

Classics for Kids



Giacomo Puccini

“Musetta’s Waltz” from *La Bohème*

Giacomo Puccini

Born: December 22, 1858

Died: November 29, 1924

Giacomo Antonio Domenico Michele Secondo Maria Puccini came from a long line of musicians. His father was a choirmaster and organist and it was expected that Giacomo would follow in his footsteps. When his father died, he actually inherited his positions although he was only six years old! Before he could take them on as an adult, however, he went to hear a performance of Verdi’s *Aida*. From that moment on he knew that what he wanted to do was compose operas.

It took a while for Puccini to achieve this goal, but eventually his works became successful. He was eventually regarded as the successor to the great Verdi.

In 1896 he wrote *La Bohème*, which is probably the most loved opera ever written. This was followed by several others, including *Madame Butterfly*, *Tosca*, *Turandot* and *The Girl of the Golden West*. Puccini’s genius lay in his ability to write beautiful melodies. He was also able to create operas that audiences responded to. His characters are very human and the stories in his operas are easy to follow.

Puccini was very successful financially as well as musically. When he died in 1924, he left over four million dollars!

LA BOHÈME

La Bohème is set in Paris. In the opening scene, a struggling painter (Marcello) and his poet friend (Rodolfo) are trying to keep warm in an attic apartment on Christmas Eve by burning pages from Rodolfo’s latest play. Marcello then leaves and Rodolfo is left alone to continue his writing. After a while, a neighbor (Mimi) comes in searching for a light for her candle. She and Rodolfo share a tender scene in which they tell each other their stories and dreams. In Act II the two go out to a restaurant where they meet up with Marcello again and also find his old girlfriend (Musetta), who is with a wealthy gentleman. It is at this point that Musetta sings her famous waltz in an effort to get Marcello’s attention. This works, as the four join forces and leave the café—and the bill for Musetta’s friend to pay.

In Act III, Marcello and Musetta are reunited. There are some problems between Mimi and Rodolfo, though, as Mimi is now quite ill and Rodolfo is afraid that this will make the poverty that they share even worse. However, they sing touchingly of their past happiness and do not part completely.

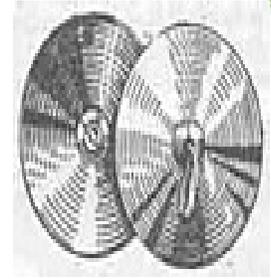
In the last act, Rodolfo and Marcello are again in their old apartment when Musetta bursts in saying that Mimi is downstairs but too weak to climb up. Although her friends gather around her and send out for food and medicine, she dies quietly. Rodolfo runs to her side calling her name and the opera ends.

If this story sounds familiar, it may be because this is the same tale that Jonathan Larson used for his musical, *Rent*.



PUCCINI WORD SEARCH

J X I T H P I R V D L O I M W
A P U M E M E H O B F M U U V
O T U I P L X W D L I S E I O
M A R C E L L O F M E J W D C
I Q G W C U A C I T M Y T O C
O A E D V I U Z T D W N G Z E
R W F O H E N A E M I Y E R N
A O W F D W Y I A A R V P Z K
W R Z D G P G J C R B H A Y O
J F E T V F V H Y O Z S V L X
F C L P V S S F U D J F H A Z
T J J Q O I D F O O F V V T W
Q T P M W V V P E L F Q T I J
D S B C K S Z Y G F M C H D B
K V A H K Z I H D O A R I A U



ARIA

BOHEME

DIVA

ITALY

MARCELLO

MIMI

MUSETTA

OPERA

PUCCINI

RODOLFO

OPERA TERMS

Match the word on the left with the
correct definition on the right

Opera

The Italian word for "end;" the final part of a piece of music.

Aria

Music that is played before the opera starts.

Overture

A female opera star

Finale

A stage work that combines music, costumes and scenery to tell a story

Div_a

A vocal solo with instrumental accompaniment, from an opera.