

This is the translation of ACT TWO of LA BOHÉME

(Transcript of the full Opera available here: <https://www.opera-arias.com/puccini/la-bohème/libretto/english/>)

Cast:

MIMI, a seamstress (Soprano)
RODOLFO, a poet (Tenor)
MARCELLO, a painter (Baritone)
COLLINE, a philosopher (Bass)
SCHAUNARD, a musician (Baritone)
BENOIT, a landlord (Bass)
MUSSETTA, a grisette (Soprano)
ALCINDORO, a state councillor and follower of Musetta (Bass)
PARPIGNOL, an itinerant toy vendor (Tenor)
CUSTOM-HOUSE SERGEANT (Bass)

CHORUS

Students, Working girls, Bourgeois, Shopkeepers, Street vendors, Soldiers, Waiters, Children, Tavern drinkers, Scavengers, Carters, Milkmaids, Peasant women

ACT TWO (SECOND TABLEAU)

Later the same evening, outside the Café Momus in the Latin Quarter; the café is so crowded that customers have to be accommodated at tables outside. All round them street vendors are shouting their wares.

STREET VENDORS

variously

Oranges, dates! Hot chestnuts!
Trinkets, crosses! Nougat!
Whipped cream!
Fruit pies, ho!
Toffees! Flowers for the pretty girls!
Fruit pies! Whipped cream!
Finches, sparrows! dates!

URCHINS

Oranges, trinkets! Hot chestnuts and toffees! Nougat!
Come on, let's hurry, come on, hurry!

MEN

What crowds! What a din!

WOMEN

Oh, what a lot of people!

STUDENTS

to midinettes

Come on, let's run!
Stick close to me!
What a row! Come on, let's run!

CROWD

Make way! Let's run!

STREET VENDORS, URCHINS

repeating as before

Hot chestnuts! Cream, nougat! etc.
Coconut milk! Fruit pies! Ho! *etc., etc.*

CROWD

What a crowd! Let's be off!

Oh! ... Let us pass!

VARIOUS CUSTOMERS

sitting at tables outside the Café Momus

Quickly here! Waiter! A glass! ...

... Hurry up! Beer! Something to drink!

CITIZENS

Oh, what a crush!

STREET VENDORS

Finches and sparrows! Hot chestnuts!

STUDENTS

to midinettes

Hang on to me, let's run!

A MOTHER

Emma! When I call you ...!

A CUSTOMER

A coffee, then?

OTHER CUSTOMERS

Bring something to drink!

Waiter! Hi there!

CHILDREN

joining the hubbub a moment later

I want a spear!

CITIZENS, STUDENTS

What a hullabaloo! Hold on to me tight!

CITIZENS

What a crowd! Let's get out of this!

STREET VENDORS

crying their wares; as before

Oranges, etc., Coats! Carrots! Flowers!

... Coconut milk! Coats! Carrots!

CITIZENS

What a crush! Come on, let's get out!

STREET VENDORS

Dates! Trinkets! Oranges and flowers!

SCHAUNARD

trying a horn he wishes to buy from an old iron merchant

That D's out of tune!

Pipe and horn, how much?

COLLINE

looking over the frockcoat he has just bought secondhand.

It's a little worn ...

RODOLFO

to Mimi

Come.

MIMI

Shall we get the bonnet?

COLLINE

... but it's sober looking and cheap.

RODOLFO

Keep tight hold of my arm.

MIMÌ

I'll cling on to you.

MIMÌ, RODOLFO

Let's go!

They go into a milliner's shop.

MARCELLO

I feel like shouting:
which of you pretty ladies
would care for a bit of love!

STREET VENDORS

basses

Dates! Trout!

tenors

Plums from Tours!

MARCELLO

to a girl

Let's strike a bargain together...

STREET VENDORS

tenors

Plums from Tours!

MARCELLO

... I'll give my virgin heart for a sou!

SCHAUNARD

Shoving and bustling the crowd comes ...
... running, and delights in sampling
mad unsatisfying pleasures.

STREET VENDORS

as ever: adding their voices to the ensemble a moment later

Trinkets, brooches! Dates and toffees!

Urchins interpolate "Ah!"

Flowers for the pretty girls!

COLLINE

approaching the café waving an old book

A rare copy ? unique even -
the runic grammar!

SCHAUNARD

Fine fellow!

MARCELLO

To supper!

SCHAUNARD, COLLINE

Where's Rodolfo?

MARCELLO

He went into a milliner's.

RODOLFO

leaving the milliner's with Mimi.
Come, our friends are waiting.

STREET VENDORS
Whipped cream!

MIMI
Does this pink bonnet suit me?

STREET VENDORS
Coconut milk! Ho! Fruit?pies! Whipped cream!

CUSTOMERS
Waiter! ...
... A glass!

RODOLFO
You're dark,...
... and that colour becomes you.

CUSTOMERS
Hi, quick! ...
... Ratafia!

MIMI
looking in a jeweller's window.
What a lovely ...
... coral necklace!

RODOLFO
I have a rich uncle.
If the good God has any sense,
I'll buy you a much better
necklace than that!

URCHINS, STUDENTS, WORK GIRLS
severally and variously
Ha, ha, ha, *etc.*

WOMEN
Let's follow the crowd!

STREET VENDORS, URCHINS
clamourously and repetitiously as ever
Fruit pies, ho! etc. Flowers for the pretty ladies!

MEN
Look out, girls!
Let's take the Rue Mazarin!
Look, the ...

WOMEN
What a row! What crowds!
I'm suffocating, let's get out!

MEN
... café is just here!

URCHINS, STREET VENDORS
Trinkets, dates, hot chestnuts!

CROWD
Let's go to Momus's!

STREET VENDORS

Oranges, dates, trinkets, flowers!
Finches, sparrows, cream, nougat!

CROWD

Ah!

RODOLFO

to Mimi, who is looking at a group of students
Who are you looking at?

COLLINE

I hate the common crowd ...
... as much as Horace did.

MIMI

to Rodolfo
Are you jealous?

RODOLFO

Suspicion for ever jogs the happy man's elbow.

SCHAUNARD

answering Colline
And when I feed ...
... I like plenty of room.

MIMI

to Rodolfo
Are you happy?

MARCELLO

to the waiter
We want a choice supper.

RODOLFO

to Mimi
Oh yes! So happy!

MARCELLO

to the waiter
Be quick!

SCHAUNARD

to the waiter
For a lot of people!

RODOLFO

to Mimi
And you?

MIMI

Yes, so very!

STUDENTS

To Momus's!

WORK GIRLS

Let's go, let's go!

MARCELLO, COLLINE, SCHAUNARD

to the waiter
Quick!

PARPIGNOL'S VOICE
Here come Parpignol's toys!

RODOLFO
joining his friends at the café
Two chairs.

COLLINE
At last!

RODOLFO
Here we are.
This is Mimi, merry flower?girl.
Her arrival completes
the fine company,
for I am the poet
and she the poetry.
From my brain burst songs,
from her fingers burst flowers,
from our exultant souls
bursts love!

MARCELLO, COLLINE, SCHAUNARD
Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

MARCELLO
Heavens, what rare fancies!

COLLINE
solemnly pointing at Mimi
She is worthy to enter.

SCHAUNARD
Let her come in, if she must.

COLLINE
I can only say: Agreed.
They all sit down at the table.

PARPIGNOL'S VOICE
Here come Parpignol's toys!

COLLINE
shouting at the waiter
Sausage.

Parpignol comes down the street, followed by a crowd of boys and girls.

BOYS, GIRLS
Parpignol! Parpignol! Parpignol! Parpignol!
Here comes Parpignol, Parpignol!
With his decorated cart!
Here's Parpignol! Parpignol! Parpignol!
variously
I want the trumpet, the little horse!
The drum, the tambourine!
I want the gun, I want the whip!
The platoon of soldiers!

SCHAUNARD
to the waiter
Roast venison!

MARCELLO

A turkey!

SCHAUNARD
Rhine wine!

COLLINE
Table wine!

SCHAUNARD
Dressed lobster!

MOTHERS
to children
You pack of ragamuffins,
what are you doing here?
Home to bed with you!
Away with you, you ugly vulgar little creatures!
A good hiding's nothing to you!
Home to bed, you pack of ragamuffins, to bed with you!

A BOY
I want the trumpet and the little horse!

RODOLFO
And what do you want, Mimì?

MIMÌ
Crème?caramel.

SCHAUNARD
to the waiter
And a grand spread. There's a lady with us!

BOYS, GIRLS
following Parpignol's cart as he moves on
Hurrah for Parpignol! Parpignol!
The drum, the tambourine,
the platoon of soldiers!

MARCELLO
Mademoiselle Mimì, what rare present
has your Rodolfo given you?

MIMÌ
A lace bonnet,
all embroidered in pink;
it'll go well with my dark hair.
For ages
I've been wanting a bonnet like this,
and he read
what was hidden in my heart.
Now, he who can see
into a heart
knows the ways of love
and is very clever.

SCHAUNARD
An expert ...

COLLINE
... who already has diplomas
and whose verses
are not early attempts.

SCHAUNARD

So much so that what he says seems true.

MARCELLO

Oh happy age of illusions and Utopias!
One believes and hopes and everything seems lovely.

RODOLFO

The most divine poetry,
my friend, is that
which teaches us to love!

MIMÌ

Love is even sweeter than honey!

MARCELLO

Depending on taste, it's honey or poison!

MIMÌ

Oh dear! I've hurt his feelings!

RODOLFO

He's in mourning, Mimì darling,

SCHAUNARD, COLLINE

Let's be merry - a toast!

MARCELLO

to the waiter

Something to drink here!

MIMÌ, RODOLFO, MARCELLO

Away with sad thoughts, up with your glasses!
Let's drink!

ALL

Let's drink!

MARCELLO

Let me drink poison!

Musetta appears, richly dressed and accompanied by a pompous, elderly admirer, Alcindoro de Mitonneaux.

RODOLFO, SCHAUNARD, COLLINE

Oh!

MARCELLO

Her!

RODOLFO, SCHAUNARD, COLLINE

Musetta!

WOMEN, STREET VENDORS

Oh! Her! Yes! Oh! Her!

Musetta!

We're in the money!

What a get?up!

ALCINDORO

Like a porter ...

running here and there ...

No! No! I won't put up with it ...

MUSETTA
calling AIcindoro like a dog
Come, Lulu!

ALCINDORO
... I've had enough!

MUSETTA
Come, Lulu!

ALCINDORO
I've ...
...had enough!

SCHAUNARD
That ugly fellow...
... seems to be sweating!

Musetta, having seen the friends sitting outside the café, makes AIcindoro sit down at a vacant table.

ALCINDORO
What! Here outside? Here?

MUSETTA
Sit, Lulu!

ALCINDORO
I beg you to reserve such nicknames
for tête-à-têtes!

MUSETTA
Don't be such a Bluebeard!

COLLINE
examining Musetta's admirer
Here is vice dignified.

MARCELLO
With the chaste Susanna!

MIMÌ
to Rodolfo
She's very well dressed though!

RODOLFO
The angels go naked.

MIMÌ
You know her! Who is she?

MARCELLO
Ask me that.
Her name is Musetta ...

MUSETTA
Marcello has seen me ...

MARCELLO
... surname: Temptation!

MUSETTA
... and won't look at me, the beast!

MARCELLO

Her ...
...vocation...
...is to play the weather?vane, . . .

MUSETTA
That Schounard's laughing!

MARCELLO
... she turns and turns
and often changes both lovers and love...

MUSETTA
They all annoy me!

MARCELLO
... and like the owl ...

MUSETTA
If I could only hit them!

MARCELLO
... she is a bird...
... of prey.

MUSETTA
If I could scratch them!

MARCELLO
Her daily fare ...

MUSETTA
But I have nothing ...
... to hand ...

MARCELLO
... is a heart!

MUSETTA
... but this tooth?pick!

MARCELLO
She eats hearts!

MUSETTA
Just wait!

MARCELLO
That's why I've none any more!

MUSETTA
Here! Waiter!

MARCELLO
Pass the stew.

MUSETTA
taking a plate and smelling it
Here! Waiter! This plate
stinks of frying!
She throws the plate violently on the ground.

ALCINDORO
No, Musetta ... quiet, quiet!

MUSETTA
He's not turning round!

ALCINDORO
Quiet! Quiet! Behave, where are your manners!

MUSETTA
Ah, he's not turning round!

ALCINDORO
To whom are you talking?

COLLINE
This chicken is a dream!

MUSETTA
Now I'll hit him, I'll hit him!

ALCINDORO
With whom are you talking?

MUSETTA
To the waiter! Don't be a nuisance!

SCHAUNARD
The wine is out of this world!

MUSETTA
I want to do as I please.

ALCINDORO
Not so loud!

MUSETTA
I'll do as I like!

ALCINDORO
Speak more softly!

MUSETTA
Don't be a nuisance!

GIRLS
Look, look who's here,
Musetta in person!

STUDENTS
With that stammering old boy!

GIRLS, STUDENTS
She, Musetta, herself!
Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

MUSETTA
Can he be jealous of this old mummy?

ALCINDORO
Propriety ... my position ... your honour ...

MUSETTA
Let's see if I still have enough power ...
... over him to make him give in!

SCHAUNARD

What a stupendous joke!

MUSETTA

speaking loudly with an eye on Marcello
You don't look at me!

ALCINDORO

thinking Musetta is speaking to him
You can see I'm ordering!

SCHAUNARD

A rip?roaring farce!

COLLINE

Stupendous!

RODOLFO

For your future guidance, bear in mind
I wouldn't be constantly forgiving you.

SCHAUNARD

She speaks to one ...
... that the other may hear.

MIMÌ

I love you so much ...
... and I'm all yours!

COLLINE

And the other....
... unkind in vain,

MIMÌ

Wh"y do you talk to me ...
... of forgiveness?

COLLINE

... pretends not to understand, but is in heaven!

MUSETTA

But your heart is hammering!

ALCINDORO

Speak softly!

MUSETTA

Your heart is hammering!

ALCINDORO

Softly! Softly!

MUSETTA

still for Marcello's benefit
When I walk out
alone along the street,
all the people stop and stare,
and seek out all my beauty
from top to toe.

MARCELLO

Tie me to the chair!

ALCINDORO

What will those people say?

MUSETTA

And then I relish the sly desire
which shines from eyes
and can infer hidden beauties
from outward charms.
Thus the breath of desire
whirls around me
and makes me happy!

ALCINDORO

That scurrilous song...
... is making me angry, it enrages me!

MUSETTA

And you who ...
... know, who remember and fret,
do you fly from me like that?
I know full well you'll not tell
Your sufferings....

MIMÌ

her phrases punctuating those of Musetta as accompaniment
I know full well that poor girl
is very much in love,
terribly in love with Marcello,
she's terribly in love!

MUSETTA

... I know, yet you feel ready to die!

Schaunard and Colline leave the table and stand on one side, watching the scene intently. Rodolfo and Mimi remain seated alone, talking. Marcello, ever more agitated, tries to go, but cannot resist Musetta's voice.

ALCINDORO

What will those people say!

RODOLFO

to Mimi
Marcello used to love her.

SCHAUNARD

Ah! Marcello'll give way!

RODOLFO

The coquette left him ...

COLLINE

Who knows what will happen!

RODOLFO

... to enjoy an easier life.

SCHAUNARD

The deception is equally sweet ...

COLLINE

Holy saints, into such?like trouble ...

SCHAUNARD

... to the one who proffers it and the one
who shuts his eyes to it.

COLLINE
... Colline will never fall!

MUSETTA
Ah! Marcello ...

ALCINDORO
Talk quietly!

MUSETTA
... is uneasy. Marcello is beaten!

MIMÌ
I feel sorry for her, poor thing!

ALCINDORO
Quiet, quiet!

COLLINE
She's pretty, I'm ...
... not blind, ...

MIMÌ
to Rodolfo
I love you!

SCHAUNARD
That swaggerer ...

RODOLFO
Mimì!

SCHAUNARD
... will give way at any moment now!

MIMÌ
I'm so sorry for that poor girl!

RODOLFO
It's a poor sort of love
that cannot avenge injuries!

SCHAUNARD
The fun's tremendous!

COLLINE
completing his cogitations
... but I much prefer
a Pipe and a Greek text!

MUSETTA
I know full well you won't admit
your sufferings!

ALCINDORO
Behave yourself, can't you?

MIMÌ
A selfish love is a bad love!

RODOLFO
A dead love never revives!

SCHAUNARD

Marcello'll give in!

COLLINE

still harping on the same theme
They please me a great deal more!

MUSETTA

Ah! But you feel like dying!

ALCINDORO

entering the ensemble last of all: in desperation
Be quiet! Be quiet!

MUSETTA

I'm going to do just as I please!
I'll do whatever I like!
Don't be a nuisance! Let me alone! ...

MIMÌ

I'm so sorry for, *etc.*

RODOLFO

It's a Poor sort of love, *etc.*

SCHAUNARD

continuing his conversation with Colline
If a pretty girl I like that
were to engage you tête-à-tête,
You'd consign all your grumbling
maxims to the devil!

COLLINE

She's very pretty I'm not blind,
but I much prefer, *etc.*

MUSETTA

... Don't interfere!
to herself
Now I must get rid of the old man!
Pretending to have a pain in her foot
Ow!

ALCINDORO

What's wrong?

MUSETTA

What a pain! What agony!

ALCINDORO

Where?

MUSETTA

In my foot!

MARCELLO

My youth, you're not dead,
neither is the memory of you!

MUSETTA

as Alcindoro bends down to loosen her shoe
Undo it! Untie it! tear it, break it!
Please!
There's a cobbler over there,
run, quick! I want

another pair!

ALCINDORO
entering the passage about two thirds through
Be more discreet!

MUSETTA
Ow! What a twinge!...
...Curse that tight shoe!

ALCINDORO
What will those people say?

SCHAUNARD, COLLINE
What a rip?roaring farce!

MARCELLO
If you were to knock on my door,...

MUSETTA
kicking off her shoe
Now I'll take it off!

ALCINDORO
to Musetta
But my position ...

MUSETTA
planting her shoe on the table
There it is!

MARCELLO
... my heart would run to open to you!

MIMI
I can see full well she's desperately in love with Marcello!

RODOLFO
And I can see full well a stupendous joke!

MUSETTA
Run! Run along! Quickly, go on, go!

ALCINDORO
... do you wish me to compromise it?
seeing Musetta is about to go to Marcello
Wait! Musetta! I'll go!
He hurries off to the cobblers.

SCHAUNARD, COLLINE
What a rip?roaring farce!

MUSETTA
Marcello!

MARCELLO
Siren!
They embrace passionately.

SCHAUNARD
We've reached the final scene!

A waiter brings the bill.

RODOLFO, SCHAUNARD, COLLINE
The bill?

SCHAUNARD
So soon?

COLLINE
Who asked for it?

SCHAUNARD
to the waiter
Let's see!

Drums and fifes are heard in the distance.

COLLINE, RODOLFO
It's quite enough!

RODOLFO, SCHAUNARD, COLLINE
Out with your money!

SCHAUNARD
Colline, Rodolfo, and you, Marcello?

URCHINS
as drums sound nearer
The Tattoo!

MARCELLO
We're broke!

SCHAUNARD
What?

GIRLS, STUDENTS
The Tattoo!

RODOLFO
Thirty pence is all I've got!

CROWD
The Tattoo!

MARCELLO, SCHAUNARD, COLLINE
What! Isn't there any more?

SCHAUNARD
But what's become of my treasure?

URCHINS
Are they coming this way?

MUSETTA
to the waiter
Give me my bill.

GIRLS, STUDENTS
No! That way!

URCHINS
They're coming that way!

GIRLS, STUDENTS
They're coming this way!

URCHINS
No! That way!

MUSETTA
Good.

CROWD
Make way!

CHILDREN
I want to see! I want to hear!

MUSETTA
to the waiter
Quick, add that bill on to mine!

MOTHER
Lisetta, will you keep quiet!

CHILDREN
I want to see, Mummy!

MUSETTA
The gentleman that was here with me will pay!

CHILDREN
I want to hear, daddy!

MOTHER
Tonio, will you stop it!

RODOLFO, MARCELLO, SCHAUNARD, COLLINE
The gentleman will pay!

CHILDREN
I want to see the tattoo!

MOTHER
Will you be quiet, will you stop it!

WOMEN
They're coming this/that way!

ALL
Yes, this way!

URCHINS
When they come ...

COLLINE
The gentleman will pay!

URCHINS
... we'll march with them!

SCHAUNARD
The gentleman will pay!

MARCELLO
The gentleman!

MUSETTA
And where he was sitting he'll find a greeting from me!

STREET VENDORS

To hear those drums makes one feel patriotic!

RODOLFO, MARCELLO, SCHAUNARD, COLLINE

And where he was sitting he'll find a greeting from her!

URCHINS, CROWD

Look, Make way, here they come!

MARCELLO

Here comes the Tattoo!

URCHINS, CROWD

All in line!

MARCELLO, COLLINE

Mind the old man doesn't see us ...

...running off with his prey!

RODOLFO

Here comes the Tattoo!

MARCELLO, SCHAUNARD, COLLINE

This dense crowd ...

... is a ready hiding?place!

The soldiers enter, preceded by a gigantic drum?major, deftly wielding his mace.

CROWD

Here comes the drum major!

Prouder than a warrior of old!

The drum major! The drum major!

MIMÌ MUSETTA, RODOLFO MARCLELLO, SCHAUNARD, COLLINE

Quickly, quickly!

CROWD

The Sappers, the Sappers, hooray!

Here comes the drum major!

URCHINS, CROWD

The Tattoo ...

WORK GIRLS

The drum major!

STUDENTS

He's like a general!

URCHINS, CROWD

... is here!

CROWD

Here he is! The handsome drum major!

The golden mace, so splendid!

He looks around, goes by, and disappears!

RODOLFO, MARCELLO, SCHAUNARD, COLLINE

Hurrah for Musetta! Heart full of mischief -

glory and honour, honour and glory

of the Latin Quarter!

CROWD

Such splendour! The handsomest man in France!
The handsome drum major! There he is!
He looks around, goes by, and disappears!

Unable to walk lacking one shoe, Musetta is carried in the wake of the departing soldiery by Marcello and Colline. Everyone falls in behind them and marches away. Alcindoro returning is presented by the waiter with the two bills and collapses, stupefied, on to a chair.
