

***La bohème* music exercises**

Act openings

Each of the four acts of Puccini's score opens with a unique scene-setting display of orchestral colours and rhythms, which help to set the mood and scene of the act.

As a class, listen to the opening of each of the acts and discuss how Puccini achieves this.

For example:

Act One – Christmas Eve (1830) in Paris in a scantily furnished and unheated garret. From the moment the curtain goes up, it is clear that the mood is a cheerful one. The music is marked *allegro vivace* and this helps to underline the persistently happy nature of the five bohemians. This opening phrase (page 3 bars 6-11) becomes particularly associated with the character of Marcello.

Act Two – bustling, brightly lit street in the Latin Quarter, outside the Café Momus. The music is marked *allegro fucoso* and the blaring trumpets throw us immediately into the hustle and bustle of the crowd and the shoppers. (Page 32 bars 9 – 20/page 33 bars 1-9)

Act Three – Tavern on the fringes of Paris. Bleak and snowy dawn in February. There is a change in the orchestration (after the first two chords) – consider the use of harps and flutes and tremolo strings to create a more wintry atmosphere. (Page 179)

Act Four – Several months later in the Bohemian's garret. This is a shorter version of the Act One opening – it is spring again and Puccini recalls and develops many of the themes we have already heard.

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