# La Boheme

### LA Boheme: Scenes de la vie Boheme

By Henri Murger



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Set in the Latin Quarter of 1840s Paris, Henri Murger's 'La Boheme' creates a stark and colorful record of the boisterous, lean, and sensual world of eternal bohemia. The author, like his character Rudolph, was a dispossessed poet living from hand to mouth while serving his literary apprenticeship in the hustle-and-bustle streets of the artists' quarter. In order to make a little money, Murger created fictional episodes based on his experiences in the heart of Bohemia and sole the first of them in 1847..for 15 francs each...to a small literary magazine entitled 'Le Corsaire.'

From this humble beginning, 'La Boheme' has become an undying tribute to true Bohemians or, as Murger describes them, 'those called by art.' the episodes first published in 'Le corsaire' were gathered into a book that sold 70,000 copies. then in 1849 Theodore Barriere made the story into a play, which became a popular sensation in Paris. And finally Giacomo Puccini transformed Murger's tale into the famous opera.

'La Boheme' is a one-of-a-kind journey to a raw yet romantic place, to a sphere where people hunger for both artistic ideals and morsels of food.

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#### **Editorial Review**

#### Review

Lovers of Puccini's "La Boheme" will find some surprises in Henri Murger's novel. The Mimi of Murger's novel has not quite the same golden heart as the Mimi of Puccini's opera, and we have, besides, many more characters and incidents than appear in the opera. D.B. Wyndant Lewis called the novel a "classic ... woven out of the gossamer stuff of Youth," and there is, indeed, a freshness, a joy, a light spirit in the face of hunger and temporary homelessness exhibited only by young artists, musicians, and writers devoted to their respective muses. The nearly continual search for rent money, for a meal, for enough cash to buy canvas, the ease with which an old acquaintance can pull the searcher away from his search with the promise of some cheap wine and good talk-all these are beautifully and convincingly recreated in Murger's novel. Puccini may have distilled the essence; here we have all the wonderful raw material. The book's style, well-caught by the translator, aptly complements the joyous life of the bohemians, free of the grinding concerns of commerce, worried about little but the demands never too strict--of their artistic calling. The episodic nature of the book's construction seems apt as well, echoing as it does the uneven lives of the bohemians. Lovers of Puccini would do well to read this book, and no resident of Bohemia should miss it. Highly recommended for most collections. -- *From Independent Publisher* 

Language Notes Text: English, French (translation)

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