

# La Boheme - nice soap opera

by J.L. Round

Unless you've been to one, you don't know what a relief it is to see and hear an opera staged in English. At the Cohn last week, Puccini's La Boheme was presented in an English translation by Ruth and Thomas Martin.

The translation is well written and neither the cast nor the audience seemed to mind the English (or even notice it, for that matter). It was nice to know what was being sung for once, rather than simply know the plot of the story and know only vaguely what each aria is about. Granted, no one got all the words, but it was a relief just knowing it was in English. If the work suffered in translation at all, it was in the loss of the mystery and magic of the foreign words. This was especially true of the recitative. Phrases like "Someone's at the door," and "Please, come in," don't quite have what it takes when heard in English.

The plot concerns the lives and romances of members of a group of struggling bohemian artists in Paris during the gay nineties. John Arab

played the part of Rudolfo, poet and main lover. Arab's singing is excellent, and his fine, impressive voice made up for whatever was lacking in the rather superficial character of Rudolfo. Barbara Collier was a lovely-voiced Mimi, the seamstress Rudolfo falls in love with in the dark. The two made an excellent musical match, and they sang the several duets with a tender yearning.

La Boheme, based on a French novel by Henri Murger, "Scenes de la vie Boheme", comes across as a nice soap opera. It's nothing to get excited about, although it's quite a favourite. It is at times amusing and at times touching. The two most realistic characters are the two secondary characters - Marcello, the fun-loving painter and his lover, Musetta, a campy, warm-hearted "belle dame". Peter Barzca and Lynn Blaser performed these roles well, adding a good contrast to the seriousness of Rudolfo and Mimi's romance.

There are several poignant moments in the opera, in traditional

melodrama style, and these were done in a simple tone, without pretension. The scenes were moving and sincere without being overbearing - particularly Mimi's death scene.

The set, designed by William Lord, is a versatile piece of equipment. He makes good use of space without cluttering the stage and, at the same time, achieves a dumpy atmosphere in the apartment of the bohemians without being the least bit messy (such tact!). The set is easily transformed into a small cafe by the removal of a few pieces of furniture, the drawing back of a curtain and the lowering of a piece of art work, turning it into

a sign above the cafe door.

The use of projection and lighting techniques, though certainly not ordinary, were not so new, either. The set was too well lit-up most of the time to allow the projected images to be effective to any great extent other than to provide an interesting background. I have seen the same idea used much more strikingly in a high school musical production.

On the whole, the members of the cast helped make this somewhat simple opera enjoyable with their musical abilities, and there was some pretty decent acting to boot!

## Non-existent group here Friday

Members of the Perth County Conspiracy (does not exist) will be returning to Dalhousie on Friday, December 5. Cedric Smith and Terry Jones will be appearing in the McInnes Room at 9:00 p.m. for an evening of music, poetry readings, mime, and theatre.

Cedric and Terry are two of Canada's finest writer/performers. English-bred, Ontario-battered, Cedric Smith has appeared at the Stratford Festival, Manitoba Theatre Centre, and the Toronto Workshop. He also directed, acted in and composed music for the

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Yeats Theatre Company, 1972, in London, England. As a founding member of Perth County Conspiracy (does not exist), he theatrically integrates Canadian social satire and poetry with music in numerous cross-country concerts, T.V. appearances and has made four albums. During February of 1975, Cedric represented Canada in the 5th annual Festival of Political Song in East Berlin. The acclaimed ten last years was highlighted by Cedric Smith's stage adaptation and original musical score.

Collaborating with Cedric Smith as an original music contributor for TEN LOST YEARS, Terry Jones has performed his music in many clubs: The Black Swan in Stratford, The Hovel in Edmonton, Le Hibou in Ottawa, The Riverboat, Egerton's and Grumble's in Toronto, to name a few. Terry composed and recorded music for two film scores in Edmonton. He has also travelled extensively across the country performing with Perth County Conspiracy (does not exist).

Cedric and Terry will be providing a lively, entertaining musical evening on Friday, December 5. Tickets will be available at the S.U.B. Enquiry Desk starting on Thursday Dec. 4 at 11:30 a.m. Admission will be \$2.00 for students and \$3.00 for others. For further information, call 424-3774.