



Overview: *La Bohème*

Creators

Production Franco Zeffirelli

Set Designer Franco Zeffirelli

Costume Designer Peter J. Hall

Lighting Designer Gil Wechsler

Revival Stage Director Gregory Keller

Composer: Giacomo Puccini

Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924) was immensely popular in his own lifetime, and his mature works remain staples in the repertory of most of the world’s opera companies. His librettists for *La Bohème*, Giuseppe Giacosa (1847–1906) and Luigi Illica (1857–1919), also collaborated with him on his next two operas, *Tosca* and *Madama Butterfly*. Giacosa, a dramatist, was responsible for the stories and Illica, a poet, worked primarily on the words themselves.

Music

Lyrical and touchingly beautiful, the score of *La Bohème* exerts an immediate emotional pull. Many of its most memorable melodies are built incrementally, with small intervals between the notes that carry the listener with them on their lyrical path. This is a distinct contrast to the grand leaps and dives that earlier operas often depended on for emotional effect. *La Bohème*’s melodic structure perfectly captures the “small people” (as Puccini called them) of the drama and the details of everyday life.

Setting

The libretto sets the action in Paris, circa 1830. This is not a random setting, but rather reflects the issues and concerns of a particular time when, following the upheavals of revolution and war, French artists had lost their traditional support base of aristocracy and church. The story centers on self-conscious youth at odds with mainstream society—a Bohemian ambience that is clearly recognizable in any modern urban center. *La Bohème* captures this ethos in its earliest days.