

La Bohème

ACT I

Act I opens on a bustling New Orleans street, alive with the color and commotion of Mardi Gras preparations outside Café du Monde. Meet our four struggling bohemian artists: Rodolfo, a painter and designer; Marcello, his dearest friend and fellow artist; Colline, a street peddler hawking balloons, masks, and carnival trinkets; and Schaunard, who arrives on his beloved bicycle with his girlfriend in tow. Into their world sweeps the fiery Musetta, torn between her passionate affair with Marcello and the generous attentions of her wealthy, doting patron Alcindoro. Back in their shabby studio, the friends are interrupted by Benoît, their long-suffering landlord come to collect overdue rent, and what begins as dread turns into a night of mischief as the bohemians tease, trick, and send him packing.

Alone in the studio, Rodolfo answers a timid knock at his door and meets Mimi, a fragile young neighbor seeking a light for her candle as the power is out. In the flicker of the lantern, the two fall instantly and irrevocably in love, and hurry out to join the carnival. The Mardi Gras parade sweeps the stage in a dizzying pageant of butterflies, jesters, and towering puppets, culminating in the grand entrance of Musetta and Alcindoro costumed as the carnival's Queen and King. Amid the splendor, a mysterious Fortuneteller and her minions read Mimi's cards and foretell heartbreak, illness, and a storm on the horizon. As the revelry softens into a late-night tango, Rodolfo's jealousy curdles the young romance, and Mimi flees in tears.

ACT II

Act II opens months later on the same New Orleans street, but the world has changed. The hurricane foretold by the Fortuneteller has swept through the city, leaving flood-damaged debris, boarded-up buildings, and a shaken community piecing itself back together. Neighbors sweep the streets, families search for lost pets, and the Fortuneteller, no longer a figure of menace but of quiet compassion, moves among the residents handing out cups of water. Into this somber morning comes Mimi, visibly frail and weakened by illness in the months since she left. She seeks out Schaunard and Colline to confess that her heart remains with Rodolfo and that she longs to make amends before her time runs out. Musetta and Marcello soon arrive with their own fiery, push-and-pull dynamic. She is in a spirit of determined cleanup, he is good-naturedly trying to calm her. Their playful bickering is a sharp contrast to the grief settling over their friends.

Inside the studio, we find Rodolfo alone, unshaven and broken, surrounded by empty bottles and obsessive sketches of Mimi that he has drawn and redrawn in her absence. Marcello and Musetta try to rouse him from his grief, but it is the sudden arrival of Colline and Schaunard, bringing a collapsing Mimi to his door, that finally breaks through. In their last pas de deux, Rodolfo draws the butterfly corsage from his pocket, worn from being held close to his heart all this time. A doctor is summoned but can offer nothing, and the friends quietly take their leave. Alone together, Mimi reaches for Rodolfo's face and guides his hand to her heart before breathing her last. She dies cradled in his arms.

Today's playbill is also digital!
Access it from your smartphone now!

Activate your phone's camera and point it at the QR code here. When prompted, tap the link to open the internet browser window and enjoy today's interactive program!

