The Cultured Woman:

Depictions of the Soprano from the Romantic Era to the Late 20th Century

An Honors Thesis (MUSPE498)

By

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Abstract:

Senior recitals, along with fulfilling one of the requirements for graduation from the Music Performance Department at Ball State University, are an opportunity for young artists to display the skills gained through four years of voice lessons and other musical instruction. In hopes of providing more than artistic expression, the program presented in this particular thesis was designed with the purpose of comparing, contrasting and overall analyzing the purpose of the various roles and characters given to Sopranos (the highest voice part) through the 19th and 20th Centuries. The DVD enclosed in the Supplemental Materials section will provide a recording of the event. Also among the supplemental materials, there will be a copy of the program and translations provided to the audience present on the night of February 12, 2011.
Acknowledgements:

Upon my arrival at Ball State, I could have never imagined that I would be fortunate enough to have an instructor like Joseph Levitt. I would like to thank him for being more than a dedicated mentor and outstanding instructor, but a remarkable example of artistry, professionalism, and irrevocable love for our craft. Thank you, Sir, for your unfaltering encouragement and instruction throughout the four best years of my life to date.

Immeasurable gratitude goes to my accompanist, Hyorim Choi, without whom this recital would not have been possible. In addition, many thanks to my past accompanists, Damion Mead and Barbara Briner-Jones, who provided me with their professional degree of work while mine was merely a work in progress.

I would also like to thank my highly esteemed colleagues, Brayton Arvin and Michael Brandenburg, for taking the time and effort to participate in this project and for being some of the best friends for whom anyone could ever ask.

I could never forget to mention the Dean, faculty, and students of the Ball State Honors College for their intellectual and creative stimulus and challenge of my perspectives in and out of the classroom. Also, thanks to the BSU Department of Modern Languages and Classics for giving meaning to my seven-language program, as well as to Nikolai Verevkin for his help with the Russian portion of the repertoire.

Finally, thanks to all my friends and family for being a critical driving force, colossal support team, and faithful audience.
Rationale:

The Cultured Woman: Depictions of the Soprano from the Romantic Era to the Late 20th Century

The Music Performance department at Ball State University requires every student to prepare a Senior Recital prior to graduation. Typically an hour in length, the purpose of this milestone in a music scholar’s career is comparable to that of a final Senior Thesis required by certain other departments. As a young soprano, my Senior Recital was to demonstrate the abilities I gained as a vocalist through four years of training. As a scholar in general, I constructed my recital in the hopes that it would also portray the relevance of music to certain cultural traits involving women prevalent at the time each piece was written. During the year preceding my graduation, my instructor and I carefully designed a program that we considered, not only musically challenging, but culturally and intellectually stimulating to both ourselves and the audience that was to attend the event, which took place in Sursa Hall on February 12, 2011. Comprised of seven languages and a rough total of 55 minutes of music (not counting intermission), I strove to, as accurately and effectively as possible, characterize each and every piece of my repertoire with the goal of demonstrating that, although the pieces only span two centuries (and therefore share many common musical traits), their cultural diversity allows for the role of the woman to range from the more stereotypical ingénue to the political conspirator or the comic figure instead of being confined to any clichés.

Although dealing with the depiction of character, the recital was not limited to operatic repertoire. In fact, the program opened with a set of three art songs – one French, one German, and one Russian. These were selected as a single set because the first two seemed, almost ideally, to be factors of the third. Francis Poulenc’s Les Chemins de L’amour (The Paths of
Love) deals as the title may suggest with a theme of eternal longing for a long lost love and speaks mainly of smoldering, although hopeless, devotion. The second piece, Franz Schubert’s Nachtwölkchen (Night Violet), is a bit of an abstract. Although speaking literally to a flower, it is unclear whether the narrator is referring to nature as the setting of a scene with a loved one or as a metaphor for said beloved. In any case, its focus on said fragile nature (a common trait of Romantic music) combined with the soft lengthy phrases of the melodic line gives the piece an overall feel of total serenity and comfort. The third piece succeeds in tying the set together by combining the overwhelming passion of the Poulenc with the focus on natural elements found in the Schubert. Sergei Rachmaninoff’s Zdes’ Khorosho (It Is Nice Here) opens with a detailed description of a particular outdoor spot (seemingly a meadow) that appears to hold exceptional beauty for the narrator. Making use of consistently intensifying phrases and a climatic musical finish, the narrator also declares that the only presence in this paradise besides herself and God is her beloved, completing the image of perfection.

The female characters from the next two sets in the program could easily be considered antonyms. Following the art songs are the cavatina and cavalletta, “Ah non credea mirarti... Ah non giunge,” from Vincenzo Bellini’s opera La Sonnambula. It this set, Amina, after falling into a rather morally incriminating situation, is besmirched, although later forgiven, by her love interest and fiancé. She is without a doubt the purest and most innocent character in the program, mainly reactive rather than proactive. In fact, her falling into the aforementioned situation was only due to her sleepwalking. Francisco A. Barbieri’s heroine from his Zarzuela, El Barberillo de Lavapiés, however, is the polar opposite of Amina, not by being impure, but cunning and daring. Paloma, a peasant seamstress, social climber, and political activist, is wide awake during all of her legal and illegal endeavors. During the picaresque duet that follows
Sonnambula, she all but seduces the enamored barber, Lamparilla, into joining her conspiracy to overthrow a government official (after first revealing to him that it was she who recently paid for his release from prison). As usual for the Zarzuela, there is a present essence of the Classical opera buffa in the sense that the plebeians challenge and triumph over the aristocrats (often via highly amusing processes).

The first half of the recital will close with a character who, although female, is not technically a woman. Antonín Dvořák’s Czech opera, Rusalka, presents a title character that is the only non-human voice in the program. An immortal water nymph, Rusalka identifies with Amina in the sense that she too is deeply in love (with a prince, no less). However, she also expresses Paloma’s determination by taking matters into her own hands and singing “Měšičku na nebi hlubokém,” during which she begs the moon for time, while she devices a plan to become human in order to, not only be with her beloved, but shed her immortal body and attain, instead, an immortal soul for her own spiritual well-being. The storyline for the opera was derived from elements of Slovak mythology as well as Hans Christian Andersen’s The Little Mermaid, and illustrates the idealistic belief of eternal life after death (present in this and many others of Andersen’s fairy tales).

After a ten-minute intermission, I will present Manuel de Falla’s Siete Canciones Populares Españolas (Seven Popular Spanish Songs). Although, as the title suggests, all seven songs are in the same language (and for that matter, express various facets of a single culture), this set is truly the most diverse in terms of characterization and subject. The set begins with “El paño moruno,” a lesson dealing with the importance of virtue told through the eyes of an elder woman. This is followed by “Seguidilla murciana,” a short fast passage, lighter than its predecessor in tone, but still warning of the repercussions of one’s actions. After this, there is an
abrupt change into a melancholy tune of unspecified desolation, “Asturiana,” and yet again into an effervescently hopeful song of forbidden love from the point of view of the unsuitable suitor, “Jota.” The next song, “Nana,” specifies a female narrator just as the previous specifies a male. A spellbinding lullaby, it possesses the musical tranquility of the other slower piece in the set (“Asturiana”), yet replaces its disconsolate lyrics with soothing words of love to a small child. Finally, the last two songs of the set both deal with betrayal, yet the narrator of “Canción” seems comparatively less affected than that of “Polo,” judging by the latter’s anguished cry of desperation depicted literally in words, the use of the lower and higher extremes of the vocal range (presented in this particular set), and the urgent accompaniment. One of the factors that make this set so appealing to a performer is that, by having some songs give their narrator a specific gender (either male or female), the set becomes acceptable for either one, which (at least in my experience) allowed far more opportunities for expression than what I would have singing a specific female role. It also, however, provides the performer the freedom to devise his/her own characters when they are not specified by the circumstances present in the lyrics.

The final two sets of the performance have far more specified characters than de Falla’s set, although the last one is not actually from a staged production. The first of these will consist of the duet “O soave fanciulla” from Giacomo Puccini’s La Bohème. The quality of this duet differs dramatically from Barbieri’s lighthearted display of double entendre, and moves instead into the much more innocent (though no less passionate) young love of Mimi and Rodolfo. Mimi is perhaps the most realistic character in the recital. Neither mindlessly innocent, nor ruthlessly tenacious, she appears resigned to her status as a bohemian seamstress, although welcoming of any opportunity for happiness. The last song of the recital, “A word on my ear” will be in English. Written by Michael Flanders and Donald Swann, it is a cleverly comedic
piece in which an opera “diva” becomes a parody of herself, confessing that, although the entire world is struck by the utter perfection of her voice, she is in fact tone deaf and entirely dependent on her accompanist to make it seem like she is singing the proper notes (or melodies, for that matter) by consistently switching keys throughout the piece.

I hope that, judging by this description and the final product, you may consider this a worthy program. Personally, I felt great satisfaction in final selection of repertoire, as I felt that I was able to combine the performing skill I have gained through my major with much of the knowledge I have attained from the honors college in order to create a rich and engaging night for my audience. It is my hope that the program was instructive, as well as entertaining for those who attended, and that it encouraged the audience to return for similar projects by my colleagues and the School of Music faculty.
Supplemental Materials:

Notes and Translations

Recital DVD

Program
Venus Hernandez
Soprano
Senior Recital
Assisted by
Hyorim Choi, Piano
Brayton Arvin, Baritone
Michael Brandenburg, Tenor
Sursa Hall
February 12, 2011
7:30pm
Notes and Translations

La Sonnambula

Ah non credea mirarti: While sleepwalking, Amina prays for Elvino and then sings her sorrow. She remembers the engagement ring that he took from her when he believed she was unfaithful to him.

Ah, non giunge: After waking and having her name cleared, Amina celebrates her love with Elvino.

El Barberillo de Lavapiés

After being spared from imprisonment for concealing a persecuted political figure and friend from the police, Paloma ventures to Lamparilla's barber shop to thank him for going to jail in her place, to attempt to recruit him for her band of conspirators... and to let him know that it was actually she who bailed him out of captivity.

Rusalka

An immortal water nymph, Rusalka begs the moon for time, while she devises a plan to become human in order to, not only be with her beloved, but shed her immortal body and attain, instead, an immortal soul for her own spiritual well-being.

La Bohème

Rodolfo suggests remaining at home with Mimi, although his friends are calling for him to accompany them. However, she decides to accompany him, and as they leave, they sing of their newfound love.
Les chemins de l’Amour

Les chemins qui vont à la mer
Ont gardé de notre passage
Des fleurs effeuillées
Et l’écho sous leurs arbres
De nos deux rires clairs
Hélas! des jours de bonheur
Radieuses joies envoûtées
Je vais sans retrouver traces
Dans mon coeur.

Chemin de mon amour.
Je vous cherche toujours.
Chemin perdus vous n’êtes plus
Et vos échos sont sourds.
Chemin du désespoir.
Chemin du souvenir.
Chemin du premier jour.
Divins chemins d’amour.

Si je dois l’oublier un jour.
La vie effaçant tout.
Je veux dans mon cœur qu’un souvenir repose
Plus fort que l’autre amour.
Le souvenir du chemin.
Où tremblante et toute éperdue.
Un jour j’ai senti sur moi
Brûler tes mains.

Nachtviolen

Nachtviolen, Nachtviolen!
Dunkle Augen, seelenvolle,
Selig ist es, sich versenken
In dem sammtten Blau.

Grüne Blätter streben freudig
Euch zu helfen, euch zu schmücken;
Doch ihr blicket ernst und schweigend
In die laue Frühlingsluft.

Mit erhabnen Wehmutstrahlen
Trafet ihr mein treues Herz,
Und nun blüht in stummen Nächten
Fort die heilige Verbindung.

The paths of love

The paths that lead to the sea
have kept of our passage
flowers stripped of their leaves
and the echo beneath their trees
of our clear laughter.
Alas! of those happy days,
radiant joys that flew away,
I go about finding no trace of them
in my heart.

Paths of my love,
I seek thee always,
lost paths, you are no more
and your echoes are deaf.
Paths of despair.
Paths of memory.
Paths of the first day.
Divine paths of love.

If I must one day forget it,
life effacing everything,
I would want in my heart one memory remaining
stronger than that other love,
the memory of the path,
where trembling and bewildered,
one day I felt upon me
your burning hands.

Night Violets

Night violets, night violets,
Dark-eyed, soulful,
Blissful it is to sink
Into the velvety blue.

Green leaves strive joyously
To brighten you, to adorn you,
But you gaze earnestly and silently
In the mild spring breeze.

With exaltation of painful, sublime courage,
You have touched my true heart,
And now blossoms on silent nights
our holy union.
Здесь хорошо

Здесь хорошо...
Взгляни, вдали
Отвсюду горит река,
Цветным ковром луга легли,
Беленот облака.

Здесь нет людей...
Здесь тишина...
Здесь только Бог да я.
Цветы, да старая сосна,
Да ты, мечта моя!

Ah, non credea mirarti... Ah, non giunge from La Sonnambula

Ah, non credea mirarti
si presto estinto, o fiore;
passasti al par d'amore,
che un giorno sol(o) duro.

Potria novel vigore
il pianto mio recarti
ma ravvivar l'amore
il pianto mio, ah no, non puo.

Ah, non giunge uman pensiero
al contento ond'io son piena:
a miei sensi io credo appena;
tu m'affida o mio tesor.

Ah, mi abbraccia, e sempre insieme,
sempre uniti in una speme,
della terra, in cui viviamo
ci formiamo un ciel d'amor.

It is nice here

It is nice here...
Look, far away. 
The river is a blaze of fire;
The meadows lie like carpets of color
The clouds are white.

Here there is no one...
Here it is silent...
Here there is only God and I,
The flowers, the old pine tree,
And you, my dream!

Oh, I didn't believe seeing you... Oh, inconceivable

Oh, I didn't believe seeing you
so quickly extinct, o flowers;
you have passed away like love
that lasted one day only.

Perhaps new life
my tears will bring to you,
but revive love
my tears, o no, cannot.

O, inconceivable human thought
from a wave of contentment I am full:
In my feelings I can hardly believe
you assure me, o my treasure.

O, embrace me, and always together,
always united in a single hope,
of the world, we live in
we will make a heaven of love.
Una mujer que quiere ver a un barbero
from El Barberillo de Lavapiés

Paloma:
 Una mujer que quiere ver a un barbero
Lamparilla:
 Aquí está listo y sano, ágil y entero.
Paloma:
 Acérquese un poquito si verme ansía.
Lamparilla:
 Abandonar no puedo la barbería.
Paloma:
 Pues volveré a marcharme, si así lo toma!
Lamparilla:
 Aquí esta Lamparilla…
Paloma:
 Con la Paloma!
Lamparilla:
 Ay, eres tú! Oh, que placer en esta calle volverte a ver!
Paloma:
 Como has estado lejos de aquí? A verte ahora hay que venir.
Lamparilla:
 Ya te llamaba mi corazón…
Paloma:
 Dime que has hecho en tu prisión.
Lamparilla:
 Vivir sin luz en un calabocito,
comer un rancho mezquino y fatal,
dormir muy poco en el suelo maldito,
y pensar mucho en tu cuerpo chiquito,
tu labio bonito de grana y coral,
beber el agua que cae cuando llueve,
oir a los presos reír y jurar,
ver alguaciles que el diablo se lleve,
y sonar siempre en tu pie lindo y breve,
y tu cutis de nieve, de rosa, y azar.

Conque aquí tienes la descripción
de cuanto he hecho en mi prisión.
Dime, tu ahora, que has hecho tu
en mis tres días de esclavitud.
Paloma:
Coser sin tregua en mi cuarto pequeño,
echar de menos tu eterno cantar,
en liberarte poner gran empeño,
y a pesar mío rendida ya al sueño,
en no sé qué dueño ponerme a soñar;
mirar mis ojos sin luz y sin brillo,
y sin notarlo, bordar al revés,
y llevar de oro repleto el bolsillo

A woman who wants to see a barber

Paloma:
 A woman who wants to see a barber
Lamparilla:
 Here he is ready and healthy, agile and whole
Paloma:
 Come a little closer, if you wish to see me
Lamparilla:
 I cannot leave the barbershop
Paloma:
 Well, I’ll just leave then, if that’s how you take it...
Lamparilla:
 Here is Lamparilla...
Paloma:
 With the Paloma
Lamparilla:
 Oh, it is you! What a pleasure it is to see you on this street again!
Paloma:
 How have you been far away from here? I had to come and see you now.
Lamparilla:
 Indeed, my heart was calling for you...
Paloma:
 Tell me, what you have done in your imprisonment.
Lamparilla:
 I’ve lived without light in a tiny dungeon,
eaten food dodgy and fatal,
slept very little in the infernal ground,
and always thought of your little body,
your pretty lips of pomegranate and coral.
I’ve drunk the water that falls when rains,
heard the prisoners laugh and swear,
seen the bailiffs that the devil may drag away,
and always dreamt of your small, lovely foot.
So here you have the description
of how much I’ve done in my prison.
Tell me now what you have done
during my three days of slavery.
Paloma:
I’ve sewn without stopping in my small room,
missed your eternal singing,
pool great effort into liberating you,
and, to my dismay, finally lost to exhaustion.
I’ve dreamt of who knows what beloved;
I’ve seen my eyes without light or sparkle,
and without noticing, embroidered backwards,
and I’ve taken a pocket full of gold
para librarse de un eterno castillo
a un mal barberillo que hay en Lavapiés.
Conque aquí tienes la descripción
de cuanto he hecho por tu intención.
Ya que servirme quisiste tú,
yá te he pagado mi gratitud.
Lamparilla:
Eso es muy poco! Yo quiero amor!
Paloma:
Téngase a raya, el buen señor!
Lamparilla:
Costurerilla, ven hacia acá…
Paloma:
Ay, Barberillo! Téngase allá!
Lamparilla:
No seas tirana!
Paloma:
Tirana? Ahí va!
No hay que quitar los hilvanes
sin que se acabe la prenda,
que si el cocido se tuerce,
ya no se vende en la tienda.
Si te gustan mis hechuras,
sin zurcidos ha de ser...
o te sientas las costuras
y no vuelve a coser!
Lamparilla:
Para un barbero en su oficio,
eso no trae desventaja,
que cuanto más jabón untes,
corre mejor la navaja.
Pero, por que no armes cisma
cuando ya casada estés,
sin que lo sientas tu misma
yo te descañonaré!
Paloma:
Vaya una navaja! Que se trae usted?
Por jugar de manos no hay que perder pie.
Ay, que barberillo de tan mala fe!
Lamparilla:
Vaya una agujita! Que se trae usted?
Por jugar de manos no hay que perder pie.
Ay, que costurera de tan mala fe!

So here you have the description
of how much I've done for your cause.
Since you so wanted to serve me,
I have now paid my gratitude.
Lamparilla:
That's much too little! I want love!
Paloma:
Keep yourself in line, good sir!
Lamparilla:
Little seamstress, come over here…
Paloma:
Oh, little barber! Keep yourself there!
Lamparilla:
Don't be a tyrant!
Paloma:
A tyrant? Here you have it!
One must not remove the basting
without having first finished the garment,
for if the sewing is crooked,
it no longer sells in the market.
If you like my work,
it must be without corrections...
or else, should I feel the seams,
you will never sew again!
Lamparilla:
For a barber in his work,
that poses no disadvantage,
for the more soap is spread,
the better the blade slides.
But, so that you'll create no arguments
when you are finally married,
without you taking the slightest notice,
I will disarm you!
Paloma:
Well, what a blade! What is your game?
We must not lose our pace for handy play.
Oh, what an evil-intentioned little barber!
Lamparilla:
Well, what a needle! What is your game?
We must not lose our pace for handy play.
Oh, what evil-intentioned seamstress!
**Měsíčku na nebi hlubokém**

from *Rusalka*

Měsíčku na nebi hlubokém
světlo tvé daleko vidím.
Po světe bloudí širokém,
dívá se v příbytky lidí.
Po světe bloudí širokém,
dívá se v příbytky lidí.

Měsíčku postůj chvili,
řekni mi
kde je můj milý.
Měsíčku postůj chvili,
řekni mi, řekni
kde je můj milý.

řekni mu, ty mu stříbrný měsíčku,
mě že jej objímá rámě,
aby si alespoň chviličku,
vzpomenul ve snění na mne,
aby si alespoň chviličku,
vzpomenul ve snění na mne.

Zasvíť mu do daleka,
Zasvíť mu
řekni mu řekni,
kde tu nan čeká.
Zasvíť mu do daleka,
Zasvíť mu
řekni mu řekni,
kde tu nan čeká.

O mněli duse lidská sní,
atšte tou vzpomínkou vzbudí!
Měsíčku, nezhasni, nezhasni!
Měsíčku, nezhasni!

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**Silver moon upon the deep dark sky**

Silver moon upon the deep dark sky,
Through the vast night pierce your rays.
This sleeping world you wonder by,
Smiling on men's homes and ways.
This sleeping world you wonder by,
Smiling on men's homes and ways.

Oh moon, ere past you glide, tell me,
Tell me, oh tell me,
where does my loved one bide?
Oh moon, ere past you glide, tell me,
Tell me, oh tell me,
where does my loved one bide?

Tell him, oh silver moon in the sky
mine are the arms that shall hold him,
That between waking and sleeping
he may think of the love that enfolds him.
That between waking and sleeping
he may think of the love that enfolds him.

Light his path far away,
light his path,
Tell him, oh tell him
who does for him stay!
Light his path far away,
light his path,
Tell him, oh tell him
who does for him stay!

Human soul, should it dream of me,
Let my memory wakened be.
Moon, oh moon, oh do not wane, do not wane,
Moon, oh moon, oh do not wane...
Siete Canciones Populares Españolas

i. El paño moruno
Al paño fino en la tienda,
una mancha le cayó.
Por menos precio se vende
porque perdió su valor.

ii. Seguidilla murciana
Cualquiera que el tejado tenga de vidrio,
no debe tirar piedras al del vecino.
Arrieros somos; puede que en el camino,
Nos encontremos!
Por tu mucha Inconstancia yo te comparo
con peseta que corre de mano en mano.
Que al fin se borra, y creyéndola falsa,
nadie la toma!

iii. Asturiana
Por ver si me consolaba
arrímeme a un pino verde.
Y el pino como era verde,
Por verme llorar, lloraba.

iv. Jota
Dicen que no nos queremos
porque no nos ven hablar.
A tu corazón y a mi
se lo pueden preguntar.
Ya me despido de ti,
de tu casa y tu ventana.
Y aunque no quiera tu madre,
Adiós, niña! Hasta mañana!

v. Nana
Duérmete, niño, duerme.
Duerme, mi alma.
Duérmete, lucerito de la mañana.
Nanita, Nana, Nanita, Nana.
Duérmete lucerito de la mañana.

Seven Popular Spanish Songs

i. The Moorish Cloth
On the fine cloth in the store
a stain set in.
For a lower price it is sold
because it has lost its value.

ii. Murcian Seguidilla
He whose roof is made of glass,
should not throw rocks at his neighbor's.
Muleteers are we; perhaps on the road,
we shall meet!
For your great inconsistency, I compare you
to a coin that passes from hand to hand
that at last is worn off, and believing it false,
no one will take!

iii. Asturian Song
To see if it would console me,
tie me up to a green pine.
The pine tree, because it was green,
upon seeing me cry, it cried.

iv. Jota
They say we don't love each other
because they do not see us talk.
But your heart and my heart
is whom they can ask.
Now I'll say goodbye to you,
to your house, and your window.
And, although your mother doesn't approve,
Goodbye, dear! Until tomorrow!

v. Nana
Sleep, child, sleep.
Sleep, my soul.
Sleep, ray of morning light.
Nanita, Nana, Nanita, Nana.
Sleep, ray of morning light.
vi. Canción
Por traidores tus ojos,
vo y a enterrarlos
No sabes lo que cuesta
“Del aire”
Niña el mirarlos
“Madre a la orilla”
Niña el mirarlos
“Madre!”
Dicen que no me quieres,
ya me has querido.
Váyase lo ganado
“Del aire”
Por lo perdido
“Madre a la orilla”
Por lo perdido
“Madre!”

vii. Polo
Guardo un “Ay!”
Guardo una pena en mi pecho
que a nadie se la diré!
Malhaya el amor, malhaya,
Y quien me lo dio a entender!

vi. Song
Because they are traitors, your eyes
I shall bury them.
You know not what it costs
“In the air”
Dear to look upon them
“Mother on the edge”
Dear to look upon them
“Mother!”
They say you do not love me
and me you have loved...
Away with what was won
“In the air”
For what was lost
“Mother on the edge”
For what was lost
“Mother!”

vii. Polo
I keep an “oh!”
I keep a pain in my chest
of which I shall never speak!
A curse on love, a curse,
and on whoever made me understand it!
O soave fanciulla
from La Bohème

Rodolfo:
O soave fanciulla,
o dolce viso
di mite circonfuso alba lunar!
In te, ravviso il sogno
Ch’io vorrei sempre sognar!
Fremon già nell’anima
le dolcezze estreme,
amor nel bacio freme!
Mimi:
Ah, tu sol comandi, amore …
Oh! come dolci scendono
le sue lusinghe al core …
Tu sol comandi, amore!
No, per pietà!
Rodolfo: Sei mia!
Mimi: V’aspettan gli amici…
Rodolfo: Gia mi mandi via?
Mimi: Vorrei dir … ma non osò.
Rodolfo: Di’.
Mimi: Se venissi con voi?
Rodolfo: Che? Mimi!
Sarebbe così dolce restar qui.
C’è freddo fuori.
Mimi: Vi starei vicina!
Rodolfo: E al ritorno?
Mimi: Curioso!
Rodolfo: Dammi il braccio, o mia piccina.
Mimi: Obbedisco, signor!
Rodolfo: Che m’ami … di’
Mimi: Io t’amo.
Rodolfo and Mimi: Amor! Amor! Amor!

O gentle girl

Rodolfo:
Oh gentle girl,
oh sweet face
in the midst of the soft moonlight.
I see in you a dream
that I wish to dream forever!
Already I taste in spirit
the heights of tenderness!
Love trembles at our kiss!
Mimi:
Ah! Love, you rule alone!
How sweet his praises
enter my heart…
Love, you alone rule!
No, please!
Rodolfo: You are mine!
Mimi: Your friends are waiting.
Rodolfo: You send me away already?
Mimi: I dare not say what I’d like…
Rodolfo: Say it.
Mimi: If I came with you…?
Rodolfo: What? Mimi!
It would be so fine to stay here.
Outside it’s cold.
Mimi: I’d be near you!
Rodolfo: And when we come back?
Mimi: Curious?
Rodolfo: Give me your arm, my dear...
Mimi: I obey, my lord…
Rodolfo: Say that you love me!
Mimi: I love you.
Rodolfo and Mimi: Love! Love! Love!