

**Cleveland Opera Theatre: *La bohème*
soprano Marian Vogel talks about Musetta**

by Mike Telin



On Friday, April 29 at 7:30 pm and Sunday, May 1 at 3:00 pm at Masonic Auditorium Performing Arts Center, Cleveland Opera Theater will present Giacomo Puccini's *La bohème*, directed by Scott Skiba. Conducted by Domenico Boyagian, the opera will be sung in Italian with English subtitles.

Puccini's opera centers around the writer Rodolfo, the painter Marcello, the musician Schaunard, and the philosopher Colline, who are roommates in an attic apartment in Paris's Latin Quarter. On Christmas Eve, Schaunard decides to treat his three friends to a night out at Café Momus.

Rodolfo stays behind, and is surprised a few minutes later by a knock at the door. It is the charming seamstress Mimì who lives in a neighboring apartment. Rodolfo later joins his friends with Mimì in tow, but things heat up when Marcello's on-again, off-again flame Musetta arrives to cause a scene.

We caught up with soprano Marian Vogel, who will sing the role of Musetta, during a rehearsal break at Masonic Auditorium, and asked her to share her thoughts about her character and why she thinks *La bohème* is one of the most beloved operas of all time.

“Why is it so beloved? I think it's because the characters are all so interesting and it's easy for people to say ‘I know someone who's like Mimì or Marcello.’ Most of us don't know an all-powerful king, but we might know a seamstress or a writer,” she said. “And when you hear the beautiful, rich orchestration and those soaring vocal and orchestral lines, it just speaks to you, so it's not hard to get an emotional attachment to it. Of course there's the universality of love, which is the essence of *La bohème*. It is a love story

between the different couples and we can relate to that, as well as to the tragedy at the end.

“Musetta is a very interesting character. She’s a lot of fun to play because she’s so fiery, but at her core, she has a very good heart, and I think that shows in her devotion to Marcello. Even though they’re on and off again, they do keep coming back together. And at the end of the opera, Musetta sells her earrings and buys a muff and medicine for Mimì, so I do think she is good hearted.

“Although she does has her moments,” Vogel added, “like when she enters the Café Momus with Alcindoro and she’s just bossing him around like she’s calling her dog. Her first line is ‘Come, Lulu,’ then ‘Sit, Lulu.’ In contrast to that, at the end she sings a prayer for Mimì. So she does go through a change during the opera.

“The opera can be approached in so many ways, but it is all about the bohemian spirit — people trying to live their passions while loving, dying, and caring. So if you’ve seen it a hundred times, or even if you’ve never seen it before, this is a wonderful production and the performances are going to be a lot of fun.”

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