

## NEW POV Event! Turn Unwanted Treasures into Gold for POV!

What could be more fun than an Antiques Roadshow with a philanthropic twist? **Give it Up for Opera** lets you bring in your treasures for appraisal and have a blast while supporting POV!

We are introducing this enjoyable new event for the many opera lovers who have told us that they have heirlooms or valuables that they would gladly consider donating to POV.

Until now, we haven't had a way to turn these treasures into banknotes. Now we have, with **Give it Up for Opera**, POV's innovative fundraiser with an antique flair.

Watch some of Victoria's finest specialists at

work appraising all kinds of cool items. Enjoy the suspense of finding out what your valuables are worth! Savour an elegant afternoon tea. You may even hear a live musical performance.

**How does Give it Up for Opera work?** Your \$35 admission fee covers afternoon tea for you and a guest **and** appraisal of up to three items by our team of experts.

We ask that you leave at least one item as a donation to POV. Proceeds will support Opera in your community, and you'll receive a tax receipt for the value of your donated item when it is sold at auction.

### What kind of items can I bring?

Anything that is portable and likely to have some value, such as jewellery, paintings, porcelain, fine china, silver, small sculptures, ethnic art, old clocks and watches, coins, carpets, old or first-edition books, even small furniture items.

### If I can't attend, can I still donate something?

Yes! Just bring your item to the POV Office on the 5th floor at 1815 Blanshard Street, Victoria. We'll send you your tax receipt after your donation is sold at auction.

### If I see something I'd like to buy at the event, may I purchase it?

Yes, donated items will be displayed and may be purchased for the appraised value.

### When will I receive my tax receipt?

We'll know the receiptable value of your donated item after it is sold at auction. Auctions of collectibles will take place in the spring. Once your item is sold, POV will send your tax receipt.

### How do I buy my ticket?

Just call us! \$35 lets two of you enjoy an afternoon of fun and philanthropy!

**250-382-1641**

Give it Up for Opera is supported by a distinguished group of local appraisers who have kindly offered to donate their services, & by Kilshaw's Auctioneers Ltd. Event Chair is Gary Karr.



## The Enduring Appeal of La Bohème

What IS it about *La Bohème*? How do we explain its lasting appeal? Why does it maintain a consistent place somewhere around #2 in the hit chart of the world's most-performed operas?

The story is slight. A boy hangs out with his friends and falls in love with a girl, who dies of TB. There are no grand people here, no kings or courtesans, no great intrigues, no murders or suicides.

*La Bohème* did get off to a shaky start. At its world premiere in Turin's Teatro Regio on February 1, 1896, under the baton of a very young Arturo Toscanini, the audience, though warm, was not as delirious as they had been over Puccini's previous opera, the mega-hit *Manon Lescaut*.

Puccini was deeply hurt by the reviews of his new opera: *I put into Bohème all my soul and love it boundlessly*. Instead he was greeted with the *spiteful salute of the critics*, who scolded him for not living up to the promise of *Manon Lescaut*. The *Gazzetta del Popolo* muttered: *We wonder what could have started Puccini toward the degradation of this Bohème ... You are young and strong, Puccini; you have talent, culture, and imagination such as few possess ... For the future, turn back to the great and difficult battles of art.*

Carlo Bersezio of *La Stampa* lectured in words that live on as a notorious example of a critic getting it completely wrong: *Just as La Bohème makes little impression on the hearts of its audience, it will leave no great mark on the history of Italian opera; it would be a good thing if the composer, considering it a momentary error, returned to his proper path, persuading himself that this has been a brief detour in the road of art.*



The timing of *La Bohème's* premiere was also unfortunate. A month before, Turin's operagoers had seen Toscanini conduct the Italian premiere of Richard Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*, a work at the opposite end of the operatic spectrum from Puccini's little slice of life. In terms of musical texture, scale, subject matter, plot, even length, *Götterdämmerung* was a different animal. The Wagnerian behemoth made it almost impossible for the critics to judge *La Bohème* on its own merits.

As the critic of the newspaper *Fanfulla* pointed out: *The gentlemen of the press ... remained at the Twilight of the Gods, and they did not see ... that an everyday and prosaic dawn, such as preludes a sad*

*winter's day, such as takes place in the third act of La Bohème, can also lead a composer to transporting emotion. They did not know how to leave the world of German transcendentalism in order to hear music which ... speaks in exquisite melodies of eternal human passions.*

*continued on p.2*

# Give It Up for Opera

CHAIR, GARY KARR

An Antiques Roadshow-style benefit for Pacific Opera Victoria

Includes afternoon tea for you and a guest, appraisals for up to three items and musical performances.

**Tickets \$35**

**Saturday, February 5, 2011**  
**Noon to 4 pm**

Leonardo Da Vinci Centre, 195 Bay Street  
**Call POV at 250-382-1641 to reserve.**

[www.pov.bc.ca](http://www.pov.bc.ca)

Clean out your attic and sort through your curio cabinets! Reserve now for Give it Up for Opera! For more information, please go to [www.pov.bc.ca](http://www.pov.bc.ca)

## Events Calendar

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH EVENTS

#### INSIDE OPERA with Robert Holliston.

Sunday, February 6.

**TWO SESSIONS: 10 am and noon**

Phillip T. Young Recital Hall, MacLaurin Music Wing, University of Victoria

Robert Holliston and guests present a guided tour of Puccini's *La Bohème*. Discover – or rediscover – Puccini's glorious, intimate portrait of Bohemian life and love in Paris. Bring your friends. It's free. And so is parking!

Please reserve before noon February 4, specifying which session you plan to attend.

250-382-1641 or [rsvp@pov.bc.ca](mailto:rsvp@pov.bc.ca)

#### Sense of Occasion

Thursday, February 17, 6:30 pm

East Lobby, the Royal Theatre.

Pre-performance reception to celebrate the opening night of *La Bohème*. Gourmet finger foods and wine. Space is limited. Dress is festive. \$25 per person.

Call 250-382-1641 to reserve with payment.

#### Monday Masters

Monday, February 21, 7 pm

West Lobby, the Royal Theatre. Free.

Selected members of the POV chorus are coached by a principal member of the cast of *La Bohème*.

Reserve at 250-382-1641 or [rsvp@pov.bc.ca](mailto:rsvp@pov.bc.ca).

### DONOR EVENTS

#### Gold Circle Soirée

Thursday, February 3, 6:30 to 9 pm

Victoria Golf Club, 1110 Beach Drive

Performance and reception with principal members of the cast of *La Bohème*.

For President's Circle members at the Gold Circle level and above. Invitations will be sent by mail.

#### President's Circle Working Rehearsal

Saturday, February 12

West Lobby, the Royal Theatre

1 pm: Coffee & cookies. 1:20 pm: Discussion with creative team members. 2 pm: Sitzprobe begins.

For all President's Circle members and Conductor level donors (\$500). Invitations will be sent by mail.

LA BOHÈME at the Royal Theatre  
**OPENING NIGHT: February 17, at 8 pm**  
**SATURDAY MATINÉE: February 19, at 3 pm**  
**PLAYING February 22, 24, 26, and Monday, February 28, 8 pm**  
 Pre-performance lobby lecture at 6:45 pm (2 pm on February 19).

PUBLIC FUNDING



PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE & IMPRESARIO CIRCLE SPONSOR



WRITER AND EDITOR  
 MAUREEN WOODALL



DAVID H. FLAHERTY

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Ater the tidal wave of *Götterdämmerung*, what a shock *La Bohème* must have been for the Turin critics! Fresh from the vision of Valhalla in flames and the gods destroyed, they now got to see unimportant people going out with friends, shopping, and paying the rent, and to watch an insignificant life snuffed out by a grubby little disease!

*La Bohème* came out of an operatic style called Verismo (Italian for realism). Minus gods and heroes, Verismo still boasted plenty of operatic mayhem. Its naturalistic depictions of everyday life, particularly among the lower classes, usually involved violence and crime. Typical Verismo operas are Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* (jealous actor kills his wife and her lover); Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* (jealous teamster kills his wife's lover); and Puccini's *Tosca* (all the main characters – police chief, politician, painter and singer – are killed or commit suicide).

In some ways *La Bohème* is more Verismo than Verismo. It dispenses with the gritty melodrama and crimes of passion of standard Verismo operas, but maintains the realism of unimportant people living familiar lives.

It has been said that *La Bohème* is about *those who cannot afford to live operatically*. And that, perhaps, is part of the reason it touches us so deeply.

It's about real lives that we can understand. The story is based on Henri Murger's semi-autobiographical sketchbook of life in the Latin Quarter of Paris, *Scènes de la vie de Bohème*. Puccini poured into it his own memories of student days in Milan, when he shared a room with a baker's son named Pietro Mascagni (the composer of *Cavalleria Rusticana*). They pooled their pennies to buy the score of *Parsifal*, cooked beans in the only pot available – their washbasin – and marked a city map with areas to avoid because they might run into creditors.

For us too, *La Bohème* can evoke student days and enduring friendships, the bittersweet

### POV Subscribers

#### Win 2 extra tickets to *La Bohème*!

Sign up for POV ENews and enter a draw for two extra tickets to *La Bohème*! Just send your name and email address to [enews@pov.bc.ca](mailto:enews@pov.bc.ca)

or call us at 250-382-1641.

This offer is available only to subscribers. Entries must be received by February 4, with the contest winner to be contacted and the tickets claimed by February 11.

time of first love, the discovery of art and music, the struggle for survival and for self-expression. We are part of the story.

As writer Burton Fisher says, *It is virtually impossible not to identify with these youngsters ... they transport us to a time lost in memory ... They mirror our family, our children, our grandchildren – or us ... the opera's underlying story is also a reminder of our own rite of passage.*

But above all, *Bohème* achieves its irresistible power through its music. By the time the first act ends with that string of glorious love songs – Rodolfo's *Che gelida manina*, Mimi's *Si, mi chiamano Mimi*, and the rapturous duet *O soave fanciulla* – one would think that surely the composer has shot his bolt. There cannot possibly be room for any more musical wonder in this opera.

But there *is* so much more: the exuberant kaleidoscope of the second act café scene; Musetta's provocative waltz; the wintry radiance and looming tragedy of Act 3; the poignant simplicity of Mimi's gentle farewell *Addio, senza rancore*; Colline's funereal ode to his old coat as he goes to pawn it; and the haunting echoes of those first love themes.

The music of *Bohème* beguiles us with its humour, illuminates the commonplace moments of daily life, and sweeps us away with its passion. It sparkles with charm, pours out lush, sumptuous melodies, and is by turns merry, tender, desperate, haunting, and unforgettably beautiful.

### The Story

*Bohemia is a district in the Department of the Seine bordered on the north by cold, on the west by hunger, on the south by love, and on the east by hope. (La Silhouette, 1849)*

**Act 1:** On Christmas Eve, in their freezing Parisian garret, Marcello works on a painting, while his roommate Rodolfo burns the manuscript of his play to get warm. Colline, a philosopher, arrives, along with Schaunard, a musician, who has made some money from a gig and brings provisions.

They go out to celebrate, leaving Rodolfo to finish an article. A neighbour, Mimi, knocks at the door to borrow a match, and as she and Rodolfo chat, they fall in love.

**Act 2:** Outside a crowded café in the Latin Quarter, the crowds shop and gossip. Rodolfo and Mimi join his friends. Marcello's

old girlfriend Musetta arrives with the elderly Alcindoro. She sets out to make Marcello jealous. The two reconcile, and everyone slips away, leaving Alcindoro to pay the bill.

**Act 3:** A couple of months later, Mimi, now quite ill, seeks out Marcello at a tavern where he and Musetta now live. Rodolfo has left Mimi and crashed for the night at Marcello's.

When Rodolfo comes out, Mimi hides, as Rodolfo tells Marcello that he left Mimi because she is a flirt; he finally admits that he is terrified by her illness and too poor to help her. Mimi's coughing gives her away, and although she and Rodolfo agree they should separate, they decide to stay together till spring. Meanwhile Marcello and Musetta quarrel fiercely.

**Act 4:** Back in their garret, Marcello and Rodolfo are pining for their lost loves. Schaunard and Colline arrive with food, followed by Musetta, who has found Mimi wandering the streets, deathly ill. They bring her in, settle her, and go off to pawn various items to buy medicine. Left alone, Rodolfo and Mimi reminisce. The others return, and Mimi quietly dies.

### An Improbable Masterpiece

That *La Bohème* was ever completed is a minor miracle, given the personalities of its creators – the gadfly Puccini, and his frustrated librettists.

Puccini was slow to get down to serious work on *La Bohème*. He started in early 1893, but quickly turned his attention to buying a bicycle (which he named Mary), and to learning to ride. Hunting season was also a distraction; Puccini's publisher Giulio Ricordi admonished him: *Puccini, Let not your passion for birds seduce you away from music. Therefore, an eye on the gunsight, but your thoughts on Bohème!*

Puccini was also busy travelling to oversee various productions of *Manon Lescaut* and working on an opera called *La Lupa*, which he eventually abandoned. His mercurial flitting from project to project maddened both Ricordi (for whom time was money) and his hapless librettists.

The librettists were Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa, the dream team brought in by Ricordi to rescue *Manon Lescaut* after Puccini had torn through three other librettists. Giacosa, Illica, and Puccini went on

### FURTHER LEARNING ABOUT *La Bohème*

For musical excerpts, a detailed synopsis, artist bios, design images, links and much more, visit [www.pov.bc.ca](http://www.pov.bc.ca)

to form the most successful composer / librettist team of Puccini's career, working on the great trio of *La Bohème*, *Tosca*, and *Madama Butterfly*.

Although the three made great operas together, their relationship was so stormy that we really must give much of the credit for *Bohème*'s existence to Ricordi, an astute businessman, canny publicist, talented journalist, painter and composer – and a master diplomat and babysitter.

It was Ricordi who perceived Puccini's talent early, took him under his wing, and cajoled him into focusing on work instead of women and birds. And it was Ricordi, that master of shuttle diplomacy, who soothed Puccini's string of browbeaten librettists, and refused to accept their regular resignations.

After one of the tiffs during work on *Bohème*, Ricordi wrote Puccini that Illica was annoyed with the composer: *He complains of having wasted much time and effort only to find himself used, cast aside, taken up again and shoved away like a dog ... He insists that I tell you that he is going on with his work solely out of regard for me!*

Illica at one point complained, *To work for Puccini means to go through a living hell. Not even Job could withstand his whims and his sudden volte-faces. I cannot keep up with his constant acrobatics.*

Giacoso too found Puccini a bear to work for, writing to Ricordi in mid 1895, *I'm tired to death of this constant reworking, touching up, adding, correcting, cutting, pasting together again, pumping it up on the right, and paring it down on the left ... I have already redone this blessed libretto three times, from start to finish, three times, and certain sections I have done four or five times ... Will it really be finished?*

After three years of work, they did finally finish *La Bohème* (nearly). Puccini made a few more changes after the 1896 premiere!

### A Special tour for POV!

**Verdi in the Holy Land, May 27 - June 10, 2011** (*pre-tour extension to Egypt May 18 - 26*)

This tour features three extraordinary Verdi performances: *Messa da Requiem* and *Aida* with the towering cliffs of Masada as a stunning backdrop, and a concert staging of *Jerusalem* at the Sultan's Pool in Jerusalem. The tour includes sightseeing, performances, accommodation and ground services. *Know The World Tours* will make a donation to POV on behalf of each person on the tour (you'll receive the tax receipt).

For details, go to [www.pov.bc.ca/boheme.html](http://www.pov.bc.ca/boheme.html) and follow the links.

### The Production

With *La Bohème*, we always have Paris – city of light and romance, mecca for artists and writers, centre of the bohemian life.

POV's production presents *La Bohème* in the early 1930s, in what may be the most amazing time ever in Paris, the time between the wars, when expatriates and artists flooded the city, seeking that very bohemian life that Puccini and Murger first depicted.

Paris at that time was full of names to conjure with: artists Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dali, Joan Miró, Marc Chagall; writers Ernest Hemingway, Henry Miller, Gertrude Stein, James Joyce, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Vladimir Nabokov; composers Aaron Copland and Igor Stravinsky; jazz diva Josephine Baker; guitarist Django Reinhardt, violinist Stephane Grappelli ... and many unknown young people who were escaping from somewhere or looking for something.

Director Michael Shamata and designer John Ferguson are creating a production imbued with the subtle romance of *film noir*, inspired by the rain-filled, smoke-filled images of the photographer Brassai, whose photos of Paris during the 1930s captured the gritty, romantic essence of the city, particularly in his 1933 book *Paris by Night*.

Henry Miller called Brassai *the eye of Paris*. Brassai also photographed many of the artists who had flocked to Paris at the time, fleeing the strictures of their homelands, seeking the lively discussion and artistic ferment of the cafés, the jazz clubs, the freethinking intellectuals, the avant-garde, the kindred spirits – *la vie bohème*.

## About the Artists



**Rhoslyn Jones** makes her POV debut and her role debut as **Mimi**. She has performed the coquettish Musetta with Pittsburgh and Arizona Opera. Originally from Aldergrove, she has appeared with Vancouver Opera, Chicago Opera Theater, and San Francisco Opera.

*Her voice is luscious, and her soul opens forthrightly and generously to the audience.*

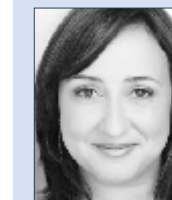
San Francisco Classical Voice



**Luc Robert** charmed us as the Duke in *Rigoletto* and the suave Nicias in *Thaïs*. We are delighted to welcome him back as **Rodolfo**. He has appeared with Opera Lyra Ottawa, Tampa Bay Opera, Vancouver Opera, and the Opera companies of Rennes, Angers, and Nantes.

*The most arresting singing ... was from Luc Robert ... His honeyed tenor glued Massenet's orchestral textures together.*

The Globe and Mail

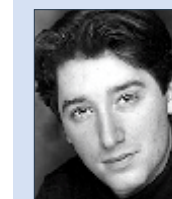


**Marianne Fiset** has sung Mimi with Saskatoon Opera and will reprise the role this spring at l'Opéra de Montréal. But we'll see a flirtier side of her for her POV debut as she sings **Musetta** for the first time.

Upcoming engagements include Marseille Opera, and her debut with Opéra Bastille in Paris, as Massenet's Manon.

*This is the voice that makes one sit up and take notice.*

Joseph So, La Scena Musicale



**Alexander Dobson** performed Schaunard in POV's 2002 *La Bohème* and returned for Junius in *The Rape of Lucretia*. He has previously sung **Marcello** with Saskatoon Opera and on BRAVO! TV and has appeared with Vancouver Opera, l'Opéra de Montréal, Opéra de Québec, and at the Royal Opera Covent Garden.

*One of the most impressive Canadian baritones of this generation ... a wonderful actor ... a rich and commanding voice ... as smooth as silk.*

Opera Canada



**Michael Shamata** is making his debut as an opera director with *La Bohème*. Next season he will direct our new commission, *Mary's Wedding*. He is Artistic Director of the Belfry Theatre and has directed across Canada, including the Stratford Festival, Canadian Stage, Soulpepper, and the Manitoba Theatre Centre.

*A triumph of storytelling; Shamata is especially faithful, and especially inventive.*

The National Post

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