

“Che gelida manina” (How cold your little hand is) LA BOHÈME,- Act I. Giacomo Puccini, 1896. Based on the novel by Henri Murger, *Scènes de la vie de bohème*, adapted into an Italian libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa, *La bohème* is one of the most popular operas in the standard repertoire.

SYNOPSIS: A group of four friends, all starving artists, share meager shelter in a freezing garret in 1830's Paris. Tonight is Christmas Eve and they plan to celebrate, thanks to some unexpected funds one of them has received. Three of the men leave for the café where they plan to enjoy themselves, but Rodolfo, a poet, stays behind to finish some work. Mimi, a neighbor in the building, knocks at his door and asks his help because her candle has gone out. Rodolfo finds Mimi irresistible and when she loses her key, they both search for it in the semi-darkness.

RODOLFO

(taking MIMI's hand, as they both try to find her key)

Che gelida manina,
se la lasci riscaldar.
Cercar che giova?
al buio non si trova.
Ma per fortuna
é una notte di luna,
e qui la luna
abbiamo vicina.

How cold your little hand is...
Let me warm it with my own.
What use is searching?
We can't see in this darkness.
But by good fortune,
the moon's shining brightly
and we can see some moonbeams
coming through the window.

Aspetti, signorina,
le dirò con due parole
chi son, e che faccio,
come vivo....Vuole?

Wait, won't you, dear young lady,
and I quickly will explain it,
just who I am, and my pastimes...
How I make a living...Listen...

Chi son? Sono un poeta.
Che cosa faccio? Scrivo.
E come vivo? Vivo.
In povertà mia lieta,
scialo da gran signore
rime ed inni damore.
Per sogni e per chimere
e per castelli in aria,
l'anima ho milionaria.

I am?... Well, I'm a poet,,,
What's my profession?.. Writer...
What's my life like? Living...
In poverty, I'm happy,
squandering like a noble
rhymes and passionate poems.
In day-dreams and fantasies
or castles I imagine,
I'm richer than a.. millionaire.

Talor dal mio forziere
 ruban tutti i gioelli
 due ladri, gli occhi bell
 Ventrar con voi pur ora,
 ed i miei sogni usati
 e i bei sogni miei,
 tosto si dileguar!
 Ma il furto non maccora,
 Poiché?
 Poiché vha preso stanza
 la speranza!
 Or che mi conoscete,
 Parlate voi;
 deh, parlate, chi siete?
 Vi piaccia dir?

Sometimes two robbers find my gems
 stealing all of my treasure,
 and two lovely eyes are guilty.
 They came in here when you did,
 and all my dreams just vanished;
 all my old chimeras
 vanished--I don't know where.
 But the loss does not upset me;
 Why not?
 Because something has filled their place--
 it's all the joy of hoping!
 Now that you've heard my story,
 will you please tell me,
 won't you tell me, who are you?
 Will you kindly speak...?

--From "Great Operatic Scenes," a course for Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at UCSC, ©2017

“Mi chiamano Mimi”- They all call me Mimi...
 Yes...They all call me “Mimi,” but my name is Lucia.
 My story’s a brief one. On canvas or silken,
 I sew at home or elsewhere.

I’m quite calm and happy
 and like to spend time
 making lilies and roses.

I love those things around me
 that are filled with sweet magic,
 that speak of tender love, and of the springtime,
 that speak of dreams and fantasies I long for,
 all that myst’ry that people call “poetic.”

You understand me?

RODOLFO: Yes.

MIMI: They all call me Mimi; but I don’t know why...
 Always alone, I make myself some dinner;
 I don’t attend mass daily, but pray a lot to the Lord.
 All alone, I live calmly; there in a room
 that’s white and very tiny, I can see the rooftops
 and far-off heaven above.

But when winter is thawing,
 mine are morning’s first sunbeams.

Only for Mimi, the first kiss of sweet April.

Only for me, the first sunshine....

A rosebud sits in water,
 Leaf by leaf, how I watch it...

What a fine gift: the perfume of a flower!

My flowers, I’m sorry to say,
 my pretty flowers, alas! they have no odor...

There’s nothing more I can tell you,
 I’m just your neighbor who’s come by, to disturb you...

MADAMA BUTTERFLY- "Un bel di" - One Fine Day; Act II
BUTTERFLY

One fine day, we'll notice a plume of smoke arising
in the distance, on the far horizon,
and then, the big ship appearing.
Then the ship, all gleaming white,
will come into the harbor, thunder out its loud salute.
You see? He has come back here..
I don't run out to greet him--not I.
I stand there on the edge of the hillside--just waiting,
just waiting, and never bothered by all the waiting...
Then out of the city filled with many people.
one man, a tiny little dot, begins to climb up the hillside.
Who is he? Who is he? And when he comes much closer,
what's he say? What's he say? He will call "Butterfly,"
before he gets there. But I will not answer, hiding away in silence,
a bit to tease him, and a bit, so I won't die
at our first meeting, and he, a little worried
will call out, he will call, "Ah, my pretty little wife,
oh, my sweet verbena," those dear names that he used
when he was with me.

(to Suzuki)

All of this you will see, I know for certain.
Though you may keep on fearing,
I'll never stop believing
and waiting.

3. LA RONDINE- “Chi il bel sogno” Doretta’s lovely dream; Act I
MAGDA

Chi il bel sogno di Doretta
potè indovinar?
Il suo mister come mai
come mai fini

Who could ever guess
Doretta’s charming lovely dream?
And how its mystery ever,
how it ever ends?

Ahimè! un giorno uno studente
in bocca la baciò
e fu quel bacio
rivelazione:
fu la passione!

Alas! One day, a poor student
kissed her ardently on the lips ,
and what a revelation
was that kiss!
It was pure passion!

Folle amore!
Folle ebbrezza!
Chi la sottil carezza
d'un bacio così ardente
mai ridir potrà?

Unbridled love!
Mad ecstasy!
Who could ever describe them--
the subtle wild caresses
of such an ardent kiss?

Ah! mio sogno!
Ah! mia vita!
Che importa la ricchezza
se alfine è rifiorita
la felicità!
O sogno d'or
poter amar così!

Ah, my dream!
Ah, my life!
What’s the use of riches
if happiness can thrive
once again?
Oh golden dream,
to be loved like this!

4. MANON LESCAUT, “Donna non vidii mai” - I never saw a woman; Act I
DES GRIEUX

Donna non vidi mai...
simile a questa!
A dirle: io t'amo,
a nuova vita l'anima mia si desta.
-"Manon Lescaut mi chiamo!"
Come queste parole profumate
mi vagam nello spirito
e ascose fibre...

I never saw a woman
equal to this one.
To tell her, “I love you,”
my soul would waken to new and better living.
“Manon Lescaut, they call me.”
How those sweetly perfumed words enchant me,
they wander through my heart and mind
with hidden power,

vanno a carezzare!... coming to caress me.
 *O sussuro gentil, deh! non cessare! *Oh, sweet murmur, pray, do not be silent!
 Deh! non cessare! Pray, don't be silent!
 -"Manon Lescaut mi chiamo!" "Manon Lescaut, they call me."
 Como queste parole profumate How those sweetly perfumed words enchant me!
 O sussuro gentil, deh! non cessar! Oh, sweet murmur, pray, do not be still!
 Deh! non cessare! Deh! non cessar! Pray, don't be still! Pray, don't be still!
 (*= repeat)

5. TOSCA “Recondta Armonia” -Profound harmonic blending, Act I

CAVARADOSSI (*to the SACRISTAN*)

Bring me the palette...

(*SACRISTAN obeys. CAVARADOSSI paints, then takes a medallion from his pocket, looks at it and at the portrait he's painting*)

Profound harmonic blending

of two different beauties...

While Floria's hair is brown,
my ardent dark-eyed lover...

SACRISTAN (*grumbling*)

(Make jokes with soldiers
and leave the saints to themselves.)

(*He goes off to get water to wash the paint brushes.*)

CAVARADOSSI (*looking at painting*)

...you, sweet unknown beauty,
crowned by your golden tresses,
you have eyes as blue as heav'n:
Tosca's are black as midnight.

SACRISTAN (*returns with basin; starts to clean brushes*)

Make jokes with soldiers
and leave the saints to themselves.

CAVARADOSSI

Art, in its unknown myst'ry
mixes different beauties all together;
but while I'm painting that one,
all my thoughts are of you, love.

Ah! I only think of you,
Tosca, it's you! It's you!

---“Vissi d'arte”- I lived for art's sake; Act II

TOSCA

I lived for art's sake; I lived for loving,
Never did I hurt a sole human being;
Acting in secret, I helped as many as I knew who suffered.
Always with faith everlasting,
my earnest prayer rose up to the shrine, way above me on high.
Always with faith everlasting, I placed flowers for the Lord.
In the hour of my torment, oh, why, oh why, please tell me,

Lord, why do you reward me in this way?
I gave my jewelry for the Madonna's mantle,
and gave my song up to the stars in Heav'n
which smiled with more happy light than ever.
When I'm in so much pain,
oh, why, oh why, my Lord,
Ah, ah! Oh, why reward me in this way?

---“E lucevan le stelle”- And the stars shone so brightly; Act III

CAVARADOSSI

And the stars shone so brightly
and the earth smelled of perfume,
Creaking, the garden gate opened
and a light footstep ran up the pathway...
She came in, bathed in fragrance...
and my waiting arms embraced her...
Oh, kisses divine, languorous caresses,
While I, impatient, set free that lovely form
from its veils and covers,
Now vanished forever, my dream of loving...
The past is over; I die in desperation; I die in desperation...
And never have I cherished life so dearly,
loved life so dearly...

6. TURANDOT- “Signore, ascolta”- My lord, please listen ; Act I

LIÙ (*She approaches the PRINCE, imploring, weeping*)

My lord, please listen! Ah, lord, please listen.

Liù can stand no more.

Her heart is breaking.

Alas, alas, how far I've traveled

with your name in my soul,

with your name on my lips!

And if perhaps your fate is decided tomorrow,

we will die on the road of exile.

He will lose his son...

I, the shadow of a smile.

Liù can stand no more. Ah, have pity!

---“Nessun dorma” - No one sleeping, Act III

CALAF

No one sleeping! No one sleeping!
You as well, oh, Princess,
in your cold lonely room,
looking at starlight
that trembles from both love and from your hoping!
But my mystery is locked in me,
and not a soul will ever know my name!
No, no, but on your lips I'll tell you,
when daylight comes to light the dawn.
And then my kiss will break the silence
And make you mine...

CHORUS

No one will ever know his name.
And we, alas, shall have to die, we will die...

CALAF

Be gone, oh, darkness...! Disappear, oh, starlight!
Disappear, you starlight!
At dawning, I shall win...
I shall win; I shall win!

--Text translations by Miriam Ellis ©2017