SJSU CONCERTS

- Friday, Nov. 14: Collegium Musicum
- Wed. Nov. 19: Keyboard Ensemble
- Friday, Nov. 21: Katherine Petersen Graduate Voice Recital
- Saturday, Nov. 22: Alexander Etherington Junior Piano Recital
- Monday, Nov. 24: Men’s and Women’s Glee Club Concert
SJSU CONCERTS

✦ Thurs. Dec. 4: Wind Ensemble Concert
✦ Fri. Dec. 5: Symphony Orchestra Concert
✦ Sat. Dec. 6: Shihhuai Chen Junior Piano Recital (4:30);
  Sat. Dec. 6: Veronica Christie Senior Trombone Recital (7:30)
✦ Sat Dec. 6: Choir Concert, Mission Santa Clara (7:30)
✦ Sun, Dec. 7: Anne Hsu Senior Percussion Recital
✦ Monday, Dec. 8: Symphonic Band Concert
✦ Tuesday, Dec. 9: Voice Fundamentals Recital
✦ Fri. Dec. 12: Opera Workshop Theatre Concert
OPERA at the MOVIES

📍 Camera 3 Entertainment, 288 S. Second Street, San Jose
📍 Sunday 12 noon, Tuesday 7:15 PM
📍 Nov. 23, 25: *Il Trovatore*
📍 Dec. 14, 16: *La Cenerentola*
Bohemians: Puccini’s *La Bohème*
Giacomo Puccini
Giacomo Puccini

- 1858-1924
- Born in Lucca, Tuscany
- Comes from a musical family working for the Cathedral of Lucca since the eighteenth century
Giacomo Puccini

- Attends the Conservatorio di Milano
- His earliest compositions are religious
After graduating his teachers suggest that he try writing OPERA, the most important musical genre in Italy.

Puccini writes *Le Villi* with librettist Ferdinando Fontana in 1883 (Puccini is 25) for a music competition for one-act operas sponsored by the Sozogno publishing company.
Puccini doesn’t win, but the opera is a success when produced.

Giulio Ricordi, head of another music publishing company, decides to commission an opera from Puccini.
Puccini’s first opera for the Ricordi company is *Edgar* (1884), again with librettist Fontana.
Giacomo Puccini

- *Edgar* is not a success, and many blamed the opera’s libretto

- Puccini’s working relationship with Ricordi is complicated by the social scandal of Puccini’s elopement with one of his piano students, Elvira Gemignani
Elvira Gemignani
Giacomo Puccini

- The Board of Directors of the Ricordi company, who are financially supporting Puccini, ask Giulio Ricordi to stop Puccini’s stipend

- Ricordi decides to give Puccini one more chance
Giacomo Puccini

- Puccini decides to turn the 1731 book *Manon Lescaut* by the French writer Abbé Prévost into an opera

- Novel concerns the love of a nobleman for the courtesan Manon

- Over four different writers—including Puccini himself—worked on writing the libretto

- The two writers that complete the libretto are Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa
Poster depicting Manon’s death at the end of the opera
Giacomo Puccini

- *Manon Lescaut* is a huge success with both the audience and critics.
- Puccini works the writing team of Illica and Giacosa on his next three projects, including his next opera—*La Bohème*.
La Bohème is based on a collection of episodic stories, Scènes de la Vie de Bohème (1851), by French author Henri Murger.
La Bohème

- The stories are set in the Latin quarter of Paris in the 1840s and trace the lives of a group of freelance artists.

- While the libretto is based on Murger’s stories, a great deal of the opera’s story was made up by the librettists and from Puccini’s experiences as a poor student at the Milan Conservatory.

- Puccini wrote, “I lived La Bohème.”
La Bohème

- Jonathan Larson based his 1994 musical RENT on La Bohème
While there is a country of Bohemia in central Europe (now a region of the Czech Republic), the term was used in nineteenth-century France for the Romani gypsies who emigrated to France from Bohemia.
La Bohème

✦ The term “Bohemian” was then used to describe people who lived an unconventional lifestyle, and whose outlook was anti-establishment…

✦ And “persons with artistic or intellectual tendencies, who live and act with no regard for conventional rules of behavior”
La Bohème

- Many “Bohemians” were artists, writers, and freethinkers
- One of the defining characteristics of the “Bohemian” lifestyle was free love and poverty
La Bohème

- The opera tries to deal in a realistic way with the lives of everyday people.
- This kind of realism was an artistic movement in Italy called VERISMO.
- VERISMO = REALISM (Vero = true)
Various nineteenth-century writers, such as French novelist Émile Zola and Guy de Maupassant, became interested in writing about life the way that it really was—including bad social conditions, poverty, violence, industry and work--instead the movers and shakers of history or the romance of mythical subjects.
La Bohème

- Such writing usually depicted life in the lower classes, especially life in the densely populated cities.
- Luigi Capuana describes it as the “poetry of the real”
Many opera composers became interested in such “real life” stories, and created a new style of music composition to represent such realism.

Most of these composers were young Italians, and were referred to as the “giovane scuola” [young school] during the years 1875-1895.
La Bohème

- The opera is set in the “Latin” quarter of Paris
The Latin Quarter

Map Courtesy of PARIS ACCESS

By Richard Saul Wurman
HarperPerennial

TAKING A SCROLL THROUGH THE LATIN QUARTER

Point Zero in France
Notre-Dame Cathedral

LEFT BANK

RIGHT BANK

St. Michel

Point Zero in France
Notre-Dame Cathedral

LEFT BANK

RIGHT BANK
La Bohème

- Rodolfo and his friends live in a *chambres de bonnes*—a “garrett”
Chambres de bonnes
Typically, opera is divided into two different kinds of sections:

- **RECITATIVE**: a very “talky” style of singing, where the action of dialogue takes place.
- **ARIA**: the more “tuneful” section, where a character expresses an emotional reaction to a situation.
RECITATIVE

Action
Dialogue

ARIA

Emotional
Reaction
La Bohème

- While there are “arias” in verismo operas, in general composers tried for more on-going flow of music.
- The line between recitativo and aria are blurred.
- Many times multiple characters sing at the same time.
- Lead characters are often placed in crowds, the crowds acting as a realistic background to the solo singing.
The story of the opera concerns the loves stories of two couples:

- RODOLFO, a poet, and MIMÌ, a seamstress
- MARCELLO, a painter, and MUSSETTA, a singer

& Rodolfo’s friends

- COLLINE, a philosopher; SCHAUNARD, a musician
La Bohème

ACT I
Introduction and Opening Scene
La Bohème

- Instrumental opening based on Puccini’s *Capriccio Sinfonico*, written when he was a student—another connection to Puccini’s Bohemian days.

- Act I is in **two sections**
  - **First** a depiction of the artistic Bohemian lifestyle of Rodolfo, Marcello and their friends.
  - **Second**, a duet for Rodolfo and Mimi as they meet and fall in love.
Rodolfo’s and Mimi’s duet is constructed of four sections:

1. Introduction, where they meet
2. Aria by Rodolfo, where he describes himself
3. Aria by Mimi, where she describes herself
4. Concluding duet together
La Bohème

ACT I

* Rodolfo’s aria, “Che gelida manina”
La Bohème

ACT I

*Mimì’s aria, “Si chiamano Mimì”
**La Bohème**

- Act III concerns Rodolfo and Mimí’s breakup
- In the central duet, Rodolfo describes how he is very worried about Mimí’s health—she has consumption (TB)
- Rodolfo wants Mimí to leave him so she can live with a wealthier boyfriend who can take care of her financially
- Rodolfo and Mimí **end their relationship**, agreeing to remain friends (“addio senza rancor”)
La Bohème

- In Act IV, Mimí returns to Rodolfo
- Sensing the worse, all her friends turn up
- Rodolfo and Mimí recall their past relationship
- The opera ends with Mimí’s death
Pieces to Know

★ “Che gelida manina,” *La Bohème* Track 100 (*111 Opera Masterpieces*)

★ “Si chiamano Mimì,” *La Bohème*, Track 83 (*111 Opera Masterpieces*)
Terms to Know

- Bohemia, Bohemian
- Henri Murger, *Scènes de la Vie de Bohème*
- Latin Quarter
- Giulio Ricordi
- Verismo
- “Poetry of the Real”
- Giovane scuola