



**La Bohème At The Metropolitan Opera**  
**Sunday, November 17, 2019**

What? Opera La Bohème at The Met  
Brunch At Marseille

Itinerary? Depart home at 9:45am  
Depart Brookdale at 10:30am  
Brunch at Marseille – around Noon  
Arrive back at Brookdale at 7:30pm

**Outline?**

La Bohème, the passionate, timeless, and indelible story of love among young artists in Paris, can stake its claim as the world's most popular opera. At first glance, La Bohème is the definitive depiction of the joys and sorrows of love and loss; on closer inspection, it reveals the deep emotional significance hidden in the trivial things – a bonnet, an old overcoat, a chance meeting with a neighbor – that make up our everyday lives. Lyrical and touchingly beautiful, the score of La Bohème exerts an immediate emotional pull. Its melodic structure perfectly captures the “small people” (as Puccini called them) of the drama and the details of everyday life.

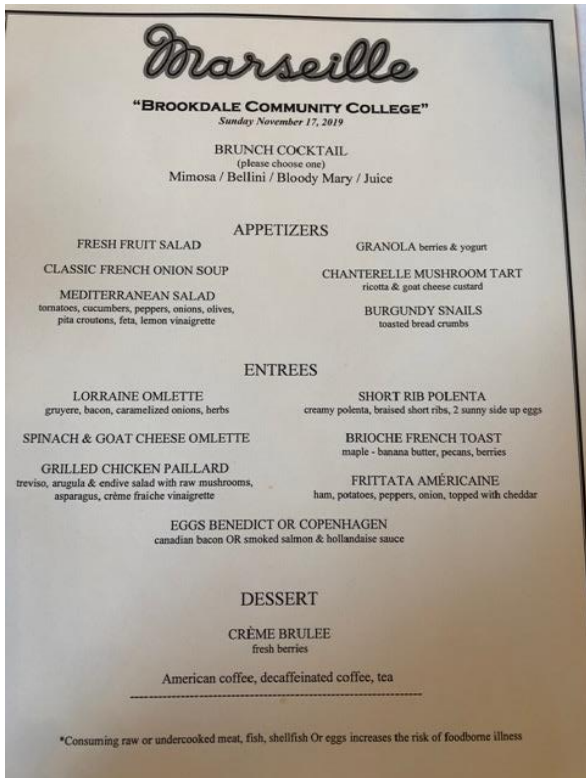
**Brunch** - start the day on a high note brunching at Marseille. <https://marseillenyc.com/>  
At 630 9th Ave, New York, NY 10036, Tele: (212) 333-2323

For nearly two decades, Marseille has been Hell's Kitchen's favorite gathering place and the Theatre District's premiere dining destination.

The neighborhood's finest, most sexy and elegant brasserie, Marseille features a world class wine list and exceptional French Provençal cuisine for breakfast, brunch, lunch, dinner, pre and post theatre dining, or simply a great glass of wine and some oysters at the bar.

Chef Andy D'Amico, also of the Upper West Side favorite eatery Nice Matin, creates exciting, flavorful, and authentic cuisine celebrating Marseille's mix of French, Italian, Greek, and North African influences. Popular yet unique dishes such as Bouillabaisse, savory tagines, perfect steak frites, gourmet burgers, succulent short ribs, fresh pastas, and a wide variety of tasty hors d'oeuvres. The brasserie has long been known as the heartbeat of its neighborhood, and as such Marseilles is beloved by neighbors, theatre goers, performers, tourists, and lovers of joie de vivre of all ages and backgrounds.

Celebrating its namesake's roots as a North African port city, a cultural melting pot and the French gateway to the world, Marseilles' classic brasserie design features details inspired by its global influences, like gorgeous Moroccan tile, that together with its warm, knowledgeable and attentive staff, create a fun, authentic, transporting experience amidst the hurries of the city.







### **More about La Boheme?**

From [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/La\\_boh%C3%A8me](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_boh%C3%A8me):

La bohème is an opera in four acts, composed by Giacomo Puccini to an Italian libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa, based on *Scènes de la vie de bohème* by Henri Murger. The world premiere of *La bohème* was in Turin on 1 February 1896 at the Teatro Regio, conducted by the 28-year-old Arturo Toscanini. Since then, *La bohème* has become part of the standard Italian opera repertory and is one of the most frequently performed operas worldwide.

In 1946, fifty years after the opera's premiere, Toscanini conducted a commemorative performance of it on radio with the NBC Symphony Orchestra. A recording of the performance was later released by RCA Victor on vinyl record, tape and compact disc. It is the only recording ever made of a Puccini opera by its original conductor.

### **The story:**

According to its title page, the libretto of *La bohème* is based on Henri Murger's novel, *Scènes de la vie de bohème*, a collection of vignettes portraying young bohemians living in the Latin Quarter of Paris in the 1840s. Although usually called a novel, it has no unified plot. Like the 1849 play by Murger and Théodore Barrière, the opera's libretto focuses on the relationship between Rodolfo and Mimì, ending with her death. Also like the play, the libretto combines two characters from the novel, Mimì and Francine, into the single character of Mimì. Early in the composition stage Puccini was in dispute with the composer Leoncavallo, who said that he had offered Puccini a completed libretto and felt that Puccini should defer to him. Puccini responded that he had had no idea of Leoncavallo's interest and that having been working on his own version for some time, he felt that he could not oblige him by discontinuing with the opera. Leoncavallo completed his own version in which Marcello was sung by a tenor and Rodolfo by a baritone. It was unsuccessful and is now rarely performed.

Much of the libretto is original. The main plots of acts two and three are the librettists' invention, with only a few passing references to incidents and characters in Murger. Most of acts one and four follow the novel, piecing together episodes from various chapters. The final scenes in acts one and four—the scenes with Rodolfo and Mimì—resemble both the play and the novel. The story of their meeting closely follows chapter 18 of the novel, in which the two lovers living in the garret are not Rodolphe and Mimì at all, but rather Jacques and Francine. The story of Mimì's death in the opera draws from two different chapters in the novel, one relating Francine's death and the other relating Mimì's.

## Synopsis

### Act 1 - Paris. Time: Around 1830

Marcello is painting while Rodolfo gazes out of the window. They complain of the cold. In order to keep warm, they burn the manuscript of Rodolfo's drama. Colline, the philosopher, enters shivering and disgruntled at not having been able to pawn some books. Schaunard, the musician of the group, arrives with food, wine and cigars. He explains the source of his riches: a job with an eccentric English gentleman, who ordered him to play his violin to a parrot until it died. The others hardly listen to his tale as they set up the table to eat and drink. Schaunard interrupts, telling them that they must save the food for the days ahead: tonight they will all celebrate his good fortune by dining at Cafe Momus, and he will pay.

The friends are interrupted by Benoît, the landlord, who arrives to collect the rent. They flatter him and ply him with wine. In his drunkenness, he begins to boast of his amorous adventures, but when he also reveals that he is married, they thrust him from the room—without the rent payment—in comic moral indignation. The rent money is divided for their evening out in the Quartier Latin.

Marcello, Schaunard and Colline go out, but Rodolfo remains alone for a moment in order to finish an article he is writing, promising to join his friends soon. There is a knock at the door. It is a girl who lives in another room in the building. Her candle has blown out, and she has no matches; she asks Rodolfo to light it. She is briefly overcome with faintness, and Rodolfo helps her to a chair and offers her a glass of wine. She thanks him. After a few minutes, she says that she is better and must go. But as she turns to leave, she realizes that she has lost her key.

Her candle goes out in the draught and Rodolfo's candle goes out too; the pair stumble in the dark. Rodolfo, eager to spend time with the girl, to whom he is already attracted, finds the key and pockets it, feigning innocence. He takes her cold hand (*Che gelida manina*—"What a cold little hand") and tells her of his life as a poet, then asks her to tell him more about her life. The girl says her name is Mimì (*Sì, mi chiamano Mimì*—"Yes, they call me Mimì"), and describes her simple life as an embroiderer. Impatiently, the waiting friends call Rodolfo. He answers and turns to see Mimì bathed in moonlight (duet, Rodolfo and Mimì: *O soave fanciulla*—"Oh lovely girl"). They realize that they have fallen in love. Rodolfo suggests remaining at home with Mimì, but she decides to accompany him to the Cafe Momus. As they leave, they sing of their newfound love.

### Act 2 - Quartier Latin (same evening)

A great crowd, including children, has gathered with street sellers announcing their wares (chorus: *Aranci, datteri! Caldi i marroni!*—"Oranges, dates! Hot chestnuts!"). The friends arrive; Rodolfo buys Mimì a bonnet from a vendor, while Colline buys a coat and Schaunard a horn. Parisians gossip with friends and bargain with the vendors; the children of the streets clamor to see the wares of Parpignol, the toy seller. The friends enter the Cafe Momus.

As the men and Mimì dine at the cafe, Musetta, formerly Marcello's sweetheart, arrives with her rich (and elderly) government minister admirer, Alcindoro, whom she is tormenting. It is clear she has tired of him. To the delight of the Parisians and the embarrassment of her patron, she sings a risqué song (Musetta's waltz: *Quando m'en vo'*—"When I go along"), hoping to reclaim Marcello's attention. The ploy works; at the same time, Mimì recognizes that Musetta truly loves Marcello. To be rid of Alcindoro for a bit, Musetta pretends to be suffering from a tight shoe and sends him to the shoemaker to get her shoe mended. Alcindoro leaves, and Musetta and Marcello fall rapturously into each other's arms.

The friends are presented with their bill. However, Schaunard's purse has gone missing and no one else has enough money to pay. The sly Musetta has the entire bill charged to Alcindoro. The sound of

a military band is heard, and the friends leave. Alcindoro returns with the repaired shoe seeking Musetta. The waiter hands him the bill and, dumbfounded, Alcindoro sinks into a chair.

**Act 3-** At the toll gate at the Barrière d'Enfer (late February)

Peddlers pass through the barriers and enter the city. Mimì appears, coughing violently. She tries to find Marcello, who is currently living in a little tavern where he paints signs for the innkeeper. She tells him of her hard life with Rodolfo, who abandoned her the night before, and of Rodolfo's terrible jealousy (O buon Marcello, aiuto!—"Oh, good Marcello, help me!"). Marcello tells her that Rodolfo is asleep inside, and expresses concern about Mimì's cough. Rodolfo wakes up and comes out looking for Marcello. Mimì hides and overhears Rodolfo first telling Marcello that he left Mimì because of her coquettishness, but finally confessing that his jealousy is a sham: he fears she is slowly being consumed by a deadly illness (most likely tuberculosis, known by the catchall name "consumption" in the nineteenth century). Rodolfo, in his poverty, can do little to help Mimì and hopes that his pretended unkindness will inspire her to seek another, wealthier suitor (Marcello, finalmente—"Marcello, finally").

Out of kindness towards Mimì, Marcello tries to silence her, but she has already heard all. Her weeping and coughing reveal her presence, and Rodolfo hurries to her. Musetta's laughter is heard and Marcello goes to find out what has happened. Mimì tells Rodolfo that she is leaving him, and asks that they separate amicably (Mimì: Donde lieta uscì—"From here she happily left"); but their love for one another is too strong for the pair to part. As a compromise, they agree to remain together until the spring, when the world is coming to life again and no one feels truly alone. Meanwhile, Marcello has found Musetta, and the couple quarrel fiercely about Musetta's flirtatiousness: an antithetical counterpoint to the other pair's reconciliation (quartet: Mimì, Rodolfo, Musetta, Marcello: Addio dolce svegliare alla mattina!—"Goodbye, sweet awakening in the morning!").

**Act 4** - Back in the garret (some months later)

Marcello and Rodolfo are trying to work, though they are primarily talking about their girlfriends, who have left them and found wealthy lovers. Rodolfo has seen Musetta in a fine carriage and Marcello has seen Mimì dressed like a queen. The men both express their nostalgia (duet: O Mimì, tu più non torni—"O Mimì, will you not return?"). Schaunard and Colline arrive with a very frugal dinner and all parody eating a plentiful banquet, dance together and sing, before Schaunard and Colline engage in a mock duel.

Musetta suddenly appears; Mimì, who took up with a wealthy viscount after leaving Rodolfo in the spring, has left her patron. Musetta found her that day in the street, severely weakened by her illness, and Mimì begged Musetta to bring her to Rodolfo. Mimì, haggard and pale, is assisted onto a bed. Briefly, she feels as though she is recovering. Musetta and Marcello leave to sell Musetta's earrings in order to buy medicine, and Colline leaves to pawn his overcoat (Vecchia zimarra—"Old coat"). Schaunard leaves with Colline to give Mimì and Rodolfo some time together. Mimì tells Rodolfo that her love for him is her whole life (aria/duet, Mimì and Rodolfo: Sono andati?—"Have they gone?").

To Mimì's delight, Rodolfo presents her with the pink bonnet he bought her, which he has kept as a souvenir of their love. They remember past happiness and their first meeting—the candles, the lost key. Suddenly, Mimì is overwhelmed by a coughing fit. The others return, with a gift of a muff to warm Mimì's hands and some medicine. Mimì gently thanks Rodolfo for the muff, which she believes is a present from him, reassures him that she is better and falls asleep. Musetta prays. Schaunard discovers that Mimì has died. Rodolfo rushes to the bed, calling Mimì's name in anguish, weeping helplessly as the curtain falls.

La bohème is scored for: woodwinds: piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, cor anglais, 2 clarinets (A, B-flat), bass clarinet (A, B-flat), 2 bassoons brass: 4 horns in F, 3 trumpets in F, 3 trombones, bass trombone

percussion: timpani, snare drum, triangle, cymbals, bass drum, xylophone, glockenspiel, chimes  
strings: harp, violins I, II, viola, cello, double bass (end of act 2): 4 piccolos, 6 trumpets, 2 snare drums (occasionally on-stage)

The discography of *La bohème* is a long one with many distinguished recordings, including the 1972 Decca recording conducted by Herbert von Karajan with Luciano Pavarotti as Rodolfo and Mirella Freni as Mimì (made before Pavarotti became an international superstar of opera), and the 1973 RCA Victor recording conducted by Sir Georg Solti with Montserrat Caballé as Mimì and Plácido Domingo as Rodolfo which won the 1974 Grammy Award for Best Opera Recording. The earliest commercially released full-length recording was probably that recorded in February 1917 and released on HMV's Italian label *La Voce del Padrone*. Carlo Sabajno conducted the *La Scala* Orchestra and Chorus with Gemma Bosini and Reno Andreini as Mimì and Rodolfo. One of the most recent is the 2008 Deutsche Grammophon release conducted by Bertrand de Billy with Anna Netrebko and Rolando Villazón as Mimì and Rodolfo.

There are several recordings with conductors closely associated with Puccini. In the 1946 RCA Victor recording, Arturo Toscanini, who conducted the world premiere of the opera, conducts the NBC Symphony Orchestra with Jan Peerce as Rodolfo and Licia Albanese as Mimì. It is the only recording of a Puccini opera by its original conductor. Thomas Beecham, who worked closely with Puccini when preparing a 1920 production of *La bohème* in London, conducted a performance of the opera in English released by Columbia Records in 1936 with Lisa Perli as Mimì and Heddle Nash as Rodolfo. Beecham also conducts on the 1956 RCA Victor recording with Victoria de los Ángeles and Jussi Björling as Mimì and Rodolfo.

Although the vast majority of recordings are in the original Italian, the opera has been recorded in several other languages. These include: a recording in French conducted by Erasmio Ghiglia with Renée Doria and Alain Vanzo as Mimì and Rodolfo (1960); a recording in German with Richard Kraus conducting the Deutsche Oper Berlin Orchestra and Chorus with Trude Eipperle and Fritz Wunderlich as Mimì and Rodolfo (1956); and the 1998 release on the Chandos Opera in English label with David Parry conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra and Cynthia Haymon and Dennis O'Neill as Mimì and Rodolfo.

Enrico Caruso, who was closely associated with the role of Rodolfo, recorded the famous aria "Che gelida manina" in 1906. This aria has been recorded by nearly 500 tenors in at least seven different languages between 1900 and 1980. In 1981 the A.N.N.A. Record Company released a six LP set with 101 different tenors singing the aria.

### **The missing act**

In 1957 Illica's widow died and his papers were given to the Parma Museum. Among them was the full libretto to *La bohème*. It was discovered that the librettists had prepared an act which Puccini decided not to use in his composition. It is noteworthy for explaining Rodolfo's jealous remarks to Marcello in act 3.

The "missing act" is located in the timeline between the Café Momus scene and act 3 and describes an open-air party at Musetta's dwelling. Her protector has refused to pay further rent out of jealous feelings, and Musetta's furniture is moved into the courtyard to be auctioned off the following morning. The four Bohemians find in this an excuse for a party and arrange for wine and an orchestra. Musetta gives Mimì a beautiful gown to wear and introduces her to a Viscount. The pair dances a quadrille in the courtyard, which moves Rodolfo to jealousy. This explains his act 3 reference to the "moscardino di Viscontino" (young fop of a Viscount). As dawn approaches, furniture dealers gradually remove pieces for the morning auction.

### **Derivative works**

In 1959 "Musetta's Waltz" was adapted by songwriter Bobby Worth for the pop song "Don't You Know?", a hit for Della Reese. Earlier, it was used for another song, "One Night of Love".

In 1969 in Paris, American free-jazz pianist Dave Burrell recorded his *La Vie de Bohème* with a seven-piece group of European and American musicians. The music on the double-LP is improvised and experimental, but the listener can still discern Puccini's themes, as well as the narrative arc of the complete opera.

*Rent*, a 1996 musical by Jonathan Larson, is based on *La bohème*. Here the lovers, Roger and Mimi, are faced with AIDS and progress through the action with songs such as "Light My Candle", which have direct reference to *La bohème*. Many of the character names are retained or are similar (e.g. the character Angel is given the surname "Schunard"), and at another point in the play, Roger's roommate and best friend Mark makes a wry reference to "Musetta's Waltz", which is a recurring theme throughout the first act and is played at the end of the second act.

The opera was adapted into a 1983 short story by the novelist V. S. Pritchett for publication by the Metropolitan Opera Association. *La Bohème: Una piccola storia sull'immortalità dell'amore e dell'amicizia* (2009) by Carolina Fabinger is an illustrated version in Italian for young readers. A short parody, *The One-Minute, Non-Musical La Bohème for One or More Actors*, by Meron Langsner was published by McSweeney's Internet Tendency in 2012.

### **Modernizations**

Stage design for act 1 of *La bohème*, Reginald Gray, 2010

Baz Luhrmann produced the opera for Opera Australia in 1990 with modernized supertitle translations, and a budget of only A\$60,000. A DVD was issued of the stage show. According to Luhrmann, this version was set in 1957 (rather than the original period of 1830) because "...[they] discovered that 1957 was a very, very accurate match for the social and economic realities of Paris in the 1840s." In 2002, Luhrmann restaged his version on Broadway, the production won two Tony Awards out of six nominations; for Best Scenic Design and Best Lighting Design as well as a special award, the Tony Honor for Excellence in Theatre. To play the eight performances per week on Broadway, three casts of Mimis and Rodolfos, and two Musettas and Marcellos, were used in rotation.

Robin Norton-Hale directed a new production produced by Adam Spreadbury-Maher at the Cock Tavern Theatre, Kilburn, for OperaUpClose in December 2009. Originally planned for a six-week season, it was extended for five months. The production was set in present-day North London, specifically in the Kilburn area, which is described as one "of pound shops and betting shops, casual labour and cheap sublets. A nice verismo touch, this—it also has the highest rate of tuberculosis infection in Greater London." Although acts 1, 3 and 4 of this production took place in the pub's tiny upstairs theatre, for act 2 the entire audience and cast moved downstairs to the pub itself, with the pub's patrons serving as extras in the Cafe Momus scene. In 2010 it transferred to the West End's Soho Theatre for two sell-out seasons and won a Laurence Olivier Award. The production was revived at the Soho Theatre in 2011 and at the Charing Cross Theatre in 2012.