

Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924)

La bohème (bohemian life)

*Opera in Four Acts**

Words by Giuseppe Giacosa (1847-1906) and Luigi Illica (1857-1919)
Based on the novel Scenes de la vie de Boheme by Henri Murger (pub. 1848)

First performance: Teatro Regio, Turin. February 1, 1896, Conducted by Arturo Toscanini
First American performance: Los Angeles, October 14, 1897

**(Opera Carolina production will be performed with two intermissions)*

THE STORY

Paris, around 1830

Act I. In a garret on Christmas eve.

The poet Rodolfo (tenor) is looking at the snow covered rooftops, while his friend, the painter Marcello (baritone), works on a painting of the Hebrews crossing the Red Sea. It is cold and, lacking wood, Rodolfo lights the stove with the manuscript of his latest play. Two friends join them, the philosopher Colline (bass), and the musician Schaunard (baritone). Schaunard brings food and wine bought with money he just earned from giving music lessons to a British tourist. The four begin to feast when they are interrupted by the landlord Benoit (bass), who has come to claim the past due rent. When the four bohemians loosen his tongue with a bit of wine, the old man boasts of his extra-marital affairs and the four penniless friends, feigning indignation, throw him out. Marcello, Colline and Schaunard leave to go to Café Momus. Rodolfo stays behind to finish a newspaper article he is writing.

Mimi (soprano), a neighbor, knocks at the door and asks if Rodolfo will light her candle. She has a sudden fit of coughing and faints. Rodolfo helps her recover. When both candles go out (hers by accident his by intent), and Mimi drops her key on the floor, as they search, their hands touch and a tender bond is created between the two young people. He tells her of his passion for writing, she tells him of her love of flowers and springtime. From the courtyard Rodolfo's friends call him to join them at the Café. Rodolfo tells them he is not alone, but that they will join them in a moment. Rodolfo and Mimi embrace and leave together.

Act II. The Latin Quarter

In front of Café Momus, Rodolfo and Mimi stop to buy a bonnet, Colline buys a second hand coat, Schaunard haggles over the price of a French horn. In the crowd, Musetta (soprano), who used to be Marcello's lover, appears, accompanied by the rich old gentleman, Alcindoro (bass). Musetta still loves Marcello and entices him by singing a beautiful waltz. She sends Alcindoro off to buy shoes and she and Marcello are reunited. A parade passes by and the bohemians, along with Musetta slip away, leaving Alcindoro to pay the Café bill.

Act III. At the outskirts of Paris

A cold February day, at dawn. After arguing with Mimi, Rodolfo has settled at the inn where Marcello and Musetta are living. Mimi arrives to speak with Marcello. She tells him she is afraid Rodolfo has left her forever, that he is insanely jealous, and they argue more and more. She hides when Rodolfo comes out to talk with his friend, and overhears their conversation. At first, he claims Mimi is a flirt and that he can't trust her. But when Marcello presses him, he admits that he believes Mimi is gravely ill and he can't face the pain of losing her. A fit of coughing gives Mimi away. Rodolfo and Mimi embrace while Marcello and Musetta argue. They decide to go their separate ways, at least until spring.

Act IV. The garret apartment of Act I

Fall. Rodolfo and Marcello are in the same situation as the opening of the opera -- one writing, one painting. This time, they cannot concentrate on their work out of melancholy for their lost loves. Colline and Schaunard arrive and the four friends try to forget their sorrows by fooling around. Musetta suddenly arrives, telling them that Mimi is desperately ill; she is at their doorstep and needs their help. The men carry Mimi into the room. Musetta sends Marcello to sell her earrings and to buy medicine while she goes out to buy a muff to warm Mimi's icy hands. Colline sets off to sell his coat, taking Schaunard with him. Left alone, Rodolfo and Mimi recall their first meeting and the love they have for each other. Their friends return, saying the doctor is on his way. But it is too late. Rodolfo at first thinks Mimi is asleep, until he notices the truth written on his friends' faces.

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La bohème (bohemian life)

English translation by James Meena

"Mimi was a charming girl, specially apt to appeal to Rodolfo, the poet and dreamer. Aged twenty-two, she was slight and graceful. Her face reminded one of a sketch of a high-born beauty; its features had marvelous refinement. The hot, impetuous blood of youth coursed through her veins, giving a rosy hue to her clear complexion that had the white velvety bloom of the camellia. This frail beauty allured Rodolfo. But what served to enchant him were Mimi's tiny hands, that, despite her household duties, she contrived to keep whiter even than those of the Goddess of Ease."

*From Scenes de la vie de Boheme
by Henri Murger*

Act I Paris, around 1830

(In a garret on Christmas eve. A spacious window overlooks the snow covered rooftops.)

Marcello This painting of the Red Sea
Makes me even more chilly and
damp. As if its icy water was
flowing down my back! For
revenge, I'll drown Pharaoh!
And what are you doing?

Rodolfo Just staring at the smoke
billowing Over the rooftops of
Paris; and thinking of that lazy
stove, that deceives us with its
idleness, just sitting there like a
rich, fat nobleman!

Marcello Its honest reward for our not
feeding it!

Rodolfo Of what use are all those silly
forests out there, covered under
the snow?

Marcello Rodolfo, my friend, I want to
share with you a profound
thought:
I'm freezing like a dog!

Rodolfo And I, Marcello candidly advise
that the sweat on my brow is a
ruse!

Marcello My fingers are frozen!
As if they were held motionless
against that great frozen block that
Musetta calls a heart!

Rodolfo Ah, love is a fireplace
that is all consuming . . .

Marcello . . . And fast burning!

Rodolfo When a man is under its spell.

Marcello And the woman is striking the
match.

Rodolfo He burns up in a puff of smoke.

Marcello And she just stands there and
watches.

Rodolfo But in the meantime, we're
freezing!

Marcello And dying of hunger!

Rodolfo We have to light this stove!

Marcello Wait. We'll sacrifice the chair!

Rodolfo Eureka!

Marcello An inspiration?

Rodolfo Yes!
Flashes of genius blaze in my
imagination!

Marcello We'll burn my painting?

Rodolfo No --
The paint will stink out the
apartment. My fiery drama will
heat us up!

Marcello You're not going to read it to me,
are you? I'm already suffering!

Rodolfo No. Into ashes the papers will peel themselves one by one into heavenly inspiration.

(with feigned importance)

My masterpiece will be lost to the ages: And great Rome shall fall!

Marcello Not that!

Rodolfo To you I grant Act One.

Marcello I accept your offering.

Rodolfo Tear it.

Marcello I send it to its fate.

(Rodolfo lights the stove, setting part of his manuscript ablaze. Meanwhile Colline enters.)

Rodolfo & Marcello
Such joyous rays of brilliance!

Colline Truly the Apocalypse is dawning.
On Christmas Eve not one soul took pity on my begging!
Hark - a fire!

Rodolfo Quiet! We're enjoying my drama.

Colline Such blazing inspiration.

Rodolfo Thank you.

(The fire dwindles)

Colline But it is a mere flash in the pan.

Rodolfo Brevity is a great virtue in the theater.

Colline Dear author, kindly give me your chair.

Marcello These intermissions make me shiver. Quickly!

Rodolfo Act Two!

Marcello We quietly await more of your brilliance!

(The fire glows as the manuscript burns)

Colline Such profound thoughts!

Marcello Such colorful language!

Rodolfo In that languid blue flame is a blazing love scene.

Colline The pages crackle.

Marcello As though they were kissing!

Rodolfo *(Throwing the rest of the manuscript in the fire)*

Now we can hear all three acts at once.

Colline Only an audacious writer could create such rich thoughts.

All Beautiful ideas that vanish in a cheerful blaze.

Marcello Merciful God.
Already the flame dies down.

Colline Such a frail, vain drama!

Marcello The pages crackle, dying -- dead!

Marcello & Colline
Down with the author!

(Enter Schaunard with armfuls of wood, cigarettes, wine and food)

All Wood! Cigarettes! Bordeaux!
Destiny smiles on us.

Schaunard *(Throwing coins on the floor)* The Bank of France has poured out its riches for you.

Colline Pick them up.

Marcello Those must be fake!

Schaunard Then you're deaf and blind!
Whose face is this on the coin?

Rodolfo King Louis Philip! Our monarch!

All Yes. Louis is at our feet!

Schaunard Now I'll tell you what happened: This gold, or rather, silver coins have a brave story . . .

Marcello *(Putting wood on the stove)*
Relight the stove!

Colline It has suffered so from the cold.

Schaunard *(Continuing his description of events)*
I came across an English nobleman.
His lordship wanted a musician . . .

Marcello *(Ignoring Schaunard, and throwing Colline's books off the table)*
Off! Prepare the table!
Here are the candles.

Rodolfo *(Also ignoring Schaunard)*
Where is the fuel?

Colline There!

Rodolfo Now the room flashes brilliantly.

Marcello What's this - no tablecloth?

Rodolfo I have an idea -
use the newspaper as a tablecloth.

Schaunard *(Continuing, oblivious that he is being ignored)*
I presented myself and offered to give him lessons, to which he said "We begin immediately. Look:" he said, "There is a parrot in that apartment on the first floor. I want you to play until he dies!" And thus it was I played for three long days.

Then, I used my charms to get the attention of the maid and convinced her to feed the parrot dried parsley. She complied and like Socrates - he fell dead!

Colline *(Looking up from his feast long enough to hear Schaunard's last words)*

Who?

Schaunard What the hell are you all doing?
These are our provisions for days of darkness and obscurity. To dine in on Christmas Eve while the Latin Quarter is adorned with sausages and delicacies? When the fragrance of savory fritters fills the old streets, and where the girls sing contentedly . . .

All Yes - Christmas Eve!

Schaunard And every young student chokes their song.
A bit of religious decorum, dear sirs.
By all means drink at home, but tonight we dine out!

(They are ready to leave but are stopped by a knocking at their door)

Marcello Who is it?

Benoit Just me - Benoit!

Marcello Good God - the landlord!

Schaunard Bolt the door!

Colline *(out loud)*
No one is here!

Schaunard Locked!

Benoit One word, if you please.

Schaunard Alright - but just one.

Benoit *(entering)*
The rent!

Marcello Hey there. Give the man a chair.

Rodolfo Quickly!

Benoit No, that's not necessary.

Schaunard Please sit down.

Marcello Some wine?

Benoit Thank you!

Rodolfo To your health!

Benoit This is the last quarter . . .

Schaunard Another glass?

Benoit Thank you.
. . . and therefore . . .

All We drink to your health!

Benoit . . . your rent is past due and
you promised to pay it.

Marcello And we will keep our promise.

Rodolfo & Schaunard
(aside) Are you crazy?

Marcello *(showing Benoit the sack of
money)*
You see?
We have it ready for you.
Now, stay a while and keep us
company.
Tell me, dear signor Benoit,
how old are you?

Benoit My age? Please!

Rodolfo More or less our age?

Benoit Oh no -- older -- much older.

Marcello The other evening, at Café Mabil,
I saw you in the throws of
passion! You deny it?

Benoit Well . . .

Marcello And she was beautiful.

Benoit . . . Yes -- Very!

All You rogue - What a seducer.

Marcello He's like a sturdy old oak tree --
like a cannon!
Her hair blond and curly.
And he strutted like a rooster!

Benoit I may be old, but I've still got it!

Marcello And feminine virtue falls before
him.

Benoit I was bashful as a boy, and now
I'm making up for it.
You know, common girls are my
weakness. They are so curvaceous
and healthy!
Now, don't get me wrong -
I don't like them too plump --
but skinny ones are no fun at all.
All they do is complain,
just like my wife!

Marcello What? You have a wife? Infamy!

Rodolfo The stench of his infidelity infects
our honest abode!

Marcello We must fumigate the place!

Colline Drive him out!

Schaunard My morality is offended!

Benoit But I . . . But you . . .

All Out with you this instant!

*(slamming the door behind the
bewildered landlord)*

And have a pleasant evening, your
lordship Benoit. Ha! Ha! Ha!

Marcello Well -- we've paid the rent!

Schaunard And now off to Café
Momus.

Marcello Long life to the banker!

Schaunard We'll divide the loot!

Marcello In the Latin Quarter it seems the
beauties descend as if from
heaven.

(to Colline) Now that we're rich,
pay tribute to common decency:
Bear! Arrange your fur!

Colline First chance I get I will lead my
beard to his executioner.
Guide me to that ridiculous
outrage you call a barber!
Let's go.

Rodolfo I want to stay behind and finish this article for *The Beaver*.
(Mimi is seized by a fit of coughing)
You're not well!

Marcello Make it quick.
Mimi No . . . It's nothing.

Rodolfo Five minutes.
I know how to finish it.
Rodolfo You're so pale.

Colline We'll wait for you outside.
Mimi My breath . . . Those stairs.
(she faints)

Marcello If you're late - you'll suffer our singing!
Rodolfo What do I do now?
(sprinkling some water on her face)

Rodolfo Five minutes and I'll cut the tail off this beaver!
Such a lovely, yet pale visage.
(she comes around)
Do you feel better?

(Marcello, Colline and Schaunard leave)
Mimi Yes.

Marcello *(from the stairwell)*
Watch where you're going!
Rodolfo It is so cold in here.
Come, sit by the fire.
Wait. A little wine?

Colline It's pitch black in this hallway!
Mimi Thank you. But just a little.

Schaunard Damned doorman!
Rodolfo Like this?

Colline I'm injured!
Mimi Like that. Thank you.

Rodolfo Colline - are you dead?
Rodolfo *(aside)* She is so lovely.

Colline Not yet.
Mimi Now, if you would be so kind as to light my candle, I will be off.

Marcello Rodolfo - be quick about it.
Rodolfo So soon?

Rodolfo I'm not in the mood to write.
Mimi Yes. Thank you. Good night.
(exits)

(He puts his pen aside. Jus then, a timid knock at the door)
Who is it?
Rodolfo Good night.

Mimi Excuse me.
Mimi *(from the hallway)*
Oh! How awful,
I have lost my key in your room.
How can I find it?

Rodolfo A woman!
Rodolfo Don't stand at the doorway,
your candle will go out again.

Mimi If you please, my candle has gone out.
Mimi Goodness!
Come back and light it.

Rodolfo Come in.
Rodolfo Please, do come in.

Mimi Would you please . . .
Rodolfo Make yourself comfortable.
Mimi No, that's not necessary.
Rodolfo *(blowing his out)*
Oh my! Mine has also gone out!

Mimi How can I find my key?
I'm so sorry for all this trouble.

Rodolfo It's pitch black in here.
Where could it be?

Mimi Inopportune was my coming –
I am so sorry.

Rodolfo No, no. It's nothing.

(they both are on the floor groping for the key)

Mimi Search!

Rodolfo I am searching.

(Rodolfo finds the key. Saying nothing he puts it in his pocket and takes Mimi's hand)

Aria

How cold your tiny hand is,
come, let me
warm it back to life.
It is useless to search in this
darkness.
But, by fortune, the moon
illuminates the night,
and will help our search.
But not just yet.
Just a few words to tell you
who I am, what I do, how I live.
Is that alright?

Mimi Yes.

Rodolfo Who am I? I am a poet.
What do I do? I write.
And how do I live? I live!
In poverty I am wealthy,
living as a grand lord, with my
rhymes and songs of love.
With dreams and illusions and
castles in the air, my soul is a
millionaire.

But sometimes all my jewels are
stolen from my fortress by two
thieves: beautiful eyes.

You entered and your lovely eyes
have quickly stolen my beautiful
dreams.

But I don't grieve this theft

Because you have brought to this
room a radiant hope.
Now that you know a bit about
me, will you tell me who you are?

Mimi *Aria*

Yes. I am called Mimi, but my
name is really Lucy. My story is
a short one.

I embroider linens and silk in my
house. I am content and happy,
and as a pastime, I make lilies.
I love those things that have a
special charm; those things that
speak of love, and of springtime.
Those things that speak of dreams
and illusions; those things we call
poetry. You understand?

Rodolfo Yes.

Mimi They call me Mimi; why, I don't
know.
I usually dine alone, and I rarely
go to church,
but I often pray to the Lord.
I live alone in a white room from
which I can see the rooftops, and
the sky. But when winter is over,
the first ray of spring is mine.
The first kiss of April is for me.
My rose buds begin to open; and
one by one I watch the petals
grow. So gentle is the perfume of
a flower.
But the lilies I make, alas, have no
perfume. There really is not much
more to tell.
I am your neighbor who has come
at an awkward moment.

Schaunard *(from the street)*
Hey! Rodolfo!

Marcello Hey! Can't you hear us you snail!

Colline Poetaster - come on!

Schaunard Damn your laziness!

Rodolfo I have to write three more lines
and I'm done.

Mimi Who are they?

Rodolfo My friends.

Schaunard You'll feel our wrath . . .

Marcello What can you be doing up there
all by yourself?

Rodolfo I'm not alone. Someone is with
me. You go ahead to Momus.
Get a table - we'll be there shortly.

All Momus. Gently and with discretion
we're off to find love and poetry.

Duet

Rodolfo Oh gentle girl; your sweet face is
radiant in the gentle moonlight.
In you I recognize the dream I
have dreamed so long. My soul
trembles at your gentleness.
(he embraces her)

Mimi Love alone commands.
(pulling away)
No, please.

Rodolfo You are mine!

Mimi But your friends are waiting for
us.

Rodolfo Do you want me to leave?

Mimi I want to say . . . No, I dare not.

Rodolfo Say it.

Mimi May I come with you?

Rodolfo What? Mimi!
It would be so sweet to stay here.
It's freezing out there.

Mimi You will be close to me.

Rodolfo And when we return?

Mimi We'll see.

Rodolfo Give me your arm, my lady.

Mimi I obey, my lord.

Rodolfo That you love me -- say it.

Mimi I love you.

Together Love.

Act II The Latin Quarter

"Mademoiselle Musetta was a pretty girl of
twenty. Very coquettish; somewhat
ambitious; but not pretentious. Those
delightful dinners at the Latin Quarter. A
perpetual coming and going of blue
broughams and an omnibus; from the Rue
Breda and the Latin Quarter. 'Well, what do
you want? From time to time I myself need
to breathe the air of this life. My mad
existence is like a song; each of my loves is
a strophe' - but Marcello is not the refrain."
*From Scenes de la vie de Boheme by Henri
Murger*

*(The scene is filled with people milling
about, street vendors of all kinds, children,
entertainments, all in front of Café Momus)*

People What chaos! What an uproar!

Vendors Oranges! Dates! Fine Nougat!
Whipped Cream! Caramel!
Flowers for your sweetheart!
Kick-Knacks!

Schaunard *(testing a French horn)*
This 'd' is out of tune.
How much for the flute and the
horn?

Colline *(buying an overcoat)*
It seems a bit shabby, but it's a
good coat, and cheap too.

Rodolfo *(to Mimi)*
Come along. Hold my arm
tightly.

Mimi Let's go look for a new bonnet.
Yes, I will hold tightly to your
arm.

Marcello Even my shouting
"Who wants a bit of love, my
ladies?" would be in vain!
(accosting a passing girl)
Do you want my wounded heart?

Schaunard	The crowd delights in pushing and shoving in this mad endeavor!	Students	Let's go to Momus! ParpignolParpignol is here with his toys!
Colline	<i>(now looking at a book)</i> A rare copy; rather unique; the grammar of Runic!	Rodolfo	<i>(entering the café, to the waiter)</i> Two seats - here we are.
Marcello	Onward to dinner! <i>(seeing Rodolfo)</i> Ah! He's acquired a seamstress!	Colline	Finally!
Rodolfo	Come, my friends are waiting.	Rodolfo	This is Mimi, my cheerful flower maker. Her joining us completes this wonderful company. I am the poet -- she the poem. From my imagination flow songs, from her hands flowers. From our rejoicing souls love flows!
Mimi	Don't you like this new red bonnet?	All	Ha! Ha!
Rodolfo	The color is perfect for you.	Marcello	Lord, such lofty wit.
Mimi	<i>(looking into another shop window)</i> What a lovely coral necklace!	Colline	<i>(with a low, exaggerated bow to Mimi -speaking in Latin)</i> A worthy introduction.
Rodolfo	I have an uncle who's a millionaire. If the good Lord takes him, I'll have enough to buy a necklace far more beautiful for you! <i>(Rodolfo and Mimi enter the Café. She notices a group of handsome students)</i>	Schaunard	<i>(with droll dignity)</i> Department is required.
	What are you looking at?	Colline	<i>(snapping at Schaunard)</i> I'll not grant you an accessit! Waiter! Salami!
Mimi	Are you jealous?	Children	Here is Parpignol! I want the toy trumpet! I want the toy horse! I want the cannon! For me the toy soldiers!
Rodolfo	To a true love, suspicion is always close at hand.	Schaunard	<i>(to the waiter)</i> Roast boar! German wine! And lobster - without the shell!
Mimi	Are you happy?	Mothers	<i>(to their children who have surrounded Parpignol)</i> You rascally children -- what do you think you're doing? We're going home! To bed! Go on -- or will get a whipping! Off to bed!
Rodolfo	Completely.	One boy	<i>(crying)</i> I want the toy trumpet and the horse!
Colline	I hate the vulgar mob, as did Horace!	Rodolfo	And Mimi, what would you like?
Schaunard	And I need space when I'm ready to satiate my appetite.		
Marcello	<i>(to the waiter)</i> We want the choicest of suppers! Quickly!		
Colline	For many of us!		

Mimi Some custard. stand any more!

Schaunard *(to the waiter)* Musetta *(as if calling a pet dog)*
 And the best you have! She is a Heel, Lulu! Sit here.
 lady.

Marcello Mademoiselle Mimi, what rare Schaunard That old fellow is earning
 gift has your Rodolfo given you? his keep.

Mimi A delicate rose colored Alcindoro What! Outside? Here?
 embroidered bonnet. It suits my Musetta Sit, Lulu.
 dark hair. I've admired it for some Alcindoro *(grumbling)*
 time now, and he read my desire Please keep these nicknames
 in my heart. He who can read my between us.
 heart is the author of love.

Schaunard Yes, an expert professor . . . Musetta Oh, don't be a mean Bluebeard.

Colline Who has earned his diploma, and Colline *(looking Alcindoro over)*
 not only with his poems. Dignified -- but still a dirty old
 man.

Schaunard Every word he says seems Marcello *(spitefully)*
 to be true. With the pure Susanna!

Marcello Oh this beautiful age of utopian Mimi Whose very well dressed!
 deception! If you believe, hope, Rodolfo The angels are naked by
 then everything will appear for comparison.
 you!

Rodolfo My friend, the most divine of all Mimi *(to Rodolfo)*
 poems is that which teaches us Do you know her? Who is she?
 love.

Mimi Love is sweeter than honey. Marcello You can ask me that question.
 Her name is Musetta.
 Last name - Temptation!
 For her avocation, like roses in the
 wind, is to go back and forth from
 one lover to the next.
 Like a coquettish bird of prey --
 and her food: The Heart!

Marcello To some palates, the honey tastes Musetta *(aside)*
 like gall! Marcello is here.
 But he's ignoring me, the villain!
 Schaunard is laughing!
 They are provoking me!
 Oh, if I could beat him and claw at
 him!
 But I have this old pelican to
 contend with. But wait!
*(grabbing a plate from a nearby
 table)*

Mimi *(to Rodolfo, surprised)* Rodolfo He's mourning, dear Mimi.

Oh dear! I have offended him!

All A toast! Away with sorrows! We Rodolfo

drink!

Marcello *(hearing Musetta laughing)* All Oh! It's Musetta!

Bring me a glass of poison!

Women Look at her. Dressed to kill!

Alcindoro You treat me like a porter --
 running here and there! That's
 enough! Here I stay! I can't
 Hey! Waiter! This plate stinks
 from burned fat!

(throws the plate on the ground)

Alcindoro No, Musetta. Calm down!

Musetta He's still ignoring me. Now what? Oh, I could beat him!

Alcindoro Who are you talking to?

Musetta To the waiter. Don't bother me. I want to do as I please. And don't you bore me! *(aside)* Could he possibly be jealous of this old mummy? We'll see if I still have the power to sway him.

Schaunard This comedy is stupendous!

Musetta *(directly to Marcello)* So, you won't look at me! No? But I know your heart is pounding!

Rodolfo You know I would never forgive you if . . .

Mimi I love you, and am yours only. Why speak of forgiveness?

Schaunard *(commenting on Musetta's tirade)* She speaks to one, but wants the other to hear.

Colline And the other pretends not to hear, but laps up every word like honey.

Musetta *Aria*

(with exaggeration for Marcello's sake)

Whenever I want,
I can stroll alone down any street,
and everyone will stop and stare.
And all take in my beauty from
head to toe!

Marcello *(boiling with fury)*
Tie me down to this chair or I'll . . .

Alcindoro Stop this - what will people say?
This lewd song upsets me greatly.

Musetta *(continuing)*

And I savor subtle jealousy in
their eyes; And every man's
obvious ensnarement by my
fascinating beauty.
Thus an outburst of desire
encircles me;
And I am happy with my
conquest.

You hold the memories of our
past, so why flee from them?
Very well.
You rather die than confess your
anguish.

Mimi I see it now. She is still in love
with Marcello.

Rodolfo Marcello loved her. But she left
him for someone with money.

Schaunard Ah! Marcello will soon
give in. He will find her trap to be
sweet.

Colline Great gods above, never allow
Colline to fall into such a trap.

Musetta Ah, Marcello is weakening - he is
vanquished.

Mimi I feel sorry for her.

Musetta Now I must get rid of the
old man. *(pretending to suffer a
violent pain in her foot)* Ah! Such
pain, such suffering!

Alcindoro Where?

Musetta My foot!
*(Alcindoro unties her shoe and
goes off to buy a replacement)*

Marcello My goddess, you are not dead
after all, for love has revived you!

Schaunard & Colline
This comedy is truly stupendous!

Musetta Marcello!

Marcello Enchantress!

Schaunard Now for the finale.

All The bill? So soon?

Colline Who asked him to bring it?

Schaunard Let's see . . . *(takes the bill and passes it around)*

All Oh dear! All the money has disappeared! We're broke!

Rodolfo I only have thirty livre left!

All What? That's all?

Schaunard What happened to my fortune?
(the sound of a parade is heard entering the square)

Musetta The parade is coming this way.

All We'll leave the bill for the old man!

Musetta *(to the waiter, placing the bills at Alcindoro's place)*
And give my gentleman friend who was sitting here my regards!

All Yes, give our gentleman friend our regards!

Marcello See. Here comes the parade. Let's follow it and the old man will never find us in the crowd.

All Here is the parade. Here is the drum major! He looks like a general! How grand, what splendor.

(the bohemians, with Mimi and Musetta, follow the band out of the square as Alcindoro returns, only to be presented with the bill by the waiter as the curtain falls.)

Act III Outside the city walls.
The Barriere d'enfer.

"Mimi's voice was as a sound that penetrated Rodolfo's heart like a death knell . . . He, however, had a love for her that was consumed by bizarre, eccentric jealousy. . . Twenty times they were at the point of

separating . . . It must be confessed that their existence was a living hell. Nonetheless, in the midst of this tempest of strife, they would agree to enjoy the pleasures of a night of love . . . but at dawn a new battle drove love away. Thus - if life it was - a few happy days alternated with many wretched ones, awaiting divorce."
From Scenes de la vie de Boheme by Henri Murger

Peasants *(shouting at the customs guards)*
Hola! Guards! Open up!
Let us in. We're street sweepers.
(stamping their feet from the cold)
It's snowing out here! We're freezing!

Guard I'm coming.

People *(from within the tavern)*
Who enjoys a glass of beer - pass the glass. From your lips I find love!

Musetta Ah! If in your glass is pleasure, then in the young mouth is love.

Guards *(seeing some women approach)*
The milk maids are here.

Milk maids Good morning. We bring butter, cheese and eggs to St. Michaels. We should be there by mid-day.

(as the scene clears of merchants, Mimi enters. She looks anxious, as if not sure of her whereabouts. She is seized by a violent fit of coughing, but recovers herself and continues, approaching the guard.)

Mimi Excuse me. Can you tell me if this is the inn where a certain painter is now working?

Guard Yes, this is it.

Mimi *(approaching a woman who has just come out of the inn)*
Oh, good woman, if you would do me the favor of finding the painter Marcello. I need to speak with him urgently. Tell him, quietly, that Mimi is here waiting for him.

Guard *(to some passersby)*
 Hey! What's in those baskets?
(searching them)
 They're empty. You may pass.

Duet

Marcello Mimi?

Mimi I hoped to find you here.

Marcello Yes. We've been here for about a month.
 Musetta teaches singing to the travelers and I'm doing a portrait of the regiment for the façade of the inn.
 It's cold. Come inside.

Mimi Is Rodolfo here?

Marcello Yes.

Mimi I can't enter then.

Marcello Why?

Mimi Oh! Good hearted Marcello, help me!

Marcello What has happened?

Mimi Rodolfo loves me, yet he has left me -- my
 Rodolfo is consumed with jealousy!
 A passing glance, a single word, a single flower suffice to raise his jealousy and his fury.
 One night, feigning to be asleep, I could tell he was awake, staring at me. He screams at me: "You are not mine! You've taken another lover!" It's his temper speaking, I know, but how can I answer him, Marcello?

Marcello If it is like this, you should not live together.

Mimi You're right. I should let him go. But help us, Marcello, we've tried before and can't stay apart. It is for the best.

Marcello *(to himself)*

I am so happy with Musetta, and she with me.
 Our life here is carefree -- singing and laughing -- the flowers of undying love.
(to Mimi)
 Very well, I'll try. I'll go wake him.

Mimi He's asleep?

Marcello He arrived an hour before dawn, exhausted.
 So he is resting inside. You can see him through this window.
(she is seized with another fit of coughing) But you're ill.

Mimi Since yesterday it has gotten worse, shaking me to the bone. And now he walked out last night saying, "It's over." At daybreak I hurried here to find him.

Marcello *(looking through the window)*
 He's waking up - he's looking for me. Come.

Mimi No. He must not see me.

Marcello Then please go home quickly, Mimi. I will speak to him. Don't make a scene here.
(Mimi leaves, but hides behind the tree, listening to their conversation)

Trio

Rodolfo Marcello, finally I can talk to you with no one hearing me. I want to end it with Mimi.

Marcello Can you really be so fickle?

Rodolfo Before this time the love in my heart was already dying; but her beautiful blue eyes once again restored it.
 Now, boredom attacks it . . .

Marcello And you want to complete your heart's funeral?

Rodolfo Forever!

Marcello Think it over. Only madmen
revel in a love that is gloomy and
brings tears. If it doesn't laugh
and sparkle, love is weak.
You are jealous.

Rodolfo A little.

Marcello You're sick, a lunatic, filled with
stubborn, troubling
preconceptions!

Mimi *(to herself)* That will make him
lose his temper. Ahime, he'll
blame me.

Rodolfo Mimi is a coquette who flirts with
everyone. A little dandy Viscount
makes fish eyes at her; and she
wiggles and shows her ankle to
entice him . . .

Marcello I must tell you, my friend; that
doesn't sound sincere.

Rodolfo Alright -- no. I am not being
sincere. In vain I try to hide my
true torment. I love Mimi above
everything in the world -- I love
her, but I am afraid.
Mimi is so sick! Every day she is
worse. The poor girl is doomed!

Marcello Mimi?

Mimi What is this he is saying?

Rodolfo A terrible cough shakes her fragile
chest, and already her emaciated
cheeks are flushed . . .

Marcello Poor Mimi!

Mimi Alas, am I truly dying?

Rodolfo My room is a squalid little place;
there is no fire; and that damned
north wind enters my pathetic
place and blows about.
Yet she sings and smiles, and I'm
consumed with guilt!
It is my fault this cough is killing
her.

Marcello What to do, then?

Mimi Oh -- my life!

Rodolfo Mimi is like a delicate flower that
poverty has blighted;
Love is not enough to restore her
health.

Marcello Poor Mimi.

Mimi My life is over -- alas, to die!
*(she is overcome with coughing,
mixed with tears)*

Rodolfo What? Mimi, you're here?
You've heard me?

Marcello She was listening?

Rodolfo Don't be frightened; it was
nothing; you know how my
temper can take over what I say.
(indicating the tavern)
Come here in the warmth.

Mimi No, the moldy smell in there will
choke me!

Rodolfo Ah, Mimi. *(taking her hands)*

Marcello *(hearing Musetta laughing in the
tavern)*
That's Musetta laughing.
Who is she laughing with?
Ah, you flirt! I'll teach you!

Mimi Goodbye.

Rodolfo What? You're going?

Mimi *Aria*

Mimi is going back to her happy
nest, that she left when she heard
your call of love.
She returns to weave false
flowers!
Goodbye - we part without
bitterness.
Listen, gather the few things I left
scattered in your room. You'll
find that gold ring in my drawer;
and the book of prayers.
Wrap everything in an apron and I
will send someone for them . . .
Mind you, under the pillow is our
pink bonnet.

If you want -- keep it as a memory
of our love...
Goodbye - we part without
bitterness.

Quartet

Rodolfo Then it's really over!
You're leaving, my little one?
Goodbye dreams of love!

Mimi Goodbye sweet mornings, rising
together!

Rodolfo Goodbye, life of dreams . . .

Mimi Goodbye jealousies and rebukes!

Rodolfo Which one of your smiles would
calm.

Mimi Goodbye suspicions . . .

Rodolfo Kisses . . .

Mimi Sharp bitterness . . .

Rodolfo Which I, as a true poet, rhymed
with 'caresses'!

Together Alone in winter, causes one
to die!

Mimi Alone.

Together While in spring, there is the
sun for a companion.
*(Musetta and Marcello are heard
arguing)*

Marcello What were you doing?
What were you saying?

Musetta What do you mean?

Marcello By the fire - with that grand
gentleman?

Musetta What are you saying?

Mimi *(to Rodolfo, ignoring the
quarreling lovers)*
No one is alone in April . . .

Marcello You blushed when you saw me
come in.

Musetta That gentleman only asked:
"Do you like dancing, miss?"

Marcello Vain, frivolous flirt!

Rodolfo *(to Mimi, ignoring Musetta and
Marcello)*
One can speak with lilies and
roses ...

Mimi And the sound of hatchlings in
their nest . . .

Musetta Yes, I blushed and answered him:
"I would dance from evening to
morning . . .

Marcello You're not telling me everything.

Musetta I want my freedom!

Marcello I could strike you for saying that!
If I catch you flirting,
Mind you, some things I won't put
up with.

Musetta Don't take that tone with me!
We're not married!
I detest lovers who behave like
husbands!

Mimi & Rodolfo The fountains chatter, the breeze
of evening calms the suffering
soul.

Marcello I won't be make a laughing stock!

Musetta I make love with whomever I
please!

Marcello You vain, frivolous flirt!
You're going! Good!
I'm the richer for it.

Musetta Musetta's leaving - yes!

Musetta & Marcello
Get out!

Mimi & Rodolfo
Do you want to wait until
Yes, we'll leave each other
at the season of flowers.

Musetta Hack - housepainter!

Marcello Viper!

Musetta Toad!

Marcello Witch!

Mimi I wish this winter would last forever.

Act IV. The apartment of Act I

At that time, yes for some time, the friends lived alone. Musetta once again took up with a public official - for three or four months Marcello did not see her. And Mimi too -- Rodolfo had no word from her, except when he talked to himself about her. One day, Marcello secretly kissed a bunch of flowers, thinking of Musetta; and he saw Rodolfo hiding the bonnet - that rose colored bonnet - left behind by Mimi. 'Good', muttered Marcello, 'he is as miserable as I!' A gay life - and a terrible one. *From Scenes de la vie de Boheme by Henri Murger*

(Marcello is once again at his easel, and Rodolfo is seated at a table. They try to convince each other that they are busy working, but all they do is talk to each other)

Marcello She was in a carriage?

Rodolfo With a pair of horses and a coachman.
She waved and smiled at me.
"Why, Musetta!" I said to her:
"What of your heart?" And she replied:
"It doesn't beat, or I don't feel it

...

Thanks to this rich velvet that covers it."

Marcello I am truly delighted to hear this.

Rodolfo *(to himself)*
Go on, you hypocrite. You laugh outside, but are consumed with rage inside.

Marcello Doesn't beat? Good! And I saw...

Rodolfo Musetta?

Marcello Mimi.

Rodolfo *(shuddering at first, then with composure)*
You saw her? Well fancy that.

Marcello She was in a carriage, dressed like a queen.

Rodolfo Hurrah! I am happy about it.

Marcello *(to himself)*
Liar. He's consumed with love.

Together Back to work.
(they start back to work)

Rodolfo What a terrible pen!

Marcello What a wretched brush!

Duet

Rodolfo Oh Mimi, to return no more;
Oh beautiful days gone by.
Your tiny hands and fragrant hair

Your neck as pure as snow!
Ah, Mimi, the love of my brief youth.

Marcello I don't know how it is, but my brush mixes colors and paints against my will.
If I want to paint skies or landscapes, or winters or springs, my brush draws two dark eyes for me, then an alluring mouth; and out comes the face of Musetta once again with its charm, and its deceit.
Meanwhile Musetta enjoys herself while my cowardly heart calls for her, and waits.

Rodolfo And you, lovely bonnet that she hid under the pillow; you know all our happiness.
Come, little bonnet, I place you on my heart, for love is dead.

Rodolfo What time is it?

Marcello	Time for dinner -- yesterday's!	Some mystery?
Rodolfo	And Schaunard hasn't returned yet? <i>(Schaunard and Colline enter, carrying four-loaves of bread)</i>	Schaunard
Schaunard	Here we are!	Colline
Rodolfo	Well?	The King has called me to the ministry.
Marcello	<i>(with disdain)</i> Well? Only some bread?	Rodolfo, Marcello & Schaunard
Colline	<i>(bringing out a herring)</i> It is a dish worthy of Demosthenes: A herring!	Good!
Schaunard	Salted!	Colline
Colline	Dinner is on the table. <i>(they sit, pretending to enjoy a sumptuous banquet)</i>	<i>(with feigned importance)</i> However, I will see Prime Minister Guizot!
Marcello	This abundance is worthy of Carnival!	Schaunard
Schaunard	<i>(putting Colline's hat on the table and placing a bottle of water in it)</i> Now to put the champagne on ice.	<i>(to Marcello)</i> Hand me the goblet!
Rodolfo	<i>(to Marcello)</i> Choose, oh Baron -- trout or salmon?	Marcello
Marcello	<i>(to Schaunard)</i> Duke -- would you like a tongue of parrot?	Yes! Drink; I'm feasting.
Schaunard	No, thank you -- it is too fattening. This evening I must go to the ball. <i>(Colline getting up from his chair)</i>	Schaunard
Rodolfo	<i>(to Colline)</i> You're full?	<i>(with feigned solemnity)</i> If this noble company would permit me . . .
Colline	<i>(with feigned solemnity)</i> I am in a hurry. The King awaits me.	Rodolfo & Colline
Marcello	Is there some plot?	<i>(stopping him)</i> Enough!
Rodolfo, Marcello & Schaunard		Marcello
		<i>(after having tasted the wine)</i> Weak!
		Colline
		What a concoction!
		Marcello
		Get out!
		Colline
		Give me the goblet!
		Schaunard
		<i>(feigning inspiration)</i> I'm inspired by the genius of song!
		Rodolfo, Marcello & Schaunard
		No!
		Schaunard
		Some choreography, then?
		Rodolfo, Marcello & Schaunard
		Yes!
		Schaunard
		A dance, accompanied by song!
		Colline
		Clear the halls! <i>(they move the furniture, preparing themselves for 'the ball')</i>

Colline Gavotte.

Marcello Minuet.

Rodolfo A little pavanne.

Schaunard Fandango!

Colling I propose the quadrille.

Rodolfo Offer your hand to the ladies.

Colline I'll call the dance.

Schaunard *(singing)*
Lallera, lallera la . . . la

Rodolfo *(gallantly to Marcello)*
Charming little damsel . . .

Marcello Observe propriety. I beg you.

Colline *(acting as ballet master)*
Balancez!

Schaunard First the Rondo.

Colline No! You beast!

Schaunard What manners - like a lackey!

Colline You insult me, if I'm not mistaken!
(taking the fireplace tongs)
Unsheathe your sword!

Schaunard *(takes the fireplace shovel)*
Ready. Taste this! I want to drink your blood!

Colline *(fighting a mock duel)*
One of us will be disemboweled.

Schaunard Get a stretcher ready.

Colline Prepare the cemetery.
(while they 'duel', Rodolfo and Marcello dance around them, singing)

Rodolfo & Marcello
While combat rages, the
(the door flies open. Musetta, agitated, enters)

Marcello Musetta!

Musetta Mimi is here -- she is very sick.

Rodolfo Where is she?

Musetta Climbing the stairs her strength failed her.

Rodolfo *(running through the doorway)*
Ah!

Schaunard *(to Colline)*
Move the cot closer.

Rodolfo *(to his friends, after setting Mimi on the cot)*
There . . . Something to drink.
(Musetta gets some water)

Mimi Rodolfo.

Rodolfo Quiet now, rest.

Mimi Oh my Rodolfo! Do you want me here with you?

Rodolfo Ah! My Mimi -- always, always!

Musetta *(quietly)*
I heard that Mimi left the Viscount;
That she was near death.
Where could she have gone? I searched . . .
Then I saw her passing by me in the street . . .
Dragging herself.
She said, "I can't bear anymore; I'm dying, I can feel it. I want to die with him!
Maybe he is waiting for me . . ."

Mimi I feel much better . . .

Musetta ". . . Will you come with me, Musetta?"

Mimi Let me look around. Ah, how good it is here.
One is reborn. Once again I feel life here . . .
No, you ~~right have~~ ~~been~~ ~~said!~~ turns.

Rodolfo Blessed words; you speak to me once again.

Musetta	What do you have here?	Old coat, listen; I must stay behind while you return to the sacred mountain where I found you; Receive my thanks. Never did you bend your worn back to the rich and powerful. Rather, philosophers and poets passed through your pockets, as if they were peaceful grottoes. Now that happy days have fled, To you I bid farewell, my faithful friend. <i>(to Schaunard)</i>
Marcello	Nothing!	
Musetta	No coffee? No wine?	
Marcello	Nothing! Ah! Such poverty!	
Schaunard	<i>(sadly to Colline)</i> In half an hour, she will be dead!	
Mimi	I'm so cold . . . if I had a muff! These hands of mine; can they ever be warm?	
Rodolfo	Warm them here in mine! Quiet now; talking tires you so.	Schaunard, each of us, in our own way, should combine two acts of mercy; I sell my coat . . . and you, leave them here alone for awhile. <i>(they leave together)</i>
Mimi	I have a bit of a cough! But I am used to it. <i>(looking around, seeing everyone)</i> Good day Marcello; Schaunard, Colline, good day. All of you here, smiling at Mimi.	Mimi
Rodolfo	Don't try to talk.	Are they gone? I pretended to be asleep because I wanted to be alone with you. I have so many things to say to you; or only one; but it is as big as the sea -- deep and infinite: You are my love, and my life.
Mimi	I'm speaking softly, don't worry. Marcello listen to me: She's very good, your Musetta.	Rodolfo
Marcello	I know.	Ah Mimi; my beautiful Mimi.
Musetta	<i>(to Marcello; taking off her earrings)</i> Here . . . sell them and bring some medicine; and call for a doctor.	Mimi
Rodolfo	Rest now.	Am I still beautiful?
Mimi	You aren't leaving me?	Rodolfo
Rodolfo	No! No!	Beautiful like the dawn . . .
Musetta	<i>(to Marcello who is about to leave)</i> Listen! This may be the last time she asks for anything, poor thing! I'll go with you to buy a muff for her.	Mimi
Marcello	You are so good, my Musetta.	Your comparison is mistaken; you meant to say, "Beautiful like the sunset." They call me Mimi; why, I don't know. . .
Colline	<i>Aria</i> <i>(taking off his overcoat)</i>	Rodolfo
		<i>(finishing her thought)</i> The singing swallow has returned to the nest. <i>(he takes the bonnet and hands it to her)</i>
		Mimi
		My bonnet . . . Ah! Do you remember the first time I came here?
		Rodolfo
		Do I remember . . . ?
		Mimi
		The fire had gone out . . .

Rodolfo You were so upset! Then you lost your key . . .

Mimi And you, groping, began looking for it.

Rodolfo And I looked . . .and looked.

Mimi My dear sir, I can tell you now; I know you found it quickly, and hid it.

Rodolfo I was just helping destiny.

Mimi The room was dark and you couldn't see me blushing.
(quoting Rodolfo)
"How cold your tiny hand is, come, let me warm it back to life." It was dark, and you took my hand. . .

(suddenly she is overcome with coughing)

Rodolfo Oh! God! Mimi!

Schaunard *(entering)*
What's happened?

Mimi Nothing, I'm alright.

Rodolfo Hush now, for pity's sake.

Mimi Yes, yes, forgive me, now I'll be good.

(Musetta and Marcello enter with a muff and medicine)

Musetta *(to Rodolfo)* Is she asleep?

Rodolfo Yes, she's resting.

Marcello I've seen the doctor: he say's he'll come. I told him to hurry. Here's the cordial.

Mimi Who is it who's talking?

Musetta Me --Musetta.

Mimi *(holding the muff)*
Oh, how soft and lovely.

No more pale cold hands. The warmth of the muff will make them beautiful again.
(to Rodolfo) Did you give it to me?

Musetta *(preempting Rodolfo's reply)* Yes.

Mimi You spend thrift! Thank you. But the cost . . . You're crying? I'm well now . . . No need to cry like this.
(dozing off little by little)
Here, love . . . always with you . . .

The hands . . . warm . . . and . . . to sleep.

Rodolfo *(to Marcello)*
What did the doctor say?

Marcello That he'll come.

Musetta *(warming the phial over the lamp, almost unconsciously praying)*
Blessed Mother, be merciful on this poor one, who must not die.
(to Marcello)

The lamp is flickering from the draft, bring a screen. *(Marcello complies)*
Like that.
(resuming her prayer)

And that she may recover, Holy Mother; I am not worthy of forgiveness, But Mimi is an angel from Heaven.

Rodolfo *(coming over to Musetta)*
I still have hope. Do you think it's serious?

Musetta I don't believe so.
(Schaunard has gone to the cot to see Mimi, then, quietly approached Marcello)

Schaunard Marcello . . . she's gone.

Colline *(entering, gives some money to Musetta)*
Musetta . . . for you.
(approaching Rodolfo) How is she?

Rodolfo See? She's quiet not.
*(he looks at Marcello who, filled
with dismay, looks at him with
profound pity)*

What does this mean?
Why are you looking like that?

Marcello Courage!

Rodolfo *(realizing Mimi has expired, he
runs to the cot)* Mimi!

End