

# LYRIC OPERA

KANSAS CITY

## LA BOHÈME

Giacomo Puccini 1896

March 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 2014

### Puccini's 'La bohème' tells passionate tale of tragic romance

March 16, 2014

By Libby Hanssen

Life, its fragile balance of tragedy and comedy, is art.

Giacomo Puccini's "La Bohème" tells such a story of youth, folly, romance and sorrow, the story of regular people, poor but proud, whose tumultuous lives are as epic and passionate as the lives of princesses and warriors.

Linda Brovsky directed the Lyric Opera of Kansas City's production, emphasizing these everyday moments in a straightforward, traditional rendition, using Puccini's genius for melody, drama and whimsical touches as the driving force. Craig Kier directed the Kansas City Symphony through the sweeping, opulent themes, though a few times they overwhelmed the singers.

The show develops in a dream-state half-light (lighting design by Steve Ross), in a gloomy garret, nighttime revelries and gray pre-dawn. The gray scheme carries into the set design, with R. Keith Brumley creating a chilly Paris of shadowy corners.

The garret houses four friends, boyish artist-bohemians who don't seem overly concerned about their squalid conditions, mostly making light of the hardships with bantering conversation and comic dancing, sharing in prosperity and want together. Add women and there's a whole new set of delights and problems.

Giorgio Berrugi was a likable Rodolfo, a subdued, pathetic hero character. His wooing "Che gelida manina!" was brash, self-deprecating and flattering. Later, Berrugi offered a tormented performance, and his final "Mimi!" (along with Puccini's potently tragic chords) was heart-wrenching.

Katie Van Kooten, returning to the Lyric Opera, played the gentle, fated heroine, Mimi. Her voice was light and gracious (though nevertheless powerful) and her manner demure, from her sweet, shy introductory "Mi chiamano Mimi" to the end, especially during the reconciliatory duet and her deathbed reminiscences.

THE★STAR.  
KansasCity★com

Their duets had an element of stand and deliver, or rather embrace and deliver, but created well-blended, emotionally weighty moments. Conversely, their foreshadowing asides in Act 2 were lost in the bustling activity of an otherwise well-organized scene.

Lucas Meachem's strong-voiced Marcello was genuine, supportive and in turbulent love with Musetta, well matched by Ellie Dehn. She showed an excellent scope of character in action and voice, from show-off, demanding coquette (emphasized by an elaborate gown in eye-catching goldenrod, designed by Martin Pakledinaz) to the softly rendered line of tender friend.

Ben Wager's Colline and Marcus DeLoach's Schaunard offered welcome, well-timed humor, making their mournful reactions more pitiful, especially Wager's prayerful "Vecchia zimarra." Purely comic was Rod Nelman's bumbling roles as Alcindoro/Benoit.

All together, the production provided a well-performed, direct portrayal of the opera.