

# An immortalization of pathos

"Men die and governments change but the songs of 'La Boheme' will live forever,"—Thomas Edison.

La Boheme is based on four scenes of Henri Murger's novel *Scenes de la Vie de Boheme*. The characters are said to be fairly accurate portraits of the friends of the struggling artist, Murger. Puccini has captured their speech in music—his characters live and breathe. He has immortalized their pathos and tragedy.

Rodolfo is Murger himself; Marcello is a composite of writer and two painters; Schaunard is a painter and musician; Colline is a theologian and philosopher—all within Murger's circle. Schaunard and Colline establish the Bohemian atmosphere with its 'love of life'—their barren life in 1830 Paris clothed in external gaiety.

Puccini lavished much care and many hours on Mimi—a most pathetic figure, exploiting the inherent pathos of her situation to the utmost. Each phrase develops some facets of her character which is imbued with inner qualities of gentleness and helpfulness.

With her appearance in the first act we are given an important key to her personality—her ability to accept an unpleasant existence while dreaming of a better future. She seems to be driven to searching for security in her relationship with Rodolfo.

In Friday evening's performance, Irene Salemda did not portray this Mimi to me. I felt she merely "played" the part of Mimi—evident vocally as well as dramatically. I found it difficult to imagine the

frail Mimi—wracked by the terrible coughing spasms of consumption.

John Alexander's Rodolfo was exciting. Here we were aware of a great singer and actor. He was the ardent lover, the charmer, yet all the while able to share the carefree sense of humor of his Bohemian friends. In the third act we realize his emotional instability—a curiously sarcastic passage followed by a sensitive account of Mimi's illness and their poverty.

As Marcello, Bernard Turgeon was both impressive and appealing. Marcello is the realist—aware of what the ultimate conclusion to Mimi's and Rodolfo's affair must be, yet helpless to avert the impending tragedy. At the same time, he falls victim to Musetta's affections.

Sheila Marks in the role of Musetta was flirtatious and capricious—a true coquette. This was particularly evident in the cafe scene of the second act. The comedy scenes were excellent and one felt a certain sponaneity about the humor.

Philip Silver's sets were magnificent. One really experienced that atmosphere of Paris in the 1830's. The orchestra, under conductor Samuel Krachmalnick, provided excellent accompaniment—the best I have heard in Edmonton.

Irving Guttman and the Edmonton Opera Society have whetted our tastes for more opera of this calibre and I am eagerly awaiting their Spring production of Verdi's "Rigoletto".

—Anne-Marie Stacey



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... they call it opera

## records

"LET IT BLEED" THE ROLLING STONES, London NPS 4

The Rolling Stones, since the beginning of their existence have enjoyed a profitable reputation as the chief anti-establishment group. I remember once reading an establishment press story on them where the writer posed the question "Would you want your daughter married to a Rolling Stone?" The reputation has stuck with them while they and their music have undergone constant change.

"Let It Bleed", is their debut album with Mick Taylor on guitar. He is only present on two songs but fills Brian Jones' place very well. The late Jones plays on two of the cuts. In addition to the Stones, many other "super" musicians were employed as session men. Al Kooper, Nicky Hopkins, and Ian Stuart being the best known.

In "Let It Bleed", the Stones have recorded another fine album. Their music has changed over the years but their distinguished style remains the same. There is still blues in their music, even when they do a song in country and western styling.

Four songs from the album will probably go down as some of their best works. They are "Country Honk", "Live With Me", "Let It Bleed", and "You Cain't Always Get What You Want".

"WHICH WAY YOU GOIN' BILLY" THE POPPY FAMILY (London PS 568)

With the success of the single "Which Way You Goin' Billy?" The Poppy Family have released their first album under that name.

Terry Jacks, leader of the group, produced the album, having written all the material on it. His years in many aspects of the music industry have given Terry much knowledge about what is required for a record to sell. Unlike much "top 40" material, his songs don't offend. In most cases they reflect his sensitivity, good taste, and the world as he sees it.

Terry's wife Susan, has almost unlimited potential vocally. Her interpretations of The Poppy Family's songs are a treat. With Craig McCaw on guitar and sitar, and Satwant Singh on percussion, the Poppy Family comes across very tight instrumentally.

All four of the group's singles are included on the album as well as a few "B" sides. Of the four, "What Can The Matter Be?" is my favorite. Its frank lyrics proved to be too much for many top 40 stations to handle and as a result, got little airplay. The song was re-recorded for the album. A few of their songs use studio effects in them. This can easily be overdone but Terry Jacks uses them subtly for the most part.

—Holger Peterson

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