

Detroit Opera

Detroit Opera and Artistic Director Yuval Sharon
premiere new production of *La bohème* April 2 at
Detroit Opera House

Sharon's reverse-order production starts with the last
act first

[Watch](#) Yuval Sharon on *La bohème*

LA BOHÈME
A NEW PRODUCTION BY **Detroit Opera**

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MUSIC BY GIACOMO PUCCINI
LIBRETTO BY GIUSEPPE GIACOSA
AND LUIGI ILLICA
DIRECTED BY YUVAL SHARON
CONDUCTED BY ROBERTO KALB

LA BOHÈME
DETROIT OPERA HOUSE
SAT / APR 2, 2022 / 6:30 PM
WED / APR 6, 2022 / 7:30 PM
SUN / APR 10, 2022 / 2:30 PM

DETROIT, March 16, 2022 - [Detroit Opera](#) invites audiences back to the Detroit Opera House April 2, 6, and 10 for Gary L. Wasserman Artistic Director Yuval Sharon's unique new production of *La bohème*, the first in-person opera performances in the venue in more than two years and the first under the new Detroit Opera name. The production casts familiar elements in a new light, as Sharon and Detroit Opera stage the classic opera in reverse order from Act IV to Act I, with text and music otherwise unchanged.

In this new arrangement, Sharon and Detroit Opera reappraise the ways in which audiences and artists can interact with repertoire, bringing fresh eyes and ears to a classic while extracting hope from tragedy, life from death, and love from loneliness.

Presented as a co-production with Boston Lyric Opera and Spoleto Festival USA, this bold, unconventional take on Puccini's opus is itself an experimental, nonconforming, and original piece of art. *La bohème* will be conducted by Roberto Kalb and features a cast that includes Marlen Nahhas (Mimi), Matthew White (Rodolfo), Edward Parks (Marcello), Brandie Inez Sutton (Musetta), Benjamin Taylor (Schaunard), and Cory McGee (Colline). Also appearing is George Shirley as The Wanderer, a new character created specifically for this production.

"The music that begins Act I and Act IV is almost identical," says Sharon, "and even in its normal chronology, *La bohème* isn't a connected linear narrative, but a collection of short episodic narratives. So a reverse chronology comes more easily than you might expect. But the effect is profound: suddenly, *La bohème*, this classic, archetypal opera, becomes a bit of a mystery. We know there's a darkness to it, we watch the death and tragedy unfold. But where does it start? As we move through the world of memory, we witness a resurrection, and a new love blooming. When the audience leaves the theater, they won't be left with the heaviness of inevitability. Instead, they'll be left with a notion that the pain was worth the fleeting moments of joy. We move backward, so our audience can move forward."

In order to keep the narrative of the reverse staging cohesive, Sharon introduces a new role: The Wanderer, portrayed by George Shirley. The Wanderer will give a spoken introduction to each act, helping the audience follow the reverse chronology of the story. This new text is drawn from the original source material for the opera and stage directions, allowing the opera to remain true to its artistic and historic milieu. In addition to his spoken introductions to each act, The Wanderer will also appear in three new fourth-wall-breaking scenes; in each appearance, the action will be put on hold as he asks the audience to consider which direction the story could have gone.

George Shirley is a Grammy Award-winning artist known for being the first Black tenor and the second Black man to perform a leading role at the Metropolitan Opera. A Detroit native, Shirley has extensive ties to the local community, having graduated from both Wayne State University and the the Detroit Public Schools Community District, where he also taught music in his early years. Shirley made his European debut with a production of *La bohème* in 1960, when he sang the role of Rodolfo in Milan's Teatro Nuovo; his world premiere performance as The Wanderer marks a new milestone in the artist's long and storied career.

The production will include 39 Detroit Opera Chorus members and 20 members of the Children's Chorus, led by director Suzanne Mallare Acton. The Detroit Opera Chorus dedicates these performances of *La bohème* in memory of Tamara Lehev Whitty.

La bohème performances will be held Saturday, April 2 at 6:30 p.m., Wednesday, April 6 at 7:30 p.m., and Sunday April 10 at 2:30 p.m. Tickets for *La bohème* are available online at DetroitOpera.org and start at \$29. Orders for groups of 10 or more may be placed by emailing groupsales@detroitopera.org. Subscriptions can be purchased by calling 313-237-7464.

[Safety protocols](#) will be enforced. All guests, performers, contractors, and staff 12 years of age and older, upon entry to the Detroit Opera House, must show proof of full COVID-19 vaccination, with at least 14 days having passed between the final dose and the Detroit Opera House event, or negative results of a COVID-19 PCR test taken within 72 hours of the event start time or a 6-hour antigen test. Self-administered at-home tests will not be accepted. Entrants must show a government issued photo ID (i.e., driver's license or passport) that matches the proof of full vaccination/negative test documentation. Vaccination validation applications such as Clear and Bindle are acceptable and encouraged. Masks properly over the nose and mouth must be worn inside the Detroit Opera House at all times – unless actively eating or drinking, regardless of vaccination status.

LA BOHÈME
April 2, 6, & 10, 2022
Detroit Opera House
Detroit, MI

Updated Cast and Creative

Music by Giacomo Puccini
Libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica
Directed by Yuval Sharon
Conducted by Roberto Kalb
Co-produced with Boston Lyric Opera and Spoleto Festival USA

with

Marlen Nahhas, Mimi
Matthew White, Rodolfo
Edward Parks, Marcello
Brandie Inez Sutton, Musetta
Benjamin Taylor, Schaunard
Cory McGee, Colline
George Shirley, The Wanderer

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