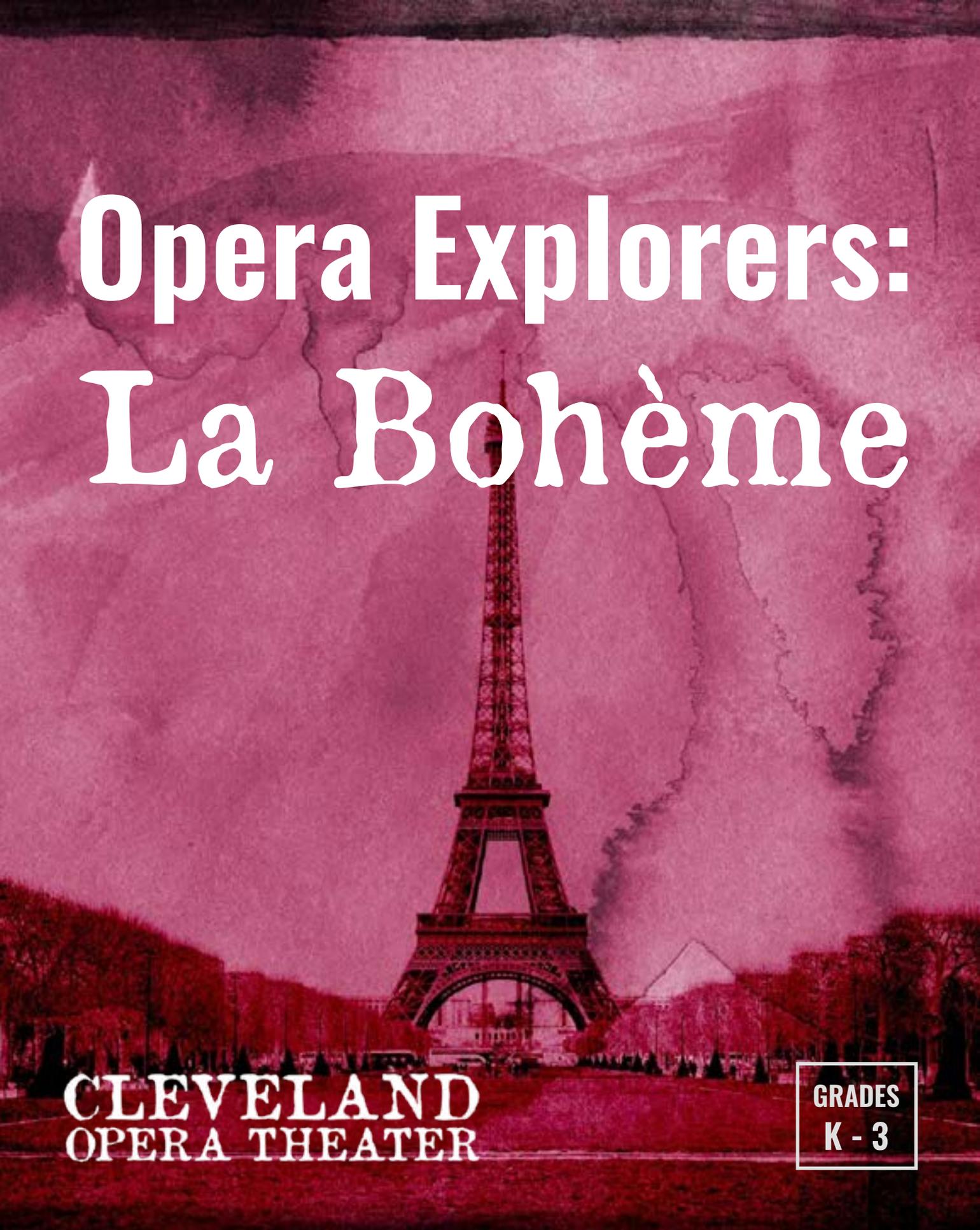


# Opera Explorers: La Bohème



**CLEVELAND  
OPERA THEATER**

**GRADES  
K - 3**

# CLEVELAND OPERA THEATER

Have questions about Puccini or *La bohème* for  
our Director of Education and Engagement?

Contact Megan Thompson at  
[mthompson@clevelandoperatheater.org](mailto:mthompson@clevelandoperatheater.org)



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## Welcome!

We are excited to bring you this opportunity to explore Cleveland Opera Theater's production of Giacomo Puccini's masterpiece, *La bohème*. **Cleveland Opera Theater's mission is to produce vibrant, accessible, innovative, and engaging opera in Greater Cleveland.** When we embarked on this project, the first thing we did was explore what resources exist for families to **experience, explore, and engage** in this opera. What we discovered is that most of the resources that are easily accessible are actually designed for a traditional classroom space. We wanted to create something for the home. The contents of this packet are designed to enhance your family's enjoyment of the opera through discussion prompts and activities, so it's still quite educational, but we designed the questions to create a connection between you and the young opera-viewers in your life.

Unlike most media, we in the opera world believe "spoilers" actually enhance your enjoyment of the opera, so we suggest reviewing the synopsis and the characters before watching our production. Knowing what is about to happen on stage makes it easier, particularly for younger viewers, to focus on the beauty of the music and exciting visuals rather than trying to follow the plot. We also suggest breaking up your experience. Try watching a scene or two, then taking a break to discuss it with your opera novice. The best part of using this video and these materials is that you can stretch out the fun over a day or two!

Happy listening,

Megan Thompson  
Director of Education and Engagement  
Cleveland Opera Theater

Stephanie Ruozzo  
Education and Engagement Associate  
Cleveland Opera Theater

# About Puccini

Giacomo Puccini was a composer; that means he wrote music. He lived in Italy over 100 years ago. He made opera music popular for everybody by writing beautiful melodies and telling sad but exciting stories.



# Timeline of Events

1855

1858

Giacomo Puccini  
born, Lucca, Italy

1861

President Abraham  
Lincoln inaugurated



1865

1865

Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*  
published



1869

First U.S. transcontinental rail route completed.



1875

1876

Alexander Graham Bell  
patents the telephone.



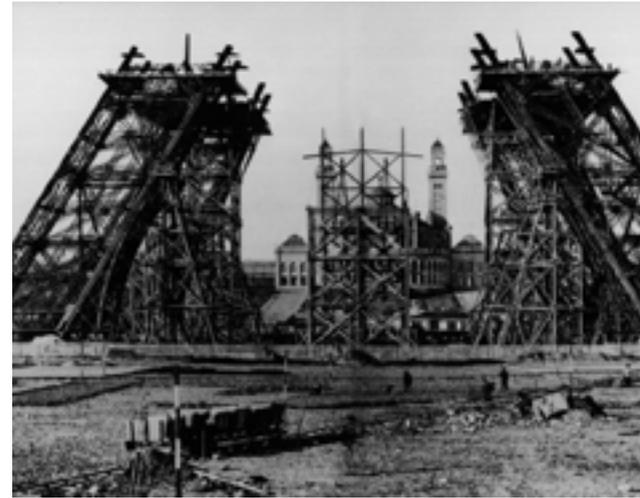
1885

1885

World's first skyscraper built in  
Chicago.



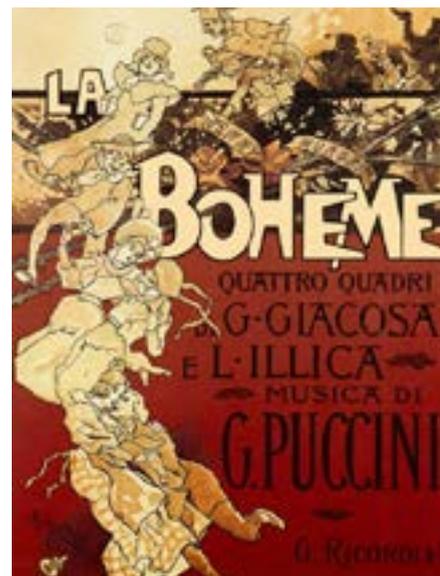
**1889**  
Eiffel Tower built for the Paris exposition.



**1896**  
First Olympic Games take place in Athens, Greece



**1896**  
Premiere of *La bohème*, Turin, conducted by Toscanini



**1900**

**1901**  
First electric vacuum cleaner is invented.

**1903**  
Wright brothers, Orville and Wilbur, fly first powered, controlled, heavier-than-air plane at Kitty Hawk, N.C.



**1910**

**1912**  
1912 Titanic sinks on maiden voyage; over 1,500 drown.

**1920**

**1924**  
Puccini dies.



# Plot Synopsis

Rodolfo (a painter) and his friend, Marcello (a writer), are out of money. Their friend Schaunard arrives to help them, and during the celebration Rodolfo meets Mimì. The two fall in love, but Mimì is sick. Rodolfo feels guilty that he can't help Mimì, so they break up. In the end, Marcello and his girlfriend Musetta convince Rodolfo and Mimì to admit that they love each other.



# Characters

**Rodolfo**, a poet

**Mimì**, a poor seamstress who ends up becoming Rodolfo's girlfriend

**Marcello**, a painter

**Musetta**, a singer who is Marcello's on-again, off-again girlfriend

**Schaunard**, a musician

**Colline**, a philosopher



# Voice Types

Operatic voices can be classified by a variety of means. Here, we take a look at the voice types Puccini utilized in *La bohème*:



# Cast

**Mimi** - Eleni Calenos  
**Rodolfo** - Mackenzie Whitney  
**Musetta** - Angela Mortellaro  
**Marcello** - Young-Kwang Yoo  
**Schaunard** - John Tibbetts  
**Colline** - James Eder

**Benoît / Alcindoro** - Jason Budd  
**Parpignol** - Shaun McGrath  
**Sergeant** - Jonathan Stuckey  
**Customs Officer** - Matthew Mueller



**Soprano**  
Rachel Glenn  
Nicole Futoran  
Raquel Roman-Rodriguez  
Julia Mihalich  
Megan Slack  
Andrea Soncina

**Tenor**  
Jon Gesin  
Joshua Sanchez Muniz  
Greg Prevoznik  
Jake Sonnenberg  
Cory Svette  
San Wetzel

**Mezzo-Soprano**  
Sarah Antell  
Polina Davydov  
Amanda Krohne-Fargo  
Katherine Jefferis  
Kira McGirr  
Elise Pates

**Bass**  
David Drettwan  
Jake Dufresne  
Dylan Glenn  
Ryan Honomichl

**Café Momus Waitstaff** Alec Donaldson & Beshoy Hanna

# Production

Conductor - **Domenico Boyagian**  
Assistant Conductor & Chorus Master - **Dean Buck**  
Children's Chorus Master - **Jennifer Call**  
Rehearsal Pianist - **Susan Schoeffler**  
Stage Director - **Scott Skiba**  
Scenic Design and Technical Direction - **Matthew D. McCarren**  
Projection Design - **Brittany Merenda**  
Lighting Design - **Steve Shack**  
Costumes Designed - **Glenn Avery Breed**  
Costumes Provided - **Wardrobe Witchery**  
Wardrobe and Costume Construction - **Edee Green**  
Wardrobe and Props - **Vanessa Cook: Cook Theatre Designs LLC**  
Production Stage Manager - **Robert Pierce**  
Assistant Stage Managers - **Rachel Zake & Joelle Watson**  
Hair, Wigs, & Makeup - **Francine Grassi & Danielle Tapp**  
Supertitle Operator - **Elaine Hudson**  
Production Assistant - **Rocco Grassi**  
Supertitles - **Chadwick Creative Arts**  
Pre-Performance Lectures - **Dr. Charles McGuire**  
Mimì Ohio Theatre Run Crew - **Jermaine Burns, Paul Duffy, Darrell Gladden, Jerry Lynch, Zach Clark**

# Libretto

## English

### ACT ONE

MARCELLO

This Red Sea of mine  
makes me feel cold and numb  
as if it were pouring over me.  
I'll drown a Pharaoh in revenge.  
What are you doing?

RODOLFO

I'm looking at Paris,  
seeing the skies grey with smoke  
from a thousand chimneys,  
and I think of that no-good,  
hateful stove of ours that lives  
a gentleman's life of idleness.

MARCELLO

It's been a long time  
since he received his just income.

RODOLFO

What are those stupid forests  
doing, all covered with snow?

MARCELLO

Rodolfo, I want to tell you  
a profound thought I've had:  
I'm cold as hell.

RODOLFO

As for me, Marcello, I'll be frank:  
I'm not exactly sweating.

MARCELLO

And my fingers are frozen -  
as if I still were holding them

## Italian

### QUADRO PRIMO

MARCELLO

Questo Mar Rosso  
mi ammolisce e assidera  
come se addosso - mi piovesse in stille.  
Per vendicarmi, affogo un Faraon!  
Che fai?

RODOLFO

Nei cieli bigi  
guardo fumar dai mille  
comignoli Parigi  
e penso a quel poltrone  
di un vecchio caminetto ingannatore  
che vive in ozio come un gran signore.

MARCELLO

Le sue rendite oneste  
da un pezzo non riceve.

RODOLFO

Quelle sciocche foreste  
che fan sotto la neve?

MARCELLO

Rodolfo, io voglio dirti un mio pensier  
profondo:  
ho un freddo cane.

RODOLFO

Ed io, Marcel, non ti nascondo  
che non credo al sudore della fronte.

MARCELLO

Ho diacciate  
le dita quasi ancora le tenessi immollate

in that enormous glacier,  
Musetta's heart.

RODOLFO  
Love is a stove that burns too much...

MARCELLO  
Too fast.

RODOLFO  
Where the man is the fuel...

MARCELLO  
And woman the spark...

RODOLFO  
He burns in a moment...

MARCELLO  
And she stands by, watching!

RODOLFO  
Meanwhile, we're freezing in here!

MARCELLO  
And dying from lack of food!

RODOLFO  
We must have a fire...

MARCELLO  
Wait...we'll sacrifice the chair!

RODOLFO  
Eureka!

MARCELLO  
You've found it?

RODOLFO  
Yes. Sharpen your wits.  
Let Thought burst into flame.

*giù in quella gran ghiacciaia che è il cuore  
di Musetta...*

RODOLFO  
*L'amore è un caminetto che sciupa  
troppo...*

MARCELLO  
*... e in fretta!*

RODOLFO  
*... dove l'uomo è fascina...*

MARCELLO  
*... e la donna è l'alare...*

RODOLFO  
*... l'una brucia in un soffio...*

MARCELLO  
*... e l'altro sta a guardare.*

RODOLFO  
*Ma intanto qui si gela...*

MARCELLO  
*... e si muore d'inedia!...*

RODOLFO  
*Fuoco ci vuole...*

MARCELLO  
*Aspetta... sacrificiam la sedia!*

RODOLFO  
*Eureka!*

MARCELLO  
*Trovasti?*

RODOLFO  
*Sì. Aguzza  
l'ingegno. L'idea vampi in fiamma.*

MARCELLO  
Shall we burn the Red Sea?

RODOLFO  
No. Painted canvas smells.  
My play...  
My burning drama will warm us.

MARCELLO  
You mean to read it? I'll freeze.

RODOLFO  
No, the paper will unfold in ash  
and genius soar back to its heaven.  
A serious loss to the age...  
Rome is in danger...

MARCELLO  
What a noble heart!

RODOLFO  
Here, take the first act!

MARCELLO  
Here.

RODOLFO  
Tear it up.

MARCELLO  
Light it.

RODOLFO and MARCELLO  
What blissful heat!

COLLINE  
Signs of the Apocalypse begin to appear.  
No pawning allowed on Christmas Eve.

MARCELLO  
*Bruciamo il Mar Rosso?*

RODOLFO  
*No. Puzza  
la tela dipinta. Il mio dramma,  
l'ardente mio dramma ci scaldi.*

MARCELLO  
*Vuoi leggerlo forse? Mi geli.*

RODOLFO  
*No, in cener la carta si sfaldi  
e l'estro rivoli ai suoi cieli.  
Al secol gran danno minaccia...  
E Roma in periglio...*

MARCELLO  
*Gran cor!*

RODOLFO  
*A te l'atto primo.*

MARCELLO  
*Qua.*

RODOLFO  
*Straccia.*

MARCELLO  
*Accendi.*

RODOLFO e MARCELLO  
*Che lieto baglior!*

COLLINE  
*Già dell'Apocalisse appariscono i segni.  
In giorno di vigilia non si accettano pegni!*

To continue reading the libretto, click [here!](#)

# Things to Talk About

- *La bohème*, or *The Bohemians*, refers to Rodolfo, Marcello, Schaunard, and Colline. What exactly is a “bohemian”?
- Rodolfo loves Mimì. Why do you think he asked her to leave?
- Musetta persuades Alcindoro to buy her shoes in Act 2. Do you think it was a nice thing for her to do? Do you think she was taking advantage of him?

- In Act 2, a chorus of children sings to the man who sells them toys because they’re so excited to get their Christmas presents. Have you ever been so excited for something that you sang? Did it sound like the kids in the chorus?

- The characters drink alcohol in this opera. Why do people drink alcohol? Is alcohol healthy? **Hint for grownups:** This is a great opportunity to discuss your family’s views on drinking with your children.

- Most of the characters in this opera are students at a university in Paris. What does each one study? What is your favorite subject in school? What do you want to be when you grow up?



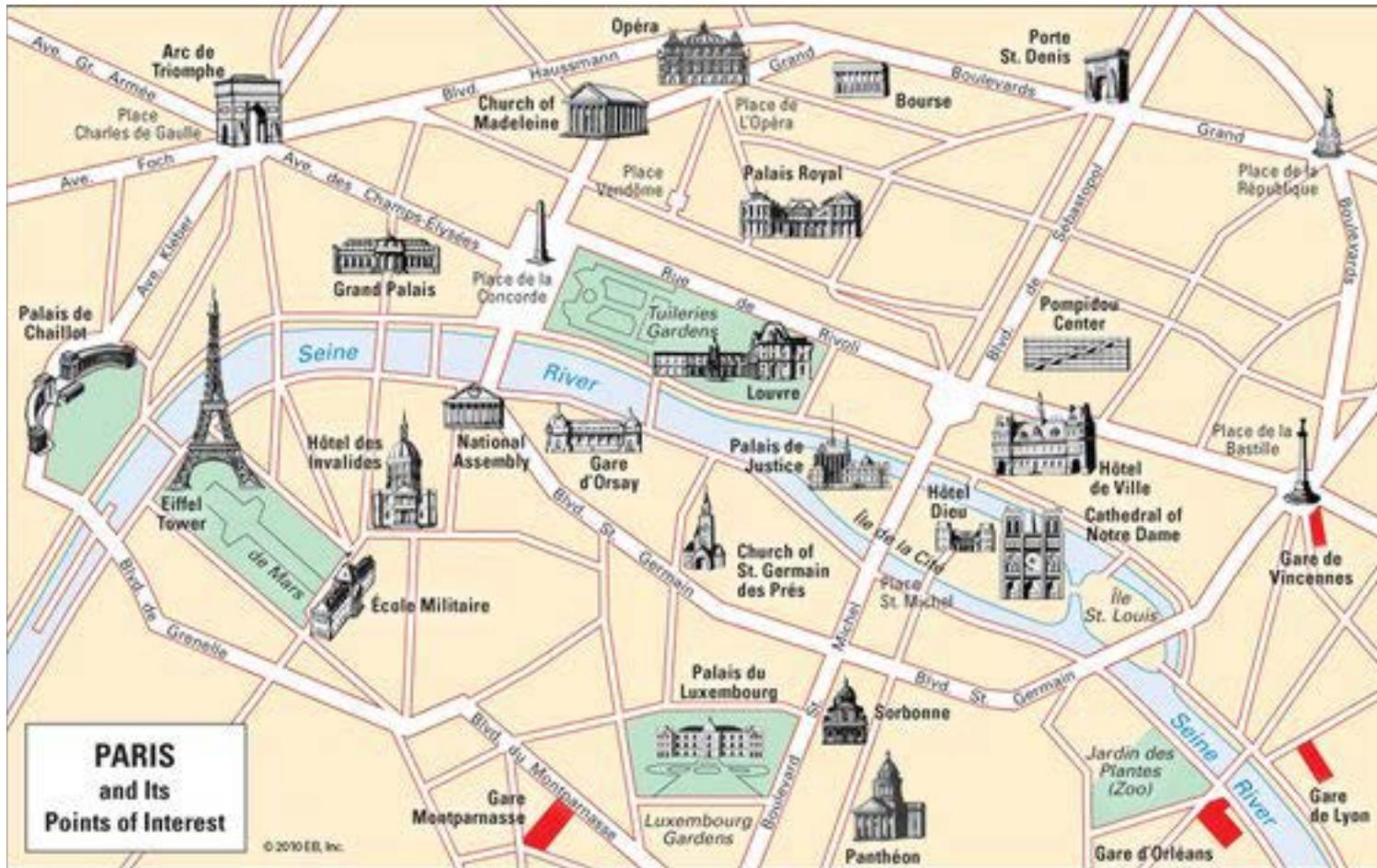
- Each of the characters uses art to help them express their deepest feelings. Rodolfo writes, Marcello paints, Schaunard sings, and Mimì sews. Have you ever made art when you had strong feelings about something? Why do you think people do that?
- *La bohème* (or *The Bohemians*) is set a long time ago in 1830. Based on what you see in the opera, how was life different back then? How was it the same as it is today?
- As you listen to the opera, listen to how the singers sing their lines. Does it all sound the same? Do you notice differences? **Hint for grownups:** your child should notice that sometimes the singers sound more like they’re speak-singing (recitative) and sometimes sound like they’re singing a regular “song” (arias).



# Activities

## Geography:

The action of *La bohème* is set in a big city called Paris, France. Check out this map of the most famous places in Paris (most of which were around when Rodolfo and Mimì were roaming the city)! Pick 3 of the places that look interesting to you, and draw a route across the map to get to all 3 places using the streets of Paris.



## ELA:

Rodolfo fell in love very quickly after meeting Mimì. Write a diary entry from Rodolfo's point of view describing meeting Mimì. How did "you" feel? What did "you" like about her? How is she different from the other women "you" have met?



## Social-Emotional Learning:

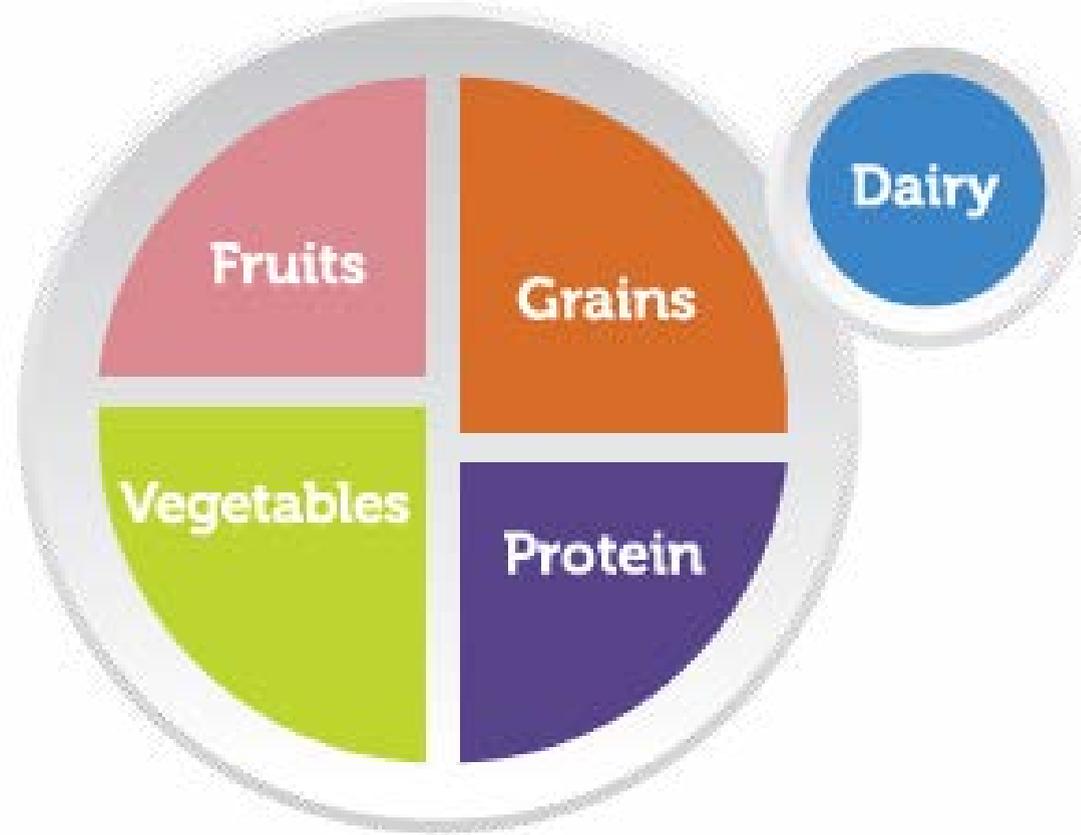
This opera ends very sadly when Mimì dies, but what would it be like if she lived? What would happen next? Write an alternate ending to the opera in which Mimì lives and describe what happens over the next few months.

## History:

*La bohème* happens in 1830 - find out how many years ago that was by subtracting 1830 from the year it is now! Do you know anything else that's that many years old? Ask your grown-ups about how old each of the buildings in your neighborhood is, and compare which buildings are the oldest.

## Science:

The artists in the opera are very poor - so poor that they don't pay Benoît their rent and never have enough to eat. What are some kinds of food that are nutritious, filling, and inexpensive that they should eat to get the most out of their money? Now, think about 2020 and the kinds of food you eat. Most people eat about \$7 worth of food per day, but those living in poverty usually spend less than \$5 per day. Can you plan healthy, balanced meals for 1 day for less than \$5 per person? (Hint: ask a grown-up for some help!)



## Art:

In 1830, the clothing people wore was very different from 2020. One of the biggest differences is that people always wore hats while in public. Since being fashionable was very important in Paris, these hats were sometimes quite elaborate. However, most people couldn't afford to have more than one or two hats. Design your own hat to wear in the sun that is elegant but also practical.

## Math:

In Act II, the friends all go out for a big Christmas dinner at the Cafe Momus because Shaunard has earned a lot of money playing music. Make your own cafe menu with all of your favorite foods and the prices you think they should cost. Have your family and friends order their favorite foods and add up their bills for them!



# Glossary

## A

**ACT:** A portion of an opera designated by the composer, which has a dramatic structure of its own.

**ARIA:** A solo piece written for a main character, which focuses on the character's emotion.

## B

**BLOCKING:** Directions given to actors for on-stage movements and actions.

**BRAVO (BRAH-voh):** Literally, a form of applause when shouted by members of the audience at the end of an especially pleasing performance. Strictly speaking, "bravo" is for a single man, "brava" for a woman, and "bravi" for a group of performers.

## C

**CHORUS:** A group of singers, singing together, who sometimes portray servants, party guests or other unnamed characters; also the music written for them.

**COMPOSER:** A person who writes music.

**CONDUCTOR:** The leader of the orchestra, sometimes called Maestro. This person leads all the musicians (instrumentalists and vocalists) in the performance of an opera; an accomplished musician with a strong sense of rhythm and an in-depth understanding of the voice and each orchestral instrument, he or she must also be able to communicate nuances of phrasing and inspire great performances from all players.

**CUE:** In opera, a signal to a singer or orchestra member to begin singing or playing.

**CURTAIN CALL:** At the end of a performance, all of the members of the cast and the conductor take bows. Sometimes this is done in front of the main curtain, hence the name curtain call. Often, however, the bows are taken on the full stage with the curtain open.

**CUT:** To omit some of the original material from the score.

## D

**DESIGNER:** A person who creates the lighting, costumes and/or sets.

**DIRECTOR (STAGE DIRECTOR):** One who prepares an opera or play for production by arranging the details of the stage settings and stage effects, and by instructing the performers in the interpretation of their roles.

**DRESS REHEARSAL:** A final rehearsal that uses all of the costumes, lights, etc. While sometimes it is necessary to stop for corrections, an attempt is made to make it as much like a final performance as possible.

## E

**ENSEMBLE:** Two or more people singing at the same time, or the music written for such a group.

## F

**FULL PRODUCTION:** A performance that includes all the elements of live theater: lights, costumes, props, makeup, design and audience. In opera, this includes music provided by an orchestra or piano along with the characters' singing.

## I

**INTERMISSION:** A long break, usually about 20 minutes, between the acts of an opera, during which the audience is free to move around.

## L

**LIBRETTO:** The text or words of an opera.

**LYRICS:** The sung words or text of a musical comedy or operetta song.

## M

**MAESTRO (mah-EHS-troh):** Literally "master;" used as a courtesy title for the conductor. The masculine ending is used for both men and women.

## O

**OPERA:** Simply stated, a play that is sung. In opera, singing is the way characters express feeling; as it often takes longer to say something in music than it would in speech, the action may seem delayed or even interrupted. Opera (the Latin plural for opus, meaning "work") can involve many different art forms (singing, acting, orchestral playing, scenic artistry, costume design, lighting and dance). Like a play, an opera is acted out on a stage with performers in costumes, wigs and makeup; virtually all operatic characters sing their lines, although there are exceptions for a role that is spoken or performed in pantomime.

**ORCHESTRA:** The group of instrumentalists or musicians who, led by the conductor, accompany the singers.

## P

**PRODUCTION:** The combination of sets, costumes, props, lights, etc.

**PROPS (PROPERTIES):** Small items carried or used by performers on stage.

## R

**RÉPERTOIRE (REP-er-twahr):** Stock pieces that a singer or company has ready to present. Often refers to a company's current season.

## S

**SCORE:** The written music of an opera or other musical work.

**STAGE DIRECTOR:** The one responsible for deciding the interpretation of each character, the movements of the singers on stage, and other things affecting the singers. Is in charge at rehearsals.

**STAGE MANAGER:** The person in charge of the technical aspects of the entire opera, including light changes, sound effects, entrances (even of the conductor) and everything else that happens.

**SYNOPSIS:** A written description of an opera's plot.

## T

**TECHNICAL DIRECTOR:** Supervisor of those who implement the concepts of the designers. He or she works with carpenters, painters, electricians, sound designers and stagehands and oversee the building of sets, props and hanging of lights.

## V

**VOCAL CORDS:** Wishbone-shaped edges of muscles in the lower part of the throat whose movements creates variations in pitch as air passes between them. Often spelled incorrectly as "chord."

\*Based on National Opera Teacher and Educator Source (NOTES), "Glossary of Terms," Opera America, Accessed April 11, 2020, <https://www.operaamerica.org/Applications/Notes/glossary.aspx>.

# Recommended Recordings

## Full Production:

[Cleveland Opera Theater's September 2019 Production](#)

## About the Opera:

The Dallas Opera ["Opera in Brief: La bohème."](#)

## Che Gelida Manina:

Decca Classics. "Jonas Kaufmann: "Che gelida manina" YouTube. Posted Oct. 18, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVEyakk-fZ6Y>.



## Si chiamano Mimi:

Metropolitan Opera. "La Bohème: 'Sì, mi chiamano Mimi'." YouTube. Posted Sep. 29, 2017. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XacspEL\\_3Zk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XacspEL_3Zk).

## Quando m'en vo:

Royal Opera House. "La bohème – 'Quando m'en vo' (Puccini; Simona Mihai; The Royal Opera)." YouTube. Posted Dec. 2, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mXrbjNncbQ>.

## Vecchia Zimarra:

RobertoAlagna\_Official. "Vecchia zimarra (From 'La bohème')." YouTube. Posted Nov. 7, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-ONC4DnwEo>.

## Addio dolce svegliare alla mattina!

Renata Tebaldi - Topic. "La bohème: Act III, Addio dolce svegliare alla mattina." YouTube. Posted Nov. 11, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q5XJVUfT-FjE>.

# Recommended Resources

[The Bear Who Loved Puccini](#)

[Sing Me a Story: The Metropolitan Opera's Book of Opera Stories for Children](#)

[The Barefoot Book of Stories from the Opera](#)

[Behind the Curtain](#)

[Bravo! Brava! A Night at the Opera: Behind the Scenes with Composers, Cast, and Crew](#)



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"La Boheme." Opera Philadelphia." Accessed Nov. 17, 2020. [\[aphila.org/whats-on/on-stage-2018-2019/la-boheme/\]\(https://www.phila.org/whats-on/on-stage-2018-2019/la-boheme/\)](https://www.oper-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

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"La Boheme vs. Rent: Role Comparison." Hawaii Opera Theater. Accessed Nov. 17, 2020. <https://www.hawaiiopera.org/news-events/la-boheme-vs-rent-role-comparison/>.

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## **Link to Full Libretto:**

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