desta...  
s'alza, mi cerca...  
viene...

He's waking up...  
he's standing, he's looking for me...  
here he comes...



MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT

## Taking Control

### TRACK 36

**MUSETTA:** Quando me'n vo' soletta per la via  
la gente sosta e mira, e la bellezza mia  
tutta ricerca in me da capo a' piè.

When I go out on the street all by myself,  
everyone stops and stares at my beauty,  
and they all gaze at me from tip to toe.

### TRACK 37

**MARCELLO:** Legatemi alla seggiola!

Tie me to the chair!

**ALCINDORO:** Quella gente che dirà?

What will those people say?

### TRACK 38

**MUSETTA:** Ed assaporo allor la bramosia sottil che da gl'occhi  
traspira e dai palesi vezzi intender sa alle occulte beltà.  
Così l'effluvio del desio tutta m'aggira, felice mi fa!

And then I savor the subtle desire that shines in their eyes and can  
perceive through my outward charm my hidden beauty. So does  
the fragrance of desire waft about me and make me happy!

### TRACK 39

**ALCINDORO:** Quel canto scurrile mi muove la bile!

That vulgar song makes me furious!

**MUSETTA:** E tu che sai che memori e ti struggi  
da me tanto rifuggi? So ben:  
le angoscie tue non le vuoi dir,  
ma ti senti morir!

And you, who knows, who remembers, and who suffers,  
will you shun me again? I well know  
that you don't want to admit your suffering,  
but you feel like you're dying!

**MIMI:** Io vedo ben che quella poveretta,  
tutta invaghita ell'è di Marcello!

I can clearly see that poor girl is totally  
in love with Marcello!

### TRACK 40

**ALCINDORO:** Quella gente che dirà?

What will those people say?

**RODOLFO:** Marcello un di l'amò. La fraschetta l'abbandonò,  
per poi darsi a miglior vita!

Marcello once loved her. The bimbo left him to find  
a better life!

**SCHAUNARD:** Ah! Marcello cederà!

Marcello will give in!

**COLLINE:** Chi sa mai quel che avverrà!

Who knows what will happen?

### TRACK 41

**SCHAUNARD:** Trovan dolce al pari il laccio chi lo tende e chi ci dà.

The trap is just as sweet for the hunter as for the prey.

**COLLINE:** Santi numi, in simil briga mai Colline intopperà!

Holy Saints, may Colline never end up in this kind of trouble!

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT

Taking Control (CONTINUED)

TRACK 42

MUSETTA: Ah! Marcello smania. Marcello è vinto!

ALCINDORO: Parla pian! Zitta, zitta!

MIMI: Quell'infelice mi muove a pietà! T'amo!

RODOLFO: Mimi!

COLLINE: Essa è bella, io non son cieco!

SCHAUNARD: Quel bravaccio a momenti cederà!  
Stupenda è la commedia!

MUSETTA: So ben: le angoscie tue non le vuoi dir.  
Ah! Ma ti senti morir!  
Io voglio fare il mio piacere!  
Voglio far quel che mi par, non seccar!

MIMI: Quell'infelice mi muove a pietà!  
L'amor ingeneroso è tristo amor!  
Quell' infelice...ah! ah!...mi muove a pietà!

RODOLFO: È fiacco amor quel che le offese vendicar non sa!  
Non risorge spento amor!  
È fiacco amore quel che le offese vendicar non sa!

SCHAUNARD: Marcello cederà!  
(to Colline) Se tal vaga persona, ti trattasse a tu per tu,  
la tua scienza brontolona manderesti a Belzebù!

COLLINE: Essa è bella, non son cieco,  
ma piaccionmi assai più una pipa e un testo greco!

ALCINDORO: Modi, garbo! Zitta, zitta!

Ah! Marcello is raving. Marcello is conquered!

Speak softly! Shhh!

Such sadness moves me to pity! I love you!

Mimi!

She is beautiful. I'm not blind!

That macho man is going to cave at any minute!  
What a great comedy!

I well know that you don't want to admit your suffering.  
Ah! But you feel like you're dying!  
I want to follow my pleasure!  
I want to do what I like, don't bother me!

Such sadness moves me to pity!  
Selfish love is sad love.  
Such sadness...ah! ah!...it moves me to pity!

It's a weak love that doesn't know how to avenge injuries!  
Once dead, love doesn't revive!  
It's a weak love that doesn't know how to avenge injuries!

Marcello will cave!  
If a pretty girl like that approached you face to face, you'd  
send all your grumpy philosophy to the Devil!

She's beautiful. I'm not blind,  
but I'd much rather have a pipe and a text in Greek!

Mind your manners! Shhhhh!

TRACK 43

MUSETTA: Or convien liberarsi del vecchio!

It's time to get rid of this old guy!

TRACK 44

MUSETTA: Ahi! Qual dolore! Qual bruciore!

ALCINDORO: Che c'è? Dove?

MUSETTA: Al piè!

Ow! What pain! What agony!

What is it? Where?

My foot!

TRACK 45

MARCELLO: Gioventù mia, tu non sei morta,  
nè di te morto è il sovvenir!  
Se tu battessi alla mia porta,  
t'andrebbe il mio core ad aprir!

Oh, my youth, you are not dead  
and neither is its inspiration!  
If you knocked on my door,  
my heart would open it to you!

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT

**Taking Control** (CONTINUED)

**MUSETTA:** Sciogli, slaccia! Rompi, straccia!  
Te ne imploro... Laggiù c'è un calzolaio.  
Corri presto! Ne voglio un altro paio.  
Ahi! che fitta, maledetta scarpa stretta!  
Or la levo. Eccola qua. Corri, va, corri! Presto, va! Va!

**ALCINDORO:** Imprudente! Quella gente che dirà?  
Ma il mio grado! Vuoi ch'io comprometta?  
Aspetta! Musetta! Vo'!

**SCHAUNARD AND COLLINE:** La commedia è stupenda!

**TRACK 46**

**MUSETTA:** Marcello!

**MARCELLO:** Sirena!

Loosen it! Untie it! Break it! Tear it!  
I beg you! There's a shoemaker over there.  
Run fast! I want another pair.  
Ow! What pain, damned tight shoe!  
Now I'll take it off! Here you go! Run, go, run! Quick, go! Go!

How rash! What will those people say?  
My reputation! Do you want me to jeopardize it?  
Wait! Musetta! I'll go!

What a great comedy!

Marcello!

Darling!

Track 47 reprises Tracks 36-47 without interruption.



## At the Met: Objects of Attention

*La Bohème* is made of music and words, people and places—and things. The eight items on this list each have an important role somewhere in the opera. Keep your eyes peeled and jot down when—and why—each of these props comes into play.

A CANDLE

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---

A PAIR OF EARRINGS

---

---

A MUFF

---

---

A CARTFUL OF TOYS

---

---

A MANUSCRIPT

---

---

A KEY

---

---

AN OLD OVERCOAT

---

---

A WOMAN'S SHOE

---

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# La Bohème: My Highs & Lows

APRIL 5, 2014

CONDUCTED BY STEFANO RANZANI

REVIEWED BY \_\_\_\_\_

<b>THE STARS</b>	<b>STAR POWER</b>	<b>MY COMMENTS</b>
ANITA HARTIG AS MIMI	* * * * *	
VITTORIO GRIGOLO AS RODOLFO	* * * * *	
SUSANNA PHILLIPS AS MUNETTA	* * * * *	
MASSIMO CAVALLETTI AS MARCELLO	* * * * *	
PATRICK CARFIZZI AS SCHAUNARD	* * * * *	
OREN GRADUS AS COLLINE	* * * * *	
DONALD MAXWELL AS BENOIT/ALCINDORO	* * * * *	

<b>THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>MUSIC</b>	<b>SET DESIGN/STAGING</b>
KEEPING WARM IN THE APARTMENT MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
THE LANDLORD COMES FOR THE RENT MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
RODOLFO MEETS MIMI MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
THE SCENE OUTSIDE THE CAFÉ MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MUNETTA LOOKS FOR ATTENTION MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
THE PARADE MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MIMI SAYS FAREWELL MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5

# *La Bohème*: My Highs & Lows

(CONTINUED)

<b>THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>MUSIC</b>	<b>SET DESIGN/STAGING</b>
MARCELLO AND MUSETTA FIGHT MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
THE "FEAST" IN THE APARTMENT MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
COLLINE'S SACRIFICE MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
THE DEATH OF MIMÌ MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5