

THE CHARACTER MIMI FROM THE OPERA "LA BOHÈME" BY GIACOMO PUCCINI. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LIBRETTO, STORY AND CHARACTER, AS A MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

The most representative work belonging to Puccini "La Bohème" sets up a portrait of the young Bohemians from the Latin neighbourhood of the Paris in the 1840s, with emphasis on the relationship between Rodolfo and Mimi. The opera is inspired by the novel "Scènes de la vie de bohème" belonging to the French writer Henri Murger and is based on a libretto belonging to Luigi Illinca and Giuseppe Giacosa. The four acts present most of the details of the novel and of the play. Using the tragic love story between Rodolfo and Mimi, the composer presents not only the passion the spiritual unrest of two youngsters, but also the romanticism full of artistic verve from the France of that beautiful period (Belle Époque). The young characters and their story represent the defining elements of Puccini's work, which has been fascinating the public over the years. In this studio we shall try to establish the connection between the story, character and music.

Keywords: *opera, verism, character, libretto.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Four friends – the poet Rodolfo, the painter Marcello, the musician Schaubard and the philosopher Colline – share their daily joys and worries in an attic in Paris. It's Christmas Eve and their mood is spoiled by the owner, who came to collect the rent. The four manage to drive him away and decide to spend the rest of the evening at the Momus coffee shop. Because he needed to stay home for a few minutes, Rodolfo is unexpectedly visited by his neighbour, Mimi. The two like each other, confess their love and leave together towards the coffee shop. Using the tragic love story between Rodolfo and Mimi, the composer presents not only the passion the spiritual unrest of two youngsters, but also the romanticism full of artistic verve from the France of that beautiful period (Belle Époque). Puccini's work recorded immediate success, starting from

its premiere 1896, at the Regio Theatre in Torino, having Arturo Toscanini as conductor. Memorable arias, young characters and a love heartrending story – are all defining elements of Puccini's work, which have been fascinating the lovers of the genre ever since and which have inspired great modern music productions, such as the rock musical "Rent" in 1996 (CARNER, 1992). An opera characterized by a seductive lyricism, that constantly runs between the joy of life, the enthusiasm of love and the abyss of hope, introduces us to the Bohemian atmosphere of Paris in the 1830s, where four friends share joys and sorrows in a cheap attic in Paris, on Christmas Eve. This is the night in which Rodolfo meets the delicate Mimi, his neighbour, he passionately falls for her and together they start a beautiful love story (DEGRADA et al., 1983).

The couple's initial happiness is shadowed by Rodolfo's unjustified jealousy and doubt. Mimi confesses to Marcello, who then reveals to Rodolfo the girl's lung disease, aggravated by the poor environment in which they were living together. Taking into account the fact that Mimi had to find a rich protector to pay for her treatment, Rodolfo recommends a friendly separation. A few months later, Rodolfo and Marcello, determined to dedicate themselves to creation, feel sadness due to their separation from their girlfriends, Mimi and Musetta. The atmosphere is animated by the short visit of their friends Colline and Schaubard, until Musetta's arrival, which announced a visit from Mimi, who was in the agony of her illness. Impressed, her old friends try to offer her comfort in the small attic, remembering all the moments they had

spent together. Mimi declares her honest love for Rodolpho. As a last token of friendship, the four offer her a muff as a gift, and Mimi dies in peace, surrounded by the love of her friends (ADAMI, 1928).

2. PUCINNI'S STRUCTURAL PARTICULARITIES

During the "fin-de-siecle period", the new enthusiastic and cosmopolitan Italian culture demanded, in an exigent manner, every opera creation to come up with some novelty, creative, a personal formal world, a crystallisation in a unique and exclusive manner of the correspondence between music and drama - a situation that has never been met before. This may seem like a step forward, taking into account the ideal evolutionary process influenced by Wagner, therefore building a new musical drama, of an increased realism and a detachment from the rules and obstacles of the aesthetic genres, implicitly the fixed forms, sometimes sacrificing the fluency of the discourse. The regularity of the opera creations recorded a gradual descendent turn, composers continually seeking possible subjects, in the hope of finding an argument that might have presented both efficient drama and originality through the form of some new expressions (AMICO, 1962).

Tosca is an interesting subject from all points of view, as it mainly doesn't correspond to the Puccini's stereotypes. Even if it expresses a strong personal will, *Tosca* is manipulated in the first act, deceived by the lover and his antagonist, therefore becoming a passive victim; in the second act it genuinely suffers for her lover, but in the decisive moments it rises again with a force similar to *Turandot*, killing *Scarpia* and setting herself free from suffering. As a result, she dies at the end of the drama, again being deceived by her oppressor; her death at the end of act III is not similar to that of *Manon* and *Mimi*: *Tosca* chooses her own faith, in some way, fighting against her destiny in a fatalist manner. Again, the formal problem is based on considerations that show that they exclusively belong to an opera vision founded on drama. For a complete, updated and multiform image of the

protagonist's portrait it is necessary to contextually reassess it from the point of view of the structural particularities of the opera it belongs to. The example of the opera *Tosca* highlights better than any other the fundamental lines of this evolution and, certainly, indicates the ways in which Puccini succeeded where others usually failed. O reach reference material on the genesis of the artistic act gives us, almost immediately, the necessary coordinates. In 1889, immediately after the premiere of his second opera (*Edgar*), Puccini firstly expresses his enthusiasm about Sardou's drama, *La Tosca*, which he viewed in 1895 in Firenze, having Sarah Bernhardt as protagonist (DEGRADA, 1968).

Even if this first contact did not initially have any succession, Puccini re-staged the idea of the drama, since at the same time, from a compositional point of view, it confronted with his new opera, *Manon Lescaut*; in this period, his editor, Ricordi addressed the librettist Luigi Illica, asking for a first abstract of Sardou's text. *Manon Lescaut* was finished in 1894, Puccini and Illica having already started to work on *La Bohème* (1896); Illica already had lots of doubts about the drama, but Puccini was still enthusiastic, in the end managing to adjudge the subject. The nature of Illica's dissatisfactions and those of his partner Giuseppe Giacosa (whom Ricordi involved in this project up to the end of 1895), are significant, proving how far Puccini wanted to open new horizons with the help of all his recent new creations (CARNER, 1992).

La Bohème is an opera devoid of what we might call a significant weight of narrative responsibilities: both present long chronological breaks between acts and for this reason only they are structured as a series of contrasting paintings, each act developing a personal environment and to some extent, an autonomous drama. This relatively free structure and the fact that the action usually devolves, having minor importance, offers significant opportunities of inserting a series of small episodes, exaggerated emotive moments which interrupt action, offering music the necessary space to develop a sufficient lyrical discourse. These episodes functioned as the drama equivalent of the opera areas from the beginning of the 18th century, therefore allowing an alternation between action

and dreaming, a situation that has always been the heart of the Italian opera melos. An important element for the exceptional public success of those two opera stems without any doubt from the fact this structural characteristic, as one of Puccini's major qualities consists of its infallible capacity to balance the preciseness and importance of these episodes in the complex economy of the dramatic context (CAMERONI, 1872).

3. THE RODOLFO - MIMI DUET - CHI È L'À??(ACT I)

Mimi's first stage appearance corresponds to her first meeting with Rodolfo. The scene presents in a relatively short period of time the heroine's major traits (the social status, the precarious health status), although her lines are rare and laconic. In the first section of the scene, the melodic discourse of the feminine character is characterised by a uniformity of the sound part, due to the obsessive repeat of the *la* sound (the dominant tonality *re major*, in which the musical moment is placed). Every line is highlighted by separating it from the rest of the discourse, with the help of breaks: *Scusi./ Di grazia/ mi s'è spento il lume./ Vorrebbe?../Non occorre*. The individuality of the character is emphasized by the double intone in the accompaniment's design of the leitmotif, that will accompany the heroine's every appearance throughout the opera. The next moment of this scene is characterized by the minimum participation of the female character. Its replies are lapidary, with prevalent negation content, the heroine wanting to hide her health status from her neighbour: *No..., nulla*. Her most significant intervention is opposed to the prior ones, due both to the dimension of the melodic microstructure and her intonational character, which goes beyond the recitative sphere up to outlining a clear melodic line, with repetitive symmetric interval content. The unity element of the melodic plan is represented by the repetition of the *la sound*, a melodic constant which could also be found in the previous fragment (RUBBOLI, 1990).

Although the melodic plan for the female character is discontinuous and synthetic, the

general sonorosity is achieved at the level of the accompaniment, which processes one of the major leitmotifs of the opera, that of Mimi's illness. The second cell of this melodic element having a symbolic role is transposed in successively descendent octaves, therefore determining the activation of the discourse, which culminates, in the drama plan, with the heroine's faint. The same discontinuous and lapidary character of the female character's discourse characterises the last fragment of that scene. Together with Mimi's short answering interventions, we find towards the end a more ample melodic segment, having a recitative character, built on the basis of the repetition of the *si sound* with short divagations towards other intonation structures. The recitative aspect of the character's intervention is emphasized by the development of the accompaniment, reduced to a series of chord pedals (DEGRADA et al., 1983).

4. MIMI'S ARIAL SI, MI CHIAMANO MIMI! (ACT I)

Although the musical discourse is placed in the *re major* tonality, the intonation structure of this symbolic melodic idea is marked by the presence of numerous adulterated elements (*sib, fa becar, sol#*), which destabilizes the tone centre, gradually developing towards the dominant tonality (*la major*), instating through the created dissonances, an ambiguous atmosphere of restlessness, which defines the main character's psychological trait. The combination between gradual walking and successive leaps as well as the progressive activation of the rhythmical side, by using punctuated formulas contributes to the achievement of a live sound image, full of vitality, which corresponds to the description of the heroine in the three appearances of the leitmotif: *Mi chiamano Mimì ma il mio nome è Lucia..* (They all call me Mimi, but my name is Lucia), *Son tranquilla e lieta ed è il mio svago far gigli e rose* (I'm calm and happy, and my joy is to make lilies and roses), *Mi chiamano Mimì, e perchè, non so* (They all call me Mimi, but why is that, I don't know) (MILA, 1959).

The composer engages the declamation specific to the recitative in the context of the aria

and the fact that he preserves the leading melodic line in the secondary plan helps him avoid that metric lack of balance of the discourse, imposed by the freedom of a recitative. At the same time, this alternation of discourse types allows the expression of a large range of ideas, images and feelings: Mimi's leitmotif is associated with the subjective nature of her portrait, with her feelings, and the repetitive speech is associated with her daily preoccupations: *La storia mia è breve..A tela o a seta ricamo in casa e fuori* (My story is short ... I embroider on canvas or silk, home or outside). The second period of this section introduces a new melodic motif, that will also be associated with of the character's ulterior appearances. From an intonational point of view, one can notice a prevalent valorisation of the scalar structures, opposed to the previous leitmotif. Another element contrasting the previous period is represented by the metric side, the 2/4 measure being replaced by the 4/4 one, which leads to a resizing of the musical phrase, in direct correlation to the agogic change (BOTTERO, 1984).

From a rhythmic point of view, the tension of the phrase by shifting towards the acute register, supported by a progressive division of the acute register of values, from crotchet to quaver, triole and sixteenth, a process that will culminate with the climax of the segment, marked by the highest sound of the phrase. Also, from a tonal point of view, this climax will be stressed by a modulatory inflexion towards the *do# minor* tonality. Although the accompaniment follows the main sounds of the vocal plan, its structure is not exclusively isorhythmic in relationship to the descant. Moreover, its composition as well as the horizontal isorhythm, based on a succession of problems, contributes to the dynamization of the melodic phrase, the creation of drama tension, ingeniously solved by a succession of ornamented formulas, by the use of the trill and of the arpeggio chords (SBÂRCEA, 1959).

All these elements of sound nature are useful to the expressivity of the text, the lyricism of the melody revealing the heroine's innocent but profound feelings, her love for those things that speak about charm, love, spring, dream and poetry: *Mi piaccion quelle cose, che han si dolce malia, che parlano d'amor, di primavera.../che parlano di sogni e di chimere.../quelle cose che han nome*

poesia (I like those things, which present that sweet spell, that talk about love, about spring / that talk about dreams and chimeras ... / those things that are called poetry). The second phase of the period holds the function of solving the tension in the previous segment, the melodic line having mainly a descendent route, the repetitive scalar formulas, the sequential character of their juxtaposition, the simple rhythmic, based on quavers and quarter notes representing the means to wind down the discourse. Although the superior plan of the accompaniment keeps the shyness of syncope of the succession of chords, they will represent only the element of latent dynamic of the segment. Also, stressing the melodic line of this final period, as well as the significance of the text is achieved by the reduplication of the main melody (in different ways) in both plans of the accompaniment. The final beat of the second phase is followed by a short dialogue of a recitative type between the two stage participants (Mimi and Rodolfo), which gives some colour to the intense melodious discourse of the first stanza. The conclusion of the first section will be presented by the resumption of the melodic line with a leitmotif role and this time the melodic line is fragmented by pauses due to the composer's intention to highlight the inflexions of direct speech, the contrast between question and answer from the heroine's reply: *Mi chiamano Mimi, il perchè, non so* (CAMERONI, 1872).

The second section of the aria has the same small bio-stanza structure, but the melodic material used is different from that previously presented. The first period is symmetrical at the level of phrase organization, the two composing segments being similar in the musical plan. The melodic line has a simple construction, mainly based on scalar formulas, the phrase's motifs having an ascendant path, interrupted by counter-jumps, which diversifies the melodic discourse. The rhythmical side is reduced to the capitalization of two values, the quarter note and the quaver, aspect which determines a harmonization of the melodic deployment, a fluency of speech. The expressivity of the main melodic line is emphasized by the simplicity of the general writing, the descant of the accompaniment doubles the vocal path, whereas

the inferior plan is limited to a pedal on the sound of the dominant, sometimes enriched by sounds that have a harmonic role (DEGRADA et al., 1983).

The preoccupation for highlighting the soloist melody line has its ultimate goal in underlining the content of the text, which represents a new disclosure of the personality of the heroine, of some aspects deriving from her daily life, with deep reflection in her interior feelings: *Sola mi fo il pranzo da me stessa, non vado sempre a messa ma prego assai il Signor./ Vivo sola, soletta,/ là in una bianca cameretta: guardo sui tetti e in cielo* (I eat alone what I prepare for myself, I don't go to work very often, but I pray to God a lot./ I live all alone, / in a little white room, with the view towards other roof and towards the sky). Each detail apparently very simple receives, through the words of the character, a significance going beyond immediate reality, therefore the entire passage underlines Mimi's loneliness, her hidden prayers, her aspiration for a better life; these emphases also receive a reflection in the sound plan, by changing the tempo at the end of each phrase. The second period brings a new change of tempo, as well as new motif content, disposed in three distinct phrases. The main reason for this period contains elements of dynamism through the group of quavers, as well as lyrical valences, through the latent representation of a descendent scalar structure highlighted by higher values, therefore its subsequent processing covers the whole expressive aria, from tension and drama to melancholic lyricism (RUBBOLI, 1990).

From a drama point of view, the first two phrases come into a sequential type succession, which presents the expression culmination of this period, marked by the *la2* sound, as well as the double intonation in the context of the repetitive structure of the second phrase. The initial motif of the period receives new and more diverse melodic and rhythmic configuration, which will become simpler at its repetition from the end of the phrase. The purpose of the drama approach is to highlight the direct presentation of the character's aspirations, her simple joys, of an innocent and apparently fulfilled love, which hides the need for real love: *ma quando vien lo sgelo/ il primo sole è mio/ il primo bacio dell'aprile è mio!/ il primo sole è mio* (But when defrost comes

/ the first sun is mine / April's first kiss is my / the first sun is mine. Her love desires are presented by the obsession repetition of the phrase *è mio*, presented in the musical plan by the motif repetition. The accompaniment contributes to increasing the tension of the discourse, the superior plan doubling the main melodic line in octaves. Also, the tensioned chord successions, chords with unresolved seventh contribute to the achievement of the accumulated tensions (MILA, 1959).

The last phrase values the same basic method of the B1 period, but the process of its transformation starts from the cadence hypostasis from the cadence of the previous phrase; the melodic unity of the whole segment will be given by the continuous transformation of a unique formation which subsequently turned into a new entity, with a different rhythmic and melodic frame from that of the initial one. The last section of the aria partially replays the first articulation (only the A1 period), this time in a new, more tense and more dynamic syntax than the initial one. Although the main melodic plan suffers insignificant changes in intonation, the accompaniment takes place on multiple plans, which sometimes identifies the successions of syncopes completed by the doubling of the soloist line in the descant (SBARCEA, 1966).

5. MIMI'S RECITATIVE SA DIRMI, SCUSI (ACT III)

Despite the free character of the discourse, the recitative can be delimited into three segments using prolonged crown breaks. Also, we notice a motif connection of the three fractions of form, the composer starting from a small number of melodic cells that he transforms on the basis of repetition or interval variation. The first segment (act III) distinguishes itself because of the absence of accompaniment, the freedom of the declamation being suggested by the *Andante a piacere* indication. The procedure of micro-cellular treatment is visible on the plan of the intonation, the main unity being represented by the descendant third jump, successively descendant transposed into various melodic hypostases (augmented by the repetition of an inversed

sound). Each appearance is separated from the previous ones through breaks, therefore each reply in the spoken discourse of the character is valued: *Sa dirmi, scusi/ qual'è l'osteria/ dove un pittor lavora?* (Could you tell me please, which is the tavern/ where a painter works?). Also, the ending of the phrase introduces a new interval, the descendant quint, subsequently repeated, under the form of the thank you answer of the character - *Grazie* - in the same spirit of the motif unity. The diversity of the sound discourse belongs to the rhythmic side, mainly composed of triole formulas in diverse configurations, the division of the main unit are achieved according to the necessities imposed by the text. The second segment uses the accompanied recitative, together with the intervention of the orchestra, the discourse of the soloist party evolving towards a balance of the rhythmic and metric pulsation. The triole formulas have a uniform character, the only variation element belonging to the use of pauses, which separates melodic micro-unites. From a melodic point of view, we notice a fragmentation of the phrase in three motifs, separated by breaks. The first two formulas are based on the descendant chromatic path, they are sequentially changed and the last motif reminds us of a previous section of the recitative through the final jump of descendant quint (SBÂRCEA, 1959).

The chord accompaniment follows the descendant chromatic path of the vocal line, also setting a succession of chords with unsolved seventh, which suggests the heroine's restlessness and anxiety: *O buona donna, mi fate il favore/ di cercarmi il pittore Marcello?/ Ho da parlargli!* (O, fair lady, could you do me the favour/ of looking for the painter Marcello?/ I have to talk to him!). The last segment represents a varied reply of the previous one, using the same descendant formulas, ended with a scale unit followed by a quint jump. We notice the same phrase segmentation into three motifs, as well as the sequential report between the two. The structure of the accompaniment stays within the same chord pattern, as well as in the dissonant sonority, offered both by the harmonic structural composition, as well as in the dissonant sonority, offered both by the composition of the harmonic

structures, and by the relationship among them (DEGRADA et al., 1983).

6. MIMI'S ARIA DONDE LIETA USCI (ACT III)

Although it fits into the same three-stanza pattern that was used before, the three sections of the aria are different at the level of the sound material, at the same time manifesting a fragmented character, mosaicked in the interior of each articulation. Although we can make a scheme of the way in which each period is composed according to the classic model of phrase delimitation, the component segments don't have the characteristics of a phrase itself. Moreover, the dimensions and their inflexional composition impose a segmented aspect on the discourse, under the form of some motif juxtapositions. The first period begins with the presentation of Mimi's leitmotif and the first motif is overlapped here, characterised by the repeatability of the sounds, which highlights the natural rhythm of speech. The precipitated discourse of the heroine is also underlined by the divided rhythmic, naturally ending in a succession of higher values, similar to the ending of a phrase in direct speech (MILA, 1959).

Although the following phrase has some ample dimensions, the fragmented character of the discourse is underlined by the delimitation of each moment with the help of rhythmic breaks or expression legate, each having a different rhythmic and melodic component. The first reason imposes itself through the descendant chromatic path, the second one through an inflexional and rhythmic uniformity, the third reason represents the expressive climax of the period by reaching the highest sound through skipping, and the last micro-unit has the role of cadenza. We notice an evolution of the meaning of the text alongside this tense gradation achieved on the basis of this juxtaposition. The heroine speaks about her rather impersonal feelings, but her words present the pain of being alone, of going back to a life that she now, after finding true love, she considers worthless, similar to her embroidered flowers without any smell: *torna sola Mimi al solitario nido./ Ritorna un'altra volta a intesser finti fior!* (Mimi comes back alone to her

lonely nest. / She come back once again to make some artificial flowers) (CAMERONI, 1872).

The unstable tonal plan, comprised of a pedal on the *lab minor* tune, is diversified with chromatic elements, presented in the superior plan of the accompaniment, whereas the syncope succession from the inferior plan contributes to intensifying the state of restlessness, which dominates the whole fragment. The last phrase of the period basically represents the conclusion of the whole section, both due to the melodic aspect, characteristic to cadence formulas and to the clear tonal centration (perfect cadenza on the tonic of the dominant tonality!). The second period, although it keeps the same fragmented character, it can be delimited by the first and last second segment, giving birth to a structural symmetry. The first sentence imposes itself through the melody of the vocal line, highlighted through the contrast between the scalar formulas and the unexpected jump, through an economy of the rhythmic means, through the diatonism of the inflexional path, as well as the simplicity of the accompaniment's writing, composing a superposition of chords with the role of harmonic support and the transposed variance of the main melodic line (ARBASINO, 1976).

The second phrase has a more diverse rhythmic and melodic composition, the juxtaposition of motifs giving birth to an association between related formulas and contrasting melodic organizations. The phrase's unity element is represented by the rhythmic side which presents a short boosting only in cadenza (values of sixteenths), the discourse's vitalising function, its role of driving force belonging to the accompaniment, comprised of a variety of formulas: values that follow each other in *contretemps*, the sound's superior ornamentations, chords in arpeggio, ascendant and descendant arpeggio figures. The last phrase that represents an identic repetition of the first segment of the period ends with an accompaniment intonation of a fragment from the second motif associated with the character of Mimi, which people can encounter in the aria *Mi chiamano Mimi*. If the beginning of the first section is marked by the leitmotif that encompasses the feelings of the character, the second section returns to the melodic motif which opens the

segment with a confessional character from the heroine's aria in act I, therefore completing Mimi's portrait: *Ascolta, ascolta. Le poche robe aduna che lasciai sparse./ nel mio cassetto stan chiusi quel cerchietto d'or./ e il libro di preghiere./ Involgi tutto quanto in un grembiale e manderò il portiere.* (Listen up, gather the few thing that I have left dissipated./ In my drawer the golden ring is locked / and the prayer book./ wrap everything up in an apron and I shall send the doorman to take them away) (MILA, 1959).

The last period starts in an unusual sonority, the *la major* tonality bringing an un unexpected sound contrast, the composer wanting to highlight the moment of maximum dramatic intensity of this aria: although Mimi says farewell to her love, she gives Rodolfo a sign in order for him to remember their love: *Bada! Sotto il guanciaie c'è la cuffieta rosa./ Se vuoi, se vuoi, se vuoi serbarla a ricordo d'amor!* (Be careful! My pink bonnet is under the pillow./ If you want, keep it to remind you of our love!). This time, the discourse returns to the mosaic structure from the beginning, each exclamation being associated with a melodic motif; also, these micro-units have a different melodic component, as well as contrasting dimensions, according to expression used in the text, from two sounds to more complex motifs. The rhythmic formulas are equally diverse, including both static groups and combinations of different visions on time, therefore their joining creates that impression of a spoken language. The climax represented by the *si2* sound has a correspondent at level of the text, the expression *ricordo d'amor*, the composer therefore highlighting the feelings of the character, previously hidden in the apparently indifferent enumeration of the things left in her room. The accompaniment contributes to making the discourse more tense, by amplifying sonority, by doubling the melody in octaves, as well as the use of the tremolo. The last sentence of the aria brings once again into the sound plan the main reason of the median section, whereas the vocal plan replays, in a different melodic component, the ending phrase of the first section, *Adio, senza rancor..* Therefore, the segment gains a conclusive-synthetic function for the entire aria (CAMERONI, 1872).

7. CONCLUSION

Inspired both by the novel "Scènes de la vie de bohème" belonging to the French writer Henri Murger and its theatrical adaptation, the "La Bohème" opera is based on a libretto belonging to Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa. They have assumed a large part of the details of the novel and of the play, such as combining the two characters, Mimi and Francine, into only one (Mimi) and the death of the female main character. Through the tragic love story of Rodolfo and Mimi, destinies of dreamers and also tragic, Puccini present not only the passion and the torments of the two youngsters, but also de romanticism and the artistic glow of France from the Belle Époque period. Puccini's opera had an immediate success, starting from its premiere in 1896 at the Regio Theatre in Torino, having Arturo Toscanini as conductor. Late on, in 1946, the same Toscanini conducted "La Bohème", in the interpretation of NBC Symphony Orchestra, especially for a radio recording. Memorable arias, young characters, a heart-breaking love story - are all defining elements for Puccini's opera, which have fascinated the lover of the genre throughout the years and which inspired modern musical productions, such as the rock musical "Rent" in 1996 (CARNER, 1992).

This exciting romantic masterpiece, which is considered to be one of the most fascinating universal lyrical creations, come back to the Cluj Opera House after an absence of almost two years. Known as an opera of contrasts, which oscillates between dramatism and comedy and "Boema" ("La Bohème") had its premiere in 1896 at *The Regio Theatre* in Torino, reaching an incredible success. It soon became an international opera reference and one of the most presented shows on the great opera scene of the world, reaching a great performance due to its at least 100 representations to the well-known opera house, *Opéra-Comique in Paris, up to the year 1903* (ANDRIEȘ-MOLDOVAN, 2007).

The opera is structured into four acts, whose libretto is based on the well-known novella

„*Scènes de la vie de bohème*”, belonging to Henri Murger, and it places the musical story in a charming Paris of the 1830s, following the lives of four friends: the poet Rodolpho, the painter Marcello, the musician Schaunard and the philosopher Colline, trapped in the poor condition of the artist in those times. Despite all lacks, the lives of the protagonists are brighter due to their honest friendship and the true love that the hero Rodolpho gets to know together with the mysterious and the delicate Mimi (CAMERONI, 1872).

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