

LA BOHÈME

STUDY GUIDE

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OPERAOMAHA

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THE WORK

La bohème

Music by Giacomo Puccini

Libretto by Luigi Illica and Guiseppe Giacosa,
based on *Scènes de la vie de bohème* by Henri Murger

Performed in Italian with English supertitles

First performance: Teatro Regio Turin, February 1, 1896

CREATIVE TEAM

Jonathan Brandani*
Conductor



E. Loren Meeker
Production by



Rebecca Herman
Director



Kevin Depinet*
Set & Properties Designer



Erik Teague*
Costume Designer



Robert Wierzel
Lighting Designer



Ronell Oliveri
Wig & Makeup Designer



Eric Sean Fogel*
Choreographer



Madison Hertel*
Associate Choreographer



*Opera Omaha debut

CAST

Karen Chia-ling Ho
Mimì



Demetrious Sampson Jr.
Rodolfo



Katrina Galka
Musetta



Darren Drone
Marcello



Johnathan McCullough
Schaunard



Nicholas Newton
Colline



Matthew Burns
Benoit/Alcindoro



Jackson Kissler
Parpignol



Schuyler Rose
Custom House Officer



Gavin Rasmussen
Prune Man



Garrett Scholberg
Sergeant



Vi Westman
Child



*Opera Omaha debut

WHO'S WHO

CHARACTER	VOICE TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Rodolfo roh-DOL-foh	tenor	A young poet who is poor but romantic. He falls in love with Mimì on Christmas Eve.
Mimì mee-MEE	soprano	A gentle seamstress who embroiders flowers. She is Rodolfo's neighbor and lover.
Marcello mar-CHEL-loh	saritone	A painter and Rodolfo's closest friend. He has an on-again, off-again romance with Musetta.
Musetta moo-ZET-tah	soprano	A flirtatious singer and Marcello's former lover.
Schaunard shoh-NAR	baritone	A musician in the group of friends.
Colline kol-LEE-neh	bass	A philosopher and the fourth friend.
Benoît ben-WAH	bass	The bohemians' landlord.
Alcindoro al-chin-DOH-roh	bass	A wealthy older state councillor who pays Musetta's bills.

THE STORY OF *LA BOHÈME*

ACT I

A garret in the Latin Quarter

On a bitter Christmas Eve in 1890s Paris, three bohemian friends, poet Rodolfo, painter Marcello, and philosopher Colline try to keep warm in their threadbare attic. They joke and burn pages of Rodolfo's latest play for heat. Their fourth roomate, the musician Schaunard arrives with food and firewood, which he has earned by being hired to play until a parrot falls down dead. When the landlord, Benoit, enters demanding rent, the gang gets him drunk, then cheerfully hustle him out without his money. The friends head to Café Momus, leaving Rodolfo behind to finish an article. A soft knock. Their neighbor Mimì, a shy seamstress, asks for a light, her candle has blown out. In the dim room, they search for her lost key; hands touch, hearts quicken. Rodolfo introduces himself, she tells of her simple life and love of spring flowers; the spark is instant. They leave arm-in-arm to join the others, their new love bright against the cold.

ACT II

Café Momus, the Latin Quarter

Café Momus glitters with hawkers and revelers. Rodolfo proudly presents Mimì to his friends, who welcome her with warmth and teasing. Amid the swirl arrives Musetta, Marcello's glamorous, tempestuous, on-again/off-again lover, on the arm of the pompous Alcindoro. Musetta launches into her famous waltz, dazzling the crowd and re-ensnaring Marcello. With a mischievous ruse, she sticks Alcindoro with the bill and dashes off with Marcello to rejoin the bohemians, who stream into the merry Paris night.

ACT III

Two months later, the Barrière d'Enfer, a snowy dawn

Winter deepens. Outside a toll gate at dawn, Mimì, coughing and exhausted, seeks Marcello at a nearby tavern where he and Musetta are working. She confides that Rodolfo's jealousy has become unbearable. Marcello hints the poet fled more from fear than temper. Rodolfo appears and admits the truth: he adores Mimì, but her illness worsens in their poverty; his jealousy is a mask for anguish and helplessness. Overhearing, Mimì steps forward. The lovers agree to separate in spring, unable to part in the icy moment. Nearby, Marcello and Musetta quarrel and split yet again.

ACT IV

Back in the garret

Spring and summer have come and gone. Rodolfo and Marcello pretend to work while pining for their lost loves. Colline and Schaunard arrive with a meager feast, and the four turn their hunger into slapstick bravado. Musetta bursts in. She found Mimì gravely ill, and brought her to the garret because she wished to die near Rodolfo. The friends scramble to help. Musetta rushes out to sell her earrings for medicine; Colline quietly decides to pawn his beloved overcoat to buy a muff to warm Mimì's cold hands. Alone together, Rodolfo and Mimì reminisce about their first meeting: the candle, the key, the joy of that night. The others return with small comforts. For a fleeting moment she seems better, grateful for the muff against the chill. Then, as laughter fades, Mimì slips away, serene; Rodolfo realizes the truth only when Schaunard gently covers her. His cry shatters the little attic.

CONDUCTOR'S NOTE

Puccini's *La bohème* is one of those operas which took the world by storm soon after its premiere back in 1896; since then, it has never ceased to inspire and to move audiences around the globe.

La bohème is the first Puccini opera that totally captivated my imagination and the one I kept listening over and over again when I was about 18 years old. I had just bought a CD recording, which came with a very nice printed version of the libretto, and I remember listening to the opera every day for hours at a time.

Even now, after many years since that time, I still consider this opera a miracle of musical and theatrical perfection. Nowadays, notwithstanding the fact that I've had the privilege of conducting it on multiple occasions, every time I encounter it, I am still deeply moved by its power. It doesn't matter how many times I have been hearing, playing, or conducting the last scene - every time I am moved to tears and amazed at how powerful it still is.

This opera - like all great masterworks - never ceases to shine and to reveal different sides of itself every time we interact with it. Every time that I get to perform it, I keep discovering and learning new things; sometimes it's a slightly different take on one of the characters, some other times it's a precious detail in the orchestration, sometimes it's a different interpretative nuance in a specific passage.

I have been thinking a lot about the reasons that make *La bohème* such a powerful opera. Is it because of its romantic story, with its unique mix of youthful comedy and timeless heartbreak? Is it because of its music, which, in its incredible sincerity, brings to the forefront all the different emotions that permeate the story? Is it because of the soaring melodies and incredible arias that fill the score? Is it because of its lush and brilliant orchestration, which literally both supports and enhances the musical storytelling? Most likely, it is because of all of this and much more which is hard to put into simple words...

While this opera is indisputably full of memorable moments, I have to admit that I have a couple of personal favorite spots. The first one is almost at the end of Act 2, when Marcello reunites with Musetta and all six principals join forces in a very short, yet musically superb sextet. The orchestra and the voices soar to such a compelling climax that I find absolutely irresistible - the sheer amount of sound that comes up from the pit and down from the stage at that point is so exhilarating and aptly translates into music all the passions and all the enthusiasm that inhabits the characters at that specific moment! The other spot is the quartet in Act 3. In this ensemble piece, Puccini manages to combine intense lyricism with incredible realism: while Mimì and Rodolfo sing soaring melodies that renew their love commitment, Marcello and Musetta argue in a lively and fiery manner, totally unaffected by what's going on around them. I always find it fascinating that opera, in the hands of skilled composers like Puccini, has the power to present and successfully overlap such two (or more!) very different situations happening at the same time!

I believe that *La bohème* is an opera that has something for everyone; it doesn't matter how young or old, hopeful or disillusioned, romantic or pragmatic one is. At every performance there will be something that will resonate with us and will make us feel the poetic power of Puccini's genius.

— Jonathan Brandani

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

It is a joy to return to this production of *La bohème*, originally created for The Glimmerglass Festival in 2016. The production has since traveled with me to OPERA San Antonio and back to Glimmerglass. Nearly a decade after we first imagined it, I am delighted to introduce this very special *Bohème* to Opera Omaha.

When we began designing the production, we wanted to place these characters in the vibrant world of Belle Époque Paris; a city alive with painters, poets, performers, cafés, cabarets, and people living just outside the boundaries of respectable society. Toulouse-Lautrec and the nightlife he captured became important visual touchstones for us. This is a world filled with color and personality, but also one in which poverty is never far away.

That combination seemed perfect for Puccini's bohemians.

Rodolfo, Marcello, Schaunard, and Colline are struggling artists, but what defines them is their charisma, their humor, their ambition, and their extraordinary friendship. They have chosen to live with almost nothing, yet at the beginning of the opera their world feels enormous. A manuscript can become firewood. A meager meal can become a feast. An empty room can be filled with laughter. They possess the optimism of youth – the belief that somehow everything will work out.

Mimì enters that world from somewhere very different. She is young, reserved, and working to support herself as a seamstress. As she falls in love with Rodolfo, she is also drawn into the freedom and unconventionality of his circle. Musetta, by contrast, seems born to inhabit this Paris: theatrical, independent, sensual, and completely aware of the effect she has on everyone around her. These women are very different, but neither is merely an accessory to the men who love them. They bring their own desires, choices, contradictions, and vitality into the story.

With this in mind, the creative team deliberately chose a sparse scenic vocabulary for the production. Rather than recreate Paris naturalistically, a few pieces of architecture, furniture, light, and the ever-present Parisian sky suggest the world around the characters. Objects transform and spaces are reconfigured before our eyes. What matters is not the completeness of the room, the café, or the city gate, but what happens between the people in these spaces.

And as their story changes, so does their world.

The expansive promise of the opening gradually disappears. By Act III, winter has arrived, relationships are fracturing, and the characters have reached an emotional low point. The architecture itself begins to feel more exposed and broken apart. When we return to the garret in Act IV, there is even less than there was at the beginning. What once seemed playfully impoverished now feels genuinely empty. The friends can still joke and pretend, but we understand that youth cannot protect them from everything.

That is one of the things I find so devastating about *La bohème*. Puccini does not tell us the story of extraordinary people. He gives us ordinary moments and allows us to discover how extraordinary they become because they will not last.

Our goal was to never have the production design compete with the brilliance of simple human moments. The purpose of the environment is to give these young people a world in which to live—and then allow Puccini, and the artists performing his opera, to do the rest.

Every time I return to *La bohème*, the production feels new because the people inside it are new. Each Rodolfo and Mimì find their own way toward one another. Each Marcello and Musetta discover their own wonderfully impossible relationship. And each group of bohemians creates the sense that, for one fleeting period of their lives, these friends truly are a family.

Perhaps that is why we continue to return to *La bohème*. Most of us know something about a time when our friends were our world, when the future seemed impossibly large, and when we did not yet understand how quickly those days would pass.

It is a delight to return to this production once again, and a privilege to share it with Omaha.

— E. Loren Meeker

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT QUESTIONS:

Guiding questions to start and finish the conversation with your students about their opera experience.

BEFORE THE SHOW:

What was life like for a poor young artist in a big city in the 1890's when the opera is set? How is it similar to or different from today?

How might reading supertitles change the way you experience a story told through music?

What makes a love story feel believable? What can the performers do with their voices or actions to make the emotions feel more real?

WHILE YOU'RE AT THE SHOW:

ACT	LISTEN FOR	ASK YOURSELF
1: The apartment	Rodolfo's aria "Che gelida manina" ("Your tiny hand is frozen") and Mimì's reply, "Sì, mi chiamano Mimì"	What does each song reveal about who they are?
2: Café Momus	The noisy street crowd and chorus, then Musetta's waltz "Quando m'en vo"	How does the music create a busy city? Why does Musetta sing so loudly?
3: Snowy dawn	The quartet: Mimì and Rodolfo agree to stay together until spring while Marcello and Musetta quarrel	Why sing two very different relationships at once?
4: Back in the apartment	Melodies from Act 1 returning, and Colline's farewell to his coat, "Vecchia zimarra"	What do the returning tunes make you remember?

Tip: the orchestra often tells you what the characters can't say. Notice when the music shifts between jokes and heartbreak.

AFTER THE SHOW:

Which moment affected you most, and what made it work: the music, acting, or staging?

Why do Mimì and Rodolfo struggle to stay together: poverty, pride, jealousy, illness, or something else?

Did the ending feel earned? Would you change anything?

Which character did you connect with most? Who frustrated you?

Why is a story like this, including its modern retelling *Rent*, still told today?

WHAT IS A WORKING DRESS REHEARSAL?

Whether an opera is an original Opera Omaha production, a co-production with one or more companies, a rental from another company, or a revival or remount of an Opera Omaha production, each production must be adjusted for the Orpheum Theater stage. While each department works independently to learn and produce their aspect of the show, it takes tremendous coordination and expense to run through the show with everyone involved.

The final working dress rehearsal is the last time all the elements of the production are brought together before the opening night performance, and the final opportunity for the staff and cast to make adjustments to the on-stage performances, orchestration, sets, costumes, lighting and other technical aspects of the opera. When you attend a dress rehearsal you will see some of the artistic, production, and administrative staff stationed behind computers and other equipment in the seats in front of the orchestra. Occasionally they may stop the performance to give notes to the singers, coordinate with the orchestra conductor, or address a staging or technical concern.

Another characteristic of a working dress rehearsal is that singers sometimes “mark” portions of their vocal parts. This means the singer may not sing out completely through the entire rehearsal. This could be because he or she wants to preserve his/her voice for opening night. In most cases, however, if the dress rehearsal is open to the public, the singers treat the occasion as a performance for the audience present.

On the day of the dress rehearsal, the staff sits in the theater and monitors the performance. Each department is responsible for specific aspects of the production, but there are basic skills that are important for everyone:

TIME MANAGEMENT
Planning well and using time efficiently to accomplish one’s goals

A STRONG WORK ETHIC
The desire to work hard and do well in one’s job

LIFELONG LEARNING
Continued study in one’s chosen field

CREATIVE THINKING
The ability to solve problems as they arise

WHO ARE THE PEOPLE WORKING BEHIND THE TABLES?

ARTISTIC STAFF

This could be the director of artistic administration, the director of production and the artistic planning staff. They act in a supervisory role, in case something goes wrong and a problem needs to be solved.

STAGE DIRECTOR AND ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

The stage director is responsible for the dramatic interpretation of the opera. They will give notes to the assistant director about anything that needs to be changed and will refer to the notes in communicating with the performers.

PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER

The production stage manager communicates all the cues throughout the production including lighting changes, the movement of set pieces, and when the performers enter the stage.

TECHNICAL STAFF

The technical director and their staff supervise the physical elements on stage, such as sets, lights, sound, communications, and video.

LIGHTING DESIGNER AND ASSISTANT LIGHTING DESIGNER

As with the directors, the lighting designer oversees the lights and gives notes to the assistant lighting designer, who is also communicating with the follow spot operators.

COSTUME STAFF

The costume director and wardrobe assistants are present to make any last-minute costume adjustments.

MUSIC STAFF

Because the conductor is working and cannot tell how the orchestra sounds from outside the orchestra pit, one or more music assistants are seated in the theater to monitor the sound and balance from within the house.

EFFECTS AND ANIMATION

If the production has special visual effects, there will be staff to oversee those elements as well.

BEHIND THE SCENES – JOBS AT THE OPERA HOUSE

Opera is one of the most popular forms of art in the world and is growing in popularity in the United States—particularly among young people. The combination of spectacle, music, and drama continues to thrill audiences. Opera is truly an international art form. While each company has its own orchestra and chorus, or group of singers, opera companies all over the world share opera productions (the sets and costumes of opera), and singers travel all over to sing the roles that made them famous. But, there is more to opera than famous singers, orchestra, and spectacle. Many people work hard behind the scenes to make each opera performance happen. Opera companies employ administrators and production personnel who are responsible for the productions you see. If you wish to explore careers in the arts, here are some professions at an opera company that might interest you.

CONDUCTOR

Opera companies may have their own resident conductor or may invite guest conductors to conduct specific operas. Conductors are accomplished and highly trained musicians, who often play several instruments and must be able to read music with the fluency of their native language. Not every conductor wants to conduct opera; conducting for the voice is a highly specialized skill. Conductors also specialize in different kinds of music; some conductors are known for early music, others specialize in composers, like Mozart or Rossini, while some are skilled in conducting contemporary or new music. The conductor may have an assistant who accompanies in rehearsals. A chorus master works with the chorus, conducting them in rehearsals and supervises them while they learn the music.

STAGE DIRECTOR

The director is responsible for the overall concept of the production, for the performers' interpretations of their roles, and for moving the action on the stage. Directors choose to set operas in a different time or place or modernize the setting. Directors are usually hired for a specific production, and like conductors, they specialize in different styles. Opera directors often work internationally. The director often works with an assistant who, among other duties, takes staging notes during rehearsals.

SET DESIGNER

The set designer works closely with the director to create the look of the opera. The director determines where and when the opera will take place, and the designer will sketch the locations. They might do this after extensive research. A set designer must know a great deal about construction and materials, for the set must be created to be lightweight, sturdy, and practical. They must also know about light, for the colors for the set must work with the lights illuminating the stage.

COSTUME DESIGNER

The costume designer works closely with both the director and set designer to create the costumes for every character in the opera. The costume designer will draw their ideas for each character. Costume constructors build (or sew) the costumes. Some characters change their costumes many times—a young girl in Act One may be portrayed as an old woman in Act Three—and the designer must develop specific details, down to the kind of fabric to be used, for each costume.

LIGHTING DESIGNER

The lighting designer must be knowledgeable about electricity, color, and theater techniques to create a design that will work for the opera. A lighting designer must be a good draftsman, for they will draw the "light plot," a rendering of every light to be used and its placement in the theater. The lighting designer creates mood, atmosphere, and locale through the clever use of light and color.

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

The technical director oversees all the technical aspects of the company's production. They work with the designers and with the stage crew to make sure the sets, props, and lights are effective and work together.

COSTUME DIRECTOR

The costume director supervises all aspects of costumes working with the costume designer to make sure all requests are met. They also supervise construction of costumes or arrange to buy or rent costumes the company doesn't make, make sure all the costumes fit the singers, and supervise the wardrobe staff who ensure the costumes are kept clean and in good condition.

PRODUCTION MANAGER

The production manager supervises all other aspects of the production, including the stage management staff (see below), wig, make-up, rehearsal schedules, and more.

STAGE MANAGER

Stage managers are responsible for "calling" the show; during the rehearsals and performances, they tell the person who controls the lights when to change them; they tell the person who opens and closes the curtains when to do their job; they tell the performers when to enter and exit stage. They are the boss of the production during performances. There is a team of stage managers for opera productions, and usually a PSM, or production stage manager leads that team with at least one ASM, or assistant stage manager.

WIG AND MAKE-UP MASTER

Just like in the movies, opera singers wear make-up on stage. Sometimes the make-up is elaborate (a young singer must be made-up to look old, for example) and sometimes it is simple. In order for the singers' faces to be seen under bright

lights and in a large auditorium, all must wear make-up. Wigs are often used, even when the singers' own hair will look fine, because it is easier for the wig master to set the wig than it is to set the singer's own hair.

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Opera companies are usually headed by a General Director. There may also be a Chief Operating Officer or Managing Director who oversees operations and functions of marketing and fundraising. Other members of the staff include the Director of Artistic Administration, who casts singers in their roles and negotiates with their agents, the Marketing Director who is in charge of advertising, public relations, and selling tickets, the Development Director who is in charge of raising money (operas are very expensive to produce—ticket sales cover less than half of the what it actually costs!), the Finance Director who oversees budgets and money, and the Engagement Programs Director who is in charge of programs for schools and the community. The number and roles of artist administrative staff vary widely from company to company.

THE LANGUAGE OF OPERA

Acoustics	The science of sound; the qualities of sound in an enclosed space.
Act	Main sections of a play or opera.
Aria	A song for solo voice in an opera used to express feelings or comment on the story.
Baritone	The middle male voice; often cast as kings, priests, and villains. This voice type is higher than a bass but lower than a tenor.
Bass	The lowest male voice; often cast as comic roles and older men.
Bel Canto	A genre and style of opera most popular in the early 19th century that has long flowing melodies and lots of vocal embellishment.
Bravo	Italian meaning "well done"; opera tradition calls for the audience to shout "bravo!" at the end of an excellent performance.
Choreography	A dance or the making of a dance; some operas include dance sequences.
Chorus	A group of singers usually divided into sections of sopranos, altos, tenors, and basses; the opera chorus often represents the general community, who comments on the story and sometimes voices the thoughts, fears and suspicions of the audience.
Composer	The person who writes the music of an opera or other musical compositions.
Conductor	As the musical director of the opera, the conductor leads both the orchestra and the singers.
Contralto	The lowest female singing voice.
Cover	A replacement for a singer in case of illness; an understudy.
Crescendo	Meaning "growing," used as a musical direction to indicate that the music is to get gradually louder.
Director	The person responsible for the dramatic interpretation of opera.
Duet	A song for two voices.
Dynamics	The degree of loudness and softness in music.
Ensemble	A French word that means "together"; a group performing together.
Finale	The ending segment of an act or scene, often very lively.
Forte (f)	Italian for "strong" or "loud." An indication to perform at a loud volume, but not as loudly as fortissimo.
Fortissimo (ff)	Very loudly. The trombones love this.

Grand Opera	Popular from the 19th century through the present, grand opera combines chorus and ballet with other elements of spectacle.
Intermission	A break between the acts of an opera. The lights go on and the audience is free to move around.
Leitmotif	A recurring musical theme, often a short melody (but also can be a chord progression or rhythm), associated with a particular character, place or idea.
Libretto	The text of an opera; literally, "a little book."
Librettist	The person who writes the libretto.
Melody	A succession of musical tones (i.e., notes not sounded at the same time), often prominent and singable.
Mezzo-soprano	Middle range female voice.
Musical	A staged story told by interweaving songs and music with spoken dialogue.
Opera	A play which is sung.
Opera Buffa	A comedic style of Italian Opera that dominated the early 18th century.
Opera Seria	The noble and "serious" style of Italian opera that rivaled the less-serious Opera Buffa.
Operetta	A light opera, whether full-length or not, often using spoken dialogue. The plots are romantic and improbable, even farcical, and the music tuneful and undemanding.
Orchestra	The group of musicians and trombonists who, led by the conductor, accompany the singers.
Orchestra Pit	The sunken area in front of the stage where the orchestra plays.
Overture	An introduction to the opera played by the orchestra.
Play	A staged story told through spoken dialogue.
Pianissimo (pp)	Very softly. The trombones usually ignore this instruction.
Piano (p)	Meaning "flat," or "low". Softly, or quietly, but not quite as much as pianissimo.
Pitch	The highness/lowness of a sound or tone.
Prima donna	The leading woman singer in an operatic cast or company.
Plot	The story or main idea.
Production	The set, costumes, and other physical elements.
Proscenium	The architectural "frame" of the stage space. The areas hidden from the audience's view, behind the proscenium are called the "wings".

Recitative	A sung speech that moves the action along by providing information.
Score	The written music of the opera or other musical compositions.
Set	The structures, furniture and decoration on stage.
Solo	Music sung by one performer.
Soprano	Highest female voice.
Tempo	The speed of the music.
Tenor	Highest male voice; young men and heroes are often tenors.
Timbre	Quality of a tone, also an alternative term for “tone-color.”
Tone-color	The characteristic quality of tone of an instrument or voice.
Trio	Three people singing together; a song for three people.
Verismo	A type of “realism” in Italian opera during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, in which the plot was on a contemporary, often violent, theme.
Volume	A description of how loud or soft a sound is. The trombones do not understand this.
Zarzuela	Popular Spanish opera style that mixes dialogue with music, similar to American musical theater.

A GUIDE TO VOICE PARTS & ORCHESTRA FAMILIES

VOICE PARTS

SOPRANO
Sopranos have the highest voices, and usually play the heroines of an opera. This means they often sing many arias and fall in love and/or die more often than other treble voice types.

MEZZO-SOPRANO OR MEZZO
This is the middle treble voice, and has a darker, warmer sound than the soprano. Mezzos often play mothers and villainesses, although sometimes they are cast as seductive heroines. Mezzos also play young men on occasion, aptly called “pants roles” or “trouser roles.”

CONTRALTO OR ALTO
Contralto, or alto, is the lowest treble voice. Contralto is a rare voice type. Altos usually portray older females, or witches.

COUNTERTENOR
This is the highest non-treble voice, and another vocal rarity. Countertenors sing in a similar range as a contralto. Countertenor roles are most common in baroque opera, but some contemporary composers also write parts for countertenors.

TENOR
If there are no countertenors on stage, then the highest non-treble voice in opera is the tenor. Tenors are usually the heroes who win their love’s heart or die horribly in the attempt.

BARITONE
The middle non-treble voice. In comic opera, the baritone is often a schemer, but in tragic opera, they are more likely to play the villain.

BASS
The lowest non-treble voice. Low voices usually suggest age and wisdom in serious opera, and basses usually play kings, fathers, and grandfathers. In comic opera, basses often portray old characters that are foolish or laughable.

FAMILIES OF THE ORCHESTRA
STRINGS: violins, violas, cellos, double basses
WOODWIND: piccolos, flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons
BRASS: trumpets, trombones, French horns, tubas
PERCUSSION: bass drum, kettle drums, timpani, xylophones, piano, bells, gongs, cymbals, chimes

OPERA OMAHA HISTORY

For over 60 years Opera Omaha has brought audiences outstanding production quality, artistry, and educational opportunities. Today, a strong blend of traditional and innovative programming continues to engage the Omaha community through opera.

Opera Omaha began in 1958 as the Omaha Civic Opera Society, an all-volunteer community opera association. By the early 1970s, the company became fully professional, and its name was changed to Opera Omaha. In 1975, Opera Omaha moved performances to the historic Orpheum Theater.

The company holds a commitment to high production standards. Throughout the years, Opera Omaha has commissioned numerous new productions utilizing innovative production techniques and engaging visual artists such as Jun Kaneko. These productions have garnered interest from other opera companies and have raised Opera Omaha's artistic profile nationally and internationally. From 2018-2020, Opera Omaha produced the ONE Festival. With an emphasis on continual experimentation and new work, the ONE festival fostered an environment that encouraged and celebrated bold risks and transformative storytelling with familiar stories and new realms of cinema, poetry, costume design and interactive, participatory music-making.

Opera Omaha has also presented educational and engagement programming in schools and communities throughout the region for the last three decades. With a vision for the company that includes a balanced program of operas annually with an expansion of the company's civic footprint beyond the doors of the Orpheum Theater, the Holland Community Opera Fellowship was created in 2017. The Holland Community Opera Fellowship works collaboratively with community partners to co-create programming that helps individuals, organizations, and communities reach their goals, serving as a creative and artistic resource to the community. Through its extensive programming, Opera Omaha serves individuals from eastern Nebraska, western Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and the southeastern Dakotas, while also drawing national visitors.

MISSION STATEMENT

Opera Omaha is a growth-minded, high energy, and innovative company with a demanding mission: producing opera performances in multiple formats and styles and co-creating artist-led programs for a variety of community service organizations. We believe the power of opera is transformational, and as a result supports the creation of an inventive, creative, empathetic, and inclusive community that inspires joy, self-discovery, kinder discourse, and opportunity for all.

Since 1958 Opera Omaha has been led by devotion to two elements: Art and Community. Everything we've done, and continue to do, is guided by the hope that through this work we can ask questions, enrich lives and uplift our city.

Learn more about Opera Omaha and educational opportunities at operaomaha.org