

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM *LA RONDINE*

THIS ELEGANT ROMANCE IS THE LEAST-KNOWN WORK OF the mature Giacomo Puccini. The story concerns a kept woman who defies convention to chase a dream of romantic love with an earnest, if naïve, young man. She is the swallow, or “rondine,” of the title, a bird who flies toward the sun. The central relationship unfolds in colorful locales in Paris and the south of France, all evoked with superb musical details. Puccini was originally approached for this project by Viennese producers who wanted an operetta.

This idea was quickly abandoned, but the original conception had an effect on the finished product, with its abundance of waltzes, romantic vision of Paris, and lightness of tone. History worked against *La Rondine*’s success, however: Italy and Austria became enemies during World War I, precluding a Vienna premiere, and the opera quietly opened in neutral Monte Carlo, never finding a permanent place in the repertoire. That loss is scandalous, since *La Rondine*, judged on its own merits rather than compared to other operas with similar themes, is a fascinating work. With the dynamic, real-life couple Romanian Angela Gheorghiu and French-born tenor Roberto Alagna performing the roles of Magda and Ruggero, it blooms into its rightful place in the glorious Puccini canon.

La Rondine’s unconventional drama is in fact one of its great strengths. It may well be Puccini’s most modern opera. This modernity infuses director Nicolas Joël’s production. The locations remain as Puccini specified, but the time has been changed from the mid-19th century to the 1920s. The sets, by veteran designer Ezio Frigerio, and costumes, by famed designer Franca Squarciapino, emphasize the art-deco refinement of the Parisian scenes and the casual elegance of the finale. The lighting, so important in this highly atmospheric opera, is by the acclaimed designer Duane Schuler.

In one sense, *La Rondine* is more accessible to adolescents than many better known works. The opera explores the meaning of love and the relationship of feelings to behavior—two unremitting teenage concerns, though rarely discussed in the classroom. This guide is designed to help your students consider the personal issues raised by *La Rondine*, as well as this opera’s place as a work of the early modern era, a time of all-out war, radical movements in art, and technological innovation that would change life on Earth forever. By provoking discussion and providing historical context, the guide seeks to prompt students’ curiosity about *La Rondine* and this new Metropolitan Opera production.

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THE WORK *LA RONDINE*

Composed by Giacomo Puccini

Libretto by Giuseppe Adami after
Dr. A.M. Willner and Heinz Reichert

First performed on March 27, 1917, in
Monte Carlo, Monaco

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NEW PRODUCTION

Marco Armiliato, Conductor

Nicolas Joël, Production

Ezio Frigerio, Set Designer

Franca Squarciapino, Costume Designer

Duane Schuler, Lighting Designer

STARRING

Angela Gheorghiu (Magda)

Roberto Alagna (Ruggero)

Lisette Oropesa (Lisette)

Marius Brenciu (Prunier)

Samuel Ramey (Rambaldo)

Co-production with Théâtre
du Capitole, Toulouse, and
Royal Opera House, Covent Garden

A GUIDE TO LA RONDINE

The guide includes four types of activities:

- **CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:** two full-length activities, designed to support your ongoing curriculum
- **MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS:** opportunities to focus briefly on excerpts from *La Rondine* to cultivate familiarity with the work
- **PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES:** to be used during *The Met: Live in HD* transmission, calling attention to special aspects of this production (Reproducible activity sheets can be found on the last two pages of this guide)
- **POST-SHOW DISCUSSION:** a post-transmission activity, integrating the *Live in HD* experience into students' wider views of the performing arts

THE ACTIVITIES IN THIS GUIDE ADDRESS SEVERAL ASPECTS of *La Rondine*:

- The opera's exploration of love, romance, and responsibility
- Features of the opera's structure and text that distinguish it as a work of modernity
- The relationships among forms of musical narrative, including opera, operetta and the Broadway-style musical
- Creative choices and notable personalities involved in this new Metropolitan Opera production

The guide seeks not only to acquaint students with *La Rondine*, but also to encourage them to think more broadly about opera—and the performing arts in general—as a means of personal and philosophical expression. Little prior knowledge is required for the activities.

Cast of the 1928 U.S. premiere at the Metropolitan Opera (Photo: Metropolitan Opera Archives)



THE STORY

ACT I. PARIS, THE 1920S. THE WEALTHY RAMBALDO AND HIS

mistress, Magda, are entertaining theatrical and literary friends. Prunier, a poet and secretly the lover of Magda's maid, Lisette, declares that romantic love is back in fashion. No one except Magda takes him seriously. Prunier starts to sing a ballad he has written about a girl who rejects the love of a king. Magda sits at the piano and finishes the song, making up a second verse that tells how the girl falls in love with a student ("Chi il bel sogno di Doretta"). She thinks about her own flirtations as a girl and recalls an encounter with a young man at Bullier's restaurant. Rambaldo says he knows what love means and gives Magda a pearl necklace, which she accepts without changing her opinion that love has nothing to do with wealth. Prunier offers to read Magda's palm and predicts that she will go south in pursuit of romance and happiness—just like "la rondine," the swallow. Rambaldo introduces a visitor, Ruggero, the son of a childhood friend, who is new to Paris and wants to know where to spend the evening. They decide on Bullier's, and Ruggero leaves to go there. Lisette, flirting with Prunier, tells him that it is her night off, and the two follow Ruggero. As the guests depart, Magda decides to remain at home, then changes her mind. She dresses as a shop girl and leaves, confident that no one will recognize her, and ready for an adventure at the restaurant.

ACT II. Bullier's restaurant is alive with a crowd of artists, students, and young women. Ruggero sits alone at a table. When Magda enters, several young men approach her, but she says she already has a date and joins Ruggero, who doesn't recognize her. She introduces herself as Paulette. When she teases him about his probable love affairs, he replies that should he ever love a woman, it would be forever. While they talk and dance, they both realize that they have fallen in love with each other. Prunier and Lisette arrive. She is startled by the sight of Magda, but Prunier, understanding the situation, convinces her that it is someone else with a chance resemblance (Ensemble: "Bevo al tuo fresco sorriso"). Suddenly Rambaldo appears, and Prunier asks Lisette to keep Ruggero out of sight. Rambaldo demands an explanation for her escapade from Magda. She replies that she has found true love and is going to leave him. Rambaldo bows ironically, expressing hope that she will not regret it. Ruggero returns and Magda leaves with him to start a new life.

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FUN FACT: By the time *La Rondine* was ready for its premiere, World War I was well underway. Originally set for Vienna, the premiere took place in neutral Monte Carlo.

ACT III. Magda and Ruggero have been living in a villa on the Riviera, but their money is running out. Ruggero says he has written to his mother for her consent to their marriage and paints an idyllic picture of his family's home in the country. Madga is dismayed that her lover doesn't know anything of her past. After he has left, Prunier and Lisette arrive, quarreling: he had tried to make her a singer but her debut was a disaster. Magda tells Lisette she would be glad to take her into service once more. Prunier, who can't imagine Magda continuing her fantasy life, delivers a message from Rambaldo: he is ready to welcome her back on any terms. Prunier leaves as Ruggero returns with a letter from his mother, who is delighted that her son has found a good and virtuous bride. Heartbroken, Magda confesses that she can be his mistress but never his wife because her past is too shameful. Though he insists he loves her anyway, she says she will not ruin his future. Leaving the devastated Ruggero behind, she turns away to return to her old life.

Gheorghiu pictured with the San Francisco cast in Bullier's restaurant in Act II (Photos of the San Francisco Opera production by Ken Howard/Metropolitan Opera)



CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

The Ends of Love: A Close Look at Motivation, Behavior, and Decision-making in *La Rondine*

FOR SOME CRITICS, THE CULMINATING CRISIS OF *LA RONDINE*—

a love that seems impossible to one of the lovers—is weak in drama, compared to the desert exile of a Manon Lescaut or the ritual suicide of a Cio-Cio-San. But *La Rondine* can be interpreted as a subtle commentary on matters of romance and love frequently taken for granted by both operetta and more serious opera. In this activity, students will consider how characters in *La Rondine* discuss, express, and understand love, examining the possibilities floated by Puccini and his librettists with an eye toward exploring their own romantic concepts, feelings and behaviors.

They will:

- Listen to a number of selections from *La Rondine* for both musical and textual meanings
- Develop their own interpretations of individual characters’ understandings of love and romance
- Probe the relationship between the notions of love presented and the dramatic choices available to Puccini and his librettists
- Become acquainted with character relationships in *La Rondine* in advance of *The Met: Live in HD* transmission

STEPS

Nearly every opera touches upon love and romance. Few leap into the topic as fearlessly as *La Rondine*. From the first words to the final sigh, this opera can be understood as a discussion about love, romance, and the many ways they’re expressed in daily life. Nearly every character in *La Rondine* embraces his or her own unique set of beliefs and opinions about love, which raises the question: What does Puccini think, and how do his own beliefs play out in the drama?

Step 1: Central to this activity is a graphic organizing tool called the “RIG,” or “Romantic Intentions Gauge.” (You’ll find it on the reproducible activity sheet on page 25.) Draw a RIG on the chalkboard. Point out that it’s a kind of scale, labeled from left to right with four understandings of “love”: love is a joke; love is physical desire; love is romantic attraction; love is purest devotion. Discuss these four ideas with your students. Explain that the scale is not meant to be comprehensive, much less scientific. It’s merely a tool to help distinguish among the viewpoints expressed by the

IN PREPARATION

For this activity, each student will need photocopies of the activity sheet and printed resources provided on pages 25 through 29 of this guide. Students will also need pencils and erasers, in case they want to change their markings on the activity sheet.

You will also need the accompanying recording of selections from *La Rondine*.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Music, Social Studies (Psychology), and Language Arts

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To identify the concepts of love held by characters in *La Rondine*
- To consider the use of music to support narrative and character development
- To prompt discussion of the relationships among love, responsibility and personal behavior
- To stir personal interest in *The Met: Live in HD* transmission of *La Rondine*

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characters and composer of *La Rondine*. If students would like to add their own understandings to the scale, they can add them where appropriate on the RIG on the chalkboard, then use those new sub-categories as they continue with the activity.

Step 2: Pass out copies of the activity sheet. On it, students will find RIGs for characters and groups of characters. During the course of the activity, students mark each character’s “location” on his/her/their RIG.

Step 3: *La Rondine* begins in a Parisian parlor. A group of sophisticated single adults are discussing the latest fad: romantic love. This conversation sets a tone for the opera. Distribute the first resource sheet, found on page 26–29, and listen to **Track 1**, a snippet of conversation between Prunier and Lisette.

Prunier is a songwriter—a poet and composer. Lisette is the housemaid in this home. That’s all the audience knows about these two characters at this point early in Act I. Prunier is not yet expressing an opinion, simply making an observation about Parisian life. He seems serious: Listen to the dignified, though not grave, underscoring to his comments. Lisette, on the other hand, responds with a strong opinion—and the dazzle of bells and winds beneath her comment suggests she’s quite happy with this view. Where do your students think Lisette stands? Have them mark Lisette’s place on her RIG.

The conversation continues with three female guests, Yvette, Suzy and Bianca. Invite students to read their contribution as they listen to **Track 2**. Note in particular the exaggerated high note as Yvette refers to Alfred de Musset, a 19th-century French romantic poet. Do your students think she’s being serious? Note also the closing comment from Magda, the heroine of *La Rondine*. Based on her response to Yvette, Suzy and Bianca, where do your students think Magda’s place might be on the RIG? Have them mark RIGS for Yvette/Suzy/Bianca and for Magda.

Now it’s Prunier’s turn. In **Track 3**, he moves from reporting to stating an opinion. Listening to this merry, mocking march, do your students think Prunier really believes love is a “microbe”—a germ? Do they think the ominous sound at the end of his song represents true fear, or is it parody? What about the response of Yvette, Bianca, and Suzy? Does it

change students' evaluation of Prunier or reinforce it? Are the women making fun of Prunier or playing along?

Have the students mark Prunier's RIG. If they like, they can adjust the women's RIG, too. From here on, students should feel free to adjust any character's RIG based on new information. In fact, listen to Prunier's comment about a "romantic demon" on **Track 4**. The tone here is quite different from his song about the "microbe." Perhaps his RIG needs adjusting to account for this serious tone.

In **Track 5**, we hear from Rambaldo—a wealthy older man, Magda's lover. What do your students think he means by "holy water"? At this point, the libretto's stage directions have Rambaldo handing Magda an expensive pearl necklace. What does that, together with the sound of his singing, say about his attitude toward love? Mark Rambaldo's RIG. Then listen to Magda's reply in **Track 6**. Do students think it's a RIG-changer? (Hardly! With a flat melody, she almost literally doesn't "change her tune"!)

Step 4: The selection that sums up Magda's view on love comes early in Act I. Prunier has sung the first verse of his new song, "Chi il bel sogno di Doretta," Doretta's dream. But upon concluding, he sings "Il finale mi manca" ("I can't figure out the ending"). Magda chimes in, transforming Doretta's dream into her own with such passion that even the hardbitten Parisians around her cry "Exquisite!" ("Delightful!"): **Track 7**.

For good or ill, Magda believes her dream has come true when she runs into Ruggero at Bullier's restaurant that evening, in Act II. When Rambaldo comes to find her, she sings out both her love and her independence—as if they were triumphantly, climactically, one and the same: **Track 8**. Notice as well in this selection that Rambaldo considers Magda's decision—her love—to be "follia" ("insanity"). That's not a sentiment one would have expected to hear in an opera by a younger Puccini. Nor is the warning faintly heard sung by a soprano somewhere outside Bullier's at the end of **Track 9**: "Nell'amor non fidar!" ("Do not trust love!"). Have students mark a RIG for the street singer, then discuss: Which view of love do they think the older Puccini supports?

Magda has reason to believe she's not alone in her view of love. Even before learning Magda's name (or rather, her fake name, since she calls herself "Paulette"), in **Track 10**, Ruggero has told her that he believes love



Angela Gheorghiu sings Magda .
(Photo: Ken Howard/Metropolitan Opera)



Roberto Alagna sings Ruggero.
(Photo: Marty Sohl/Metropolitan Opera)

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for him is for one woman, for life. She echoes, “For life!” But before your students mark Ruggero’s RIG, have them listen to **Track 11**. They will hear the same melody of lifelong love—associated here not only with the chosen love of Ruggero’s life, but with the one he could not have chosen: his mother!

What do your students think Puccini means by using the same music for these two separate versions of love? What might he be saying about Ruggero’s view of love?

Before marking Ruggero’s RIG, students may want to listen to one more selection, his Act II aria, “Dimmi che vuoi,” **Track 12**. Here, he sets forth a vision of love that’s about as far as one could imagine from Prunier’s Act I “microbe” with its “amorous glances, secret embraces, kisses, sighs.” Ruggero sings of an orchard, a sunrise and a baby someday, all under the “sacred protection” of his own mother.



Magda entertains her friends in this scene from Act I. (Photo: Ken Howard/Metropolitan Opera)

Now would be a good time to mark Ruggero's RIG—and to compare it with Magda's. Then listen to **Track 13**. Not only has Magda determined that she is too blemished to marry Ruggero, but she frames her reluctance in very specific language: She cannot “accept” his mother's kiss. Puccini builds the ensuing duet around the love strain from Tracks 10 and 11—Ruggero's “lifelong love” theme. What significance do your students draw from this musical choice?

At this point in *La Rondine*, Giacomo Puccini had a problem. We know, because he left several different endings for the opera. *The Met: Live in HD* transmission will incorporate the first, most widely used, ending, in which a broken-hearted but noble Magda simply walks out on Ruggero. In **Track 14**, we hear the critical moment: Pay special attention to Magda's use of the word “rovinarti” (“to ruin you”). In **Track 15**, Magda compares her decision to the selfless act of—yes—a mother: Do your students think this calls for a RIG adjustment?

In another possible ending, Ruggero would have learned of “Paulette”'s prior life and angrily sent her off. In a third ending, not only would he have rejected Magda, but she would have walked, hopeless, into the Mediterranean Sea, killing herself. Your students may want to discuss which of these feels most true. But first, it's worth considering one more perspective.

Step 4: Remember Prunier? It was his observation about love that began *La Rondine*, and his song that rekindled Magda's desire for love. In Track 1, we heard Prunier complain about the behavior of Magda's housemaid, Lisette. But toward the end of Act I, in a subplot, Prunier and Lisette share a duet, excerpted in **Track 16**. Prunier, of all people, begins the duet “T'amo”—I love you! Lisette calls him a liar, but the underscoring is so consonant with their gentle tones that it's hard to believe there can be any hostility here. Indeed, by the end of the track, Lisette has left the room and Prunier is praying to his muses for forgiveness: “I love her beyond all reason!”

Prunier and Lisette pop up again in the middle of Act III—just after Magda realizes she has a decision to make, whether or not to reveal her past to Ruggero. At this point, their relationship takes on the status of a parallel love story, as your students will deduce from the very first words of **Track 17**. “M'hai rovinata!” (“You've ruined me”) says Lisette to

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Prunier. The verb is the same one Magda will use with respect to Ruggero. (Remember Track 14!) Here, though, it's affectionate lovers' banter.

At the beginning of **Track 18**, Prunier intones, in Magda's hearing, "Addio per sempre!" ("Goodbye forever!"). The words are ironic, given Magda's onrushing fate. Do your students think Puccini's librettists could have included them by coincidence? Prunier and Lisette love quietly and talk of parting forever, but plan to meet a few hours later. Magda and Ruggero, on the other hand, love passionately, then part stormily and without genuine goodbyes, never to see one another again.

What terms can your students find to describe the love between Prunier and Lisette? Discreet? Understated? Comfortable? Unshakeable? How does it compare to the passions of Magda and Ruggero—no matter which of Puccini's actual endings one might choose? Could Puccini and his librettists be giving us a clue about their views of love, about their own RIG, in the relationship of Prunier and Lisette? Might the key to the mystery of *La Rondine*, after all the waltzes and tears, come at the end of Track 18: "Ti aspetto" ("I wait for you")?

FOLLOW-UP: For homework, students can mark a *Romantic Intentions Gauge* for Puccini himself, supporting it with an essay on the topic, "What *La Rondine* Tries to Teach Us about Love."

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

The Past Is Present: A Close Look at Remembrance and Reenactment in *La Rondine*

LA RONDINE FIRST APPEARED IN A TIME OF UPHEAVAL.

The electric light, the automobile, the telephone and the airplane had recently changed the world forever. World War I was being fought across Europe, while in Russia, a revolution had just overthrown the czar. Avant-garde movements were on the rise in art, music and literature. In Italy, in particular, a group of artists and musicians who called themselves Futurists called for the overthrow of traditional forms and all respect for the past, to be replaced by a new aesthetic honoring machines, speed and physical violence. Since 1910, as a symbol of the old school and a composer of great sentiment, Puccini had been a Futurist target. They called his operas “base, rickety and vulgar.”

La Rondine seems to glide above such turmoil: a gossipy love story set in gay prewar Paris and along the sparkling Riviera. Puccini himself described the work as light and sentimental, requiring not energy or momentum, but “finesse, nuance, suppleness.” Notably, in the context of Puccini’s attackers and in contrast to his three previous works, it lacks any hint of physical violence. Yet attention to the nuances of *La Rondine* reveals that issues like remembrance, the burdens of the past and the possibilities of an unburdened present throb at the heart of this opera, couched though they may be in personal terms, not lofty pronouncements of ideology. In this activity, students will explore experiences of time and memory as expressed in the music and the narrative of *La Rondine*. They will:

- Investigate Puccini’s use of melody and instrumentation to convey a sense of psychological time
- Identify storytelling techniques characterizing *La Rondine* as a modern work of art
- Consider how differences between *La Rondine* and other works by Puccini might signal evolution in the composer’s ideas and beliefs
- Acquaint themselves with the character arc of the opera’s heroine, Magda, in advance of *The Met: Live in HD* transmission

IN PREPARATION

For this activity, each student will need photocopies of the activity sheet and printed resources, found on pages 30 and 31 of this guide.

You will also need the accompanying recording of selections from *La Rondine*.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Music, Language Arts, and Social Studies (World History)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To investigate the use of literary devices, musical themes and accompaniment as tools of character development
- To consider the influence of contemporary literary and philosophical trends on the narrative and musical structures of *La Rondine*
- To study how the composer and librettists develop the emotional arc of a single character, Magda, over the course of the opera
- To build acquaintance with musical themes in *La Rondine* in advance of *The Met: Live in HD* transmission

The Past Is Present: A Close Look at Remembrance and Reenactment in *La Rondine*

STEPS

By the time *La Rondine* was first performed, Puccini was 58 years old, and the world he'd grown up in was swiftly disappearing. New technologies, new forms of politics and art, even ghastly new means of warfare, had changed Europe irreversibly. Such radical change is hardly the first thing that might cross listeners' minds in this opera about romance, sensuality and honor. But if students listen closely to *La Rondine*, they just may hear Puccini and his librettists engaged in the debates of their day: tradition vs. innovation, past vs. present, the constraints of the old vs. the freedom of the new.

Begin at the beginning: **Track 19** immediately follows the overture. When students hear the way Puccini's music jumps right in, and when they read the translation on the resource sheet (page 30), they'll discover that *La Rondine* doesn't begin at the beginning at all! It begins in the middle of a conversation. In fact, it begins with Yvette's response to a statement the audience hasn't heard. Not until Prunier speaks a third time is it revealed that he, Yvette, Bianca, and Magda are talking about a new phenomenon in Paris—falling in love. Notice the importance of the present during these opening moments. The conversation

- takes place in the present tense,
- concerns a phenomenon of the immediate present, and
- is structured so audiences will experience it as taking place right now, as if they've stumbled into an ongoing situation.

To the characters on stage, the topic of conversation is love. But for the audience, Puccini and his librettists may be laying the groundwork to explore not only the fad of love in Prunier's Paris, but their own contemporary concern: aligning the pleasures of the present with the demands of a lingering past. By and large, that concern makes itself known through the development of Puccini's heroine, Magda.

Early in Act I, Magda relates an important romantic memory with the aria "Ore dolce e divine" ("sweet, heavenly hours"). **Track 20** begins just before the aria. Magda is posing a rhetorical question which directly connects past, present and future: "Perchè non potrebbe essere ancora domani?" ("Why couldn't it be that way again tomorrow?"). She asks in

a matter-of-fact tone, in a melody as close as conceivable to plain, very serious speech.

Have students listen to this selection, the first part of the aria, following along with the translation on the resource page. A single flute, right after Magda's rhetorical question, carries her thoughts back into those sweet hours of the past. Notice how her words here conflate past and present, bringing her memory into her present experience: How did I get there? How did I leave? I don't know. Notice how, musically, they rise with the glorious past—"Come andai?"—and fall with the humdrum present—"Non lo so!"

Magda continues her recollection of laughter, dance and kissing at Bullier's restaurant in **Track 21**. A waltz, the music of romance and nightlife, carries the memory gently along to one sharply accented detail: her long-ago dance partner ordered two bocks (a strong German beer). Magda recalls with particular gusto his telling the waiter "Tenete" ("keep the change"). Yvette, Bianca and Suzy, living merrily in the present, find the spirit of wonder which this memory inspires in Magda to be hilarious.

One word a few moments later confirms how peculiar Magda's sense of the past is, given present company. In **Track 22**, the assembled try to come up with the name of a place where Ruggero, who's just arrived, can sample Parisian nightlife. They hit upon Bullier's—the restaurant that figured so large in Magda's aria. When Magda joins the conversation and hears the recommendation, she repeats, "Bullier!" briefly changing the tone of the talk. She introduces a scant second of lyric wistfulness, then Prunier restores gaiety—and pointedly reminds one and all of Magda's nostalgic bent. That "Bullier!" and Prunier's response exemplify the contrast between Magda and the others. In a sense, the rest of *La Rondine* grows from that melancholy "Bullier!"

In Act II, at Bullier's, Magda finds her past turning miraculously into a present when, after an exuberant waltz, Ruggero happens to order two bocks: **Track 23**. Your students may consider whether Puccini is as optimistic as his heroine about this accidental reenactment. Listen to the dark omen lurching up from the string section immediately before Ruggero places his order. Magda blithely presses her luck in **Track 24**: lighthearted melody carries her along as she encourages Ruggero to let the waiter keep the change. When he asks why, she mentions the aunt we heard about in

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her Act I memory aria. Then after an instant of silent reflection, an audible movement into the realm of memory, Magda transforms an uncomfortable moment from the past into a victory of the present: Compare the end of Track 24 to **Track 25**, a spot in Act I when Bianca, Yvette and Suzy ridiculed Magda.

Ruggero asks Magda her name. Rather than tell him, she offers to write it on the table: **Track 26**. A lively snatch of music follows, but why does it repeat with so dark a cast? **Track 27**, another excerpt from Magda's Act I memory aria, has the answer. On that glorious long-ago evening, she wrote her name, too. Now, in Act II, we can grasp the import of the ominous bass drum that intervenes, if passingly, after Act I's "Il nome suo tracciò" ("he traced his name").

(From the point of view of language, it's worth noting that, in Magda's memory, her partner addressed her with the Italian informal "tu" form. In the present, she and Ruggero use the more polite second-person "voi." That will change by evening's end.)

Is Magda living in her past? Is she trying to free herself of the past by transforming it into a happy present? Your students may enjoy discussing the meaning of her reenactments.

No matter what they mean, Puccini and his librettists will not let her abandon the past for a pleasant seaside present. It catches up when, in Act III, Ruggero asks Magda to marry him, to bear his children, to live in his home along with his mother. Puccini provides a wordless response in **Track 28**: a measured, almost chastened rendition of "Ore dolce e divine," the Act I memory aria. In this passage, Magda's past makes its final appearance as comforter. The past crashes down in **Track 29**: must she confess, or remain silent? By the end of this selection, Magda has been reduced to an all but mechanical, disheartened march.

As discussed in the Classroom Activity, *The Ends of Love*, Puccini went back and forth about an ending for *La Rondine*. Should Ruggero find Magda out and reject her? Should she kill herself in despair? The one alternative the composer never seems to have considered is relieving Magda of her burden: forgiving or forgetting her past. In the most commonly performed ending (which students will experience during *The Met: Live in HD* transmission) Magda punishes herself. No law, no tragic turn of fate, not even Ruggero intervenes. Her judgment is her own doing. But the punishment, simply leaving her lover, is rather unusual, coming from a composer who had no trouble seeing his heroines die.

Have students listen to **Track 30**, the very end of the opera, and see if they can discern another unusual element: This discussion of past, present and future holds a clue. What astute students will notice is that *La Rondine* ends, as it began, fully in an ongoing present. A bell tolls, as if for the dead, but we hear Magda's wordless cry. We cannot know her future, but her life doesn't end. Though she may continue to suffer under the weight of the past, as the curtain falls on Puccini's opera, his heroine, unseen, is alive and present.

FOLLOW-UP: Depending on the level of your students' interest, two alternative activities make suitable follow-ups for this study. A small research project might help some students put *La Rondine* into historical perspective: They should identify all major inventions which came to market between Puccini's birth in 1858 and his death in 1924, then write a brief essay imagining a world in which none of these exist.

Other students might enjoy a more philosophical approach: an essay on the topic, "Should the past be allowed to decide?" A few considerations that might spur thinking about that topic include crime, punishment, and rehabilitation; the passage of time; maturation; and mercy. For a resounding "No!", students may be interested in reading some of the writings of the Italian Futurists; many are available in translation online.

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS ARE BRIEF OPPORTUNITIES TO:

- Help students make sense of opera
- Whet their interest in upcoming transmissions of *The Met: Live in HD*

Each focuses on music from the accompanying CD recording or audio clips available on the Met website at www.metopera.org/education. They direct students' attention toward highlights and details that can organize and illuminate their viewing of the transmission. The descriptions below offer listening pointers.

These “mini-lessons” will in practice take up no more than a few minutes of class time. They’re designed to help you bring opera into your classroom while minimizing interruption of your ongoing curricular sequence.



Angela Gheorghiu
(Photo: Ken Howard/
Metropolitan Opera)

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Music and Critical Thinking

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To examine the use of music as a complement or enhancement to narrative dialogue
- To identify some of the specific musical decisions a composer makes in interpreting a libretto
- To practice critical listening skills
- To prompt attention to recitative, an important, though sometimes underappreciated, aspect of opera

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT

The Germanic Invasion: A Close Look at *La Rondine's* Origins in Operetta

LA RONDINE WAS FIRST CONCEIVED AS AN OPERETTA—

a stage play studded with romantic songs—in the style of such German-speaking Austrian composers as Johann Strauss II and Franz Lehar. Puccini also envisioned a work in the spirit of the German Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*. Hints of these northern origins are sprinkled through the opera, starting with the flirtatious banter that begins the evening.

The musical form most identified with Germanic operetta is the waltz, and Puccini offers several. Most of Magda's aria "Ore dolce e divine" is written in waltz time; its musical motif recurs throughout Act I. (Track 21, discussed in the Classroom Activity, *The Past is Present*, provides a fine example.) Waltzes are the meat of the dance scene at Bullier's in Act II. Magda and Ruggero's gentle duet, "Nella dolce carezza," in 3/4 time, blossoms as it proceeds into a waltz of mounting, Viennese-style intensity. Following a short march in which Magda and Ruggero sing of sweetness and madness, enchantment, and dreams (**Track 31**), an entirely new waltz begins (**Track 32**), eventually melting back to the "Nella dolce carezza" theme.

The party continues in 3/4 time right up to the fateful order of "two bocks" (**Tracks 33–34**). Those "bocks" themselves represent German influence: An Italian composer and his librettists could have quenched their characters' thirsts on wine.

Perhaps the most interesting reference comes in Act I. As Prunier describes the kind of refined, elegant, sexy woman who attracts him, he names women from then-famous romances and myths. The last mentioned, Salome, was not only a seductress who beheaded John the Baptist, but also the heroine and namesake of an opera by none other than Richard Strauss. As Prunier sings her name, Puccini honors Strauss with a snatch of melody borrowed from that opera! (**Track 35**).

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT

Love Train: A Close Look at Ruggero's Act II "Toast"

MANY OBSERVERS HAVE NOTED THAT ONE DIFFERENCE between *La Rondine* and other Puccini operas is the absence of “big numbers” at the end of each act. As Act I ends, Magda slips off to Bullier’s. At the close of Act II, she and Ruggero close the restaurant with a love duet. Act III brings the curtain down with Magda’s plaintive cry as she heads off, alone, to an uncertain future. But smack in the middle of the second act, Puccini does deliver a “production number.” It begins with Ruggero’s simple thought of a toast to love, harmonized by Magda (**Track 36**). Ruggero begins the toast proper, but Magda can’t resist, and after about 45 seconds, she joins him in duet. Lisette and Prunier promptly jump in with their own love song. Even this quartet can’t last long; soon everyone in Bullier’s has joined the fun. Waves and waves of strings and a whole series of crescendos bring the number to a tremendous vocal and orchestral finish (**Track 37**). Only then does the storyline dare pick up, with Rambaldo’s arrival at Prunier’s.

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT

Who Is “The Swallow”? A Close Look at Magda’s Alter Ego

“LA RONDINE” MEANS “THE SWALLOW.” JUST AS RUGGERO shows up for the first time, halfway into Act I, Prunier is reading Magda’s palm in order to tell her fortune. “Fate is unkind to you,” he says. “Perhaps, like the swallow, you will migrate beyond the sea toward a brilliant land of dreams, toward the sun, towards love. And perhaps...” He breaks off his prediction (**Track 39**).

But Magda does not forget it. Toward the end of the act, mustering her courage to go to Bullier’s, she repeats the fortune to herself (**Track 40**). Notice that she changes the future-tense, second-person verb “migrerete” to the first person “migrerò” (“perhaps, like the swallow, I will migrate...”).

Following this reprise, the image of the swallow disappears from *La Rondine* until the moment when Magda is about to leave Ruggero forever. All at once, she seems to recall Prunier’s metaphor. “You will return to your serene home,” she tells Ruggero in **Track 41**. “I will again take up my flight and my suffering” (“il mio volo e la mia pena”). Do you think *La Rondine* is an appropriate title for this opera? What do you think Puccini meant by the title? What is the metaphor? Ruggero, all but tongue-tied, cries “Amore!”, to which this swallow replies “Say nothing” (“non dir niente”)—“let this pain be mine,” and moves along.

Magda and Ruggero embrace in their villa on the Riviera in Act II. (Photo: Ken Howard/Metropolitan Opera)



PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

Supporting Students during *The Met: Live in HD* Transmission

THANKS TO PRINT AND AUDIO RECORDING, MUCH ABOUT

opera can be enjoyed long before a performance. But performance itself remains an incomparable embarrassment of riches—sound and color, pageantry and technology, drama, skill, and craft. Performance activities are designed to help students tease apart different aspects of the experience, consider creative choices that have been made, and sharpen their own critical faculties.

Each activity incorporates a reproducible activity sheet. Students bring the activity sheet to the transmission for filling out during intermission and/or after the final curtain. The activities direct attention to characteristics of the production that might otherwise go unnoticed. Ratings matrices invite students to express their critique, a time-tested prompt for careful thinking.

The basic activity sheet is called My Highs & Lows. Meant to be collected, opera by opera, over the course of the season, this sheet points students toward a consistent set of objects of observation. Its purposes are not only to help students articulate and express their opinions, but to support comparison and contrast, enriching understanding of the art form as a whole.

For *La Rondine*, the other activity sheet (*Superstars!*) directs students' attention toward the very special casting of this Metropolitan Opera production.

Activity reproducibles can be found on the last pages of this guide. Either activity can provide the basis for class discussion after the transmission. On the next page, you'll find an additional activity created specifically for post-show follow-up.

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION

Songs and Stories: A Look at Three Genres of Musical Theater

IN PREPARATION

This activity requires no preparation other than attendance at *The Met: Live in HD* transmission of *La Rondine*.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Language Arts and Music

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To review and consolidate students' experiences with *La Rondine*
- To identify the differences between three forms of musical theatre
- To encourage students to consider how each form might be fitting for a particular kind of story and how, more broadly, content and form affect each other in the creation of works of art

STUDENTS WILL ENJOY STARTING THE CLASS WITH AN OPEN

discussion of the Met performance. What did they like? What didn't they? Did anything surprise them? What would they like to see or hear again? What would they have done differently? This discussion will offer students an opportunity to review the notes on their My Highs & Lows sheet, as well as their thoughts about the Met production—in short, to see themselves as *La Rondine* experts.

As discussed in the pre-transmission activities, *La Rondine* was initially commissioned as an operetta—but Puccini found himself uncomfortable working in that genre. What is it about an operetta that Puccini might have found constricting, uncomfortable, or ill-suited to his talents?

Begin by eliciting students' own understanding of the differences between operetta and opera. (Some of this will be ground that your class has covered in preparing to see *La Rondine*.) While there are no hard and fast rules, in general:

- An operetta is a spoken theater piece studded with songs
- Operettas are rarely tragic; more often, they mix romance with comedy
- They often take place in exotic, fantastic settings
- Their characters tend to include royals, nobles or high officials—sometimes admired, frequently the subjects of farce or the objects of ridicule
- Other characters in operettas are often identified by social class
- Comedy in operettas frequently derives from contrasts of class conventions
- Stylistic hallmarks include wit, elegance, and catchy tunes
- They're shorter in length than operas
- A genre of light opera

If those are the characteristics of operetta, how would your students say they differ from those of opera? More concretely, you might ask, "Why was *La Rondine* originally conceived as an operetta, but ultimately classified as an opera? How does *La Rondine* straddle both genres? (In general, an opera is longer in length and "heavier" in terms of both music and subject matter. The inseparability of singing, whether solo, duet, or larger ensembles, from plot and the development of character relationships is a hallmark trait of opera.)

Your class has some familiarity with opera, perhaps less acquaintance with operetta—but probably considerable experience with Broadway-style musicals, whether classic high-school productions like *Grease* and *Fiddler on the Roof*, movie musicals like *Mamma Mia*, or TV films like *High School Musical*. Having discussed some of the differences between operetta and opera, students should now apply their own knowledge of musicals to identify characteristics which differentiate that genre. What do they think makes a musical different from an opera? What might make it different from an operetta? What kinds of stories do musicals tell? Are there stories that would not work as musicals? Do opera, operetta and the musical tell different kinds of stories?

As follow-up, students can pick a favorite (or at least familiar) musical. By way of consolidating their thinking about formal characteristics, they might write essays on the topic “How I would turn [title of show] into an opera.”

STUDENT RESOURCES

ON THE NEXT SEVERAL PAGES, YOU'LL FIND REPRODUCIBLES of the texts and worksheets for each *La Rondine* activity. Feel free to photocopy these and distribute them in your classroom.

Pages 32 and 33 are activity sheets to be used at *The Met: Live in HD* transmission. Page 32 is designed to focus student attention during the transmission and to support your post-transmission classroom work. Page 33, My Highs & Lows, is a collectible prompting closer attention to specific aspects of the opera. You may want to provide copies of My Highs & Lows not only to students, but to friends, family and other members of the community attending the transmission.

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THE METROPOLITAN OPERA: *LIVE IN HD*
LA RONDINE

Activity Sheet for Classroom Activity
The Ends of Love

Romantic Intentions Gauges

A RIG for Lisette: Love is...

A JOKE	PHYSICAL DESIRE	ROMANTIC ATTRACTION	PUREST DEVOTION
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A RIG for Yvette, Suzy, and Bianca: Love is...

A JOKE	PHYSICAL DESIRE	ROMANTIC ATTRACTION	PUREST DEVOTION
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A RIG for Magda: Love is...

A JOKE	PHYSICAL DESIRE	ROMANTIC ATTRACTION	PUREST DEVOTION
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A RIG for Prunier: Love is...

A JOKE	PHYSICAL DESIRE	ROMANTIC ATTRACTION	PUREST DEVOTION
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A RIG for Rambaldo: Love is...

A JOKE	PHYSICAL DESIRE	ROMANTIC ATTRACTION	PUREST DEVOTION
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A RIG for the Far Off Voice at the end of Act II: Love is...

A JOKE	PHYSICAL DESIRE	ROMANTIC ATTRACTION	PUREST DEVOTION
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A RIG for Ruggero: Love is...

A JOKE	PHYSICAL DESIRE	ROMANTIC ATTRACTION	PUREST DEVOTION
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...and a RIG for Signor Giacomo Puccini, based on *La Rondine*: Love is...

A JOKE	PHYSICAL DESIRE	ROMANTIC ATTRACTION	PUREST DEVOTION
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THE METROPOLITAN OPERA: *LIVE IN HD* *LA RONDINE*

Resource Page for Classroom Activity

The Ends of Love

TRACK 1

PRUNIER: Imperversa una moda nel gran mondo elegante
L'Amor sentimentale

LISETTE: Ma non dategli retta! Amor sentimentale?
Storie! Storie! Si vive in fretta: "Mi vuoi?" "Ti voglio."
È fatto!

PRUNIER (to Magda): Il suo contegno mi ripugna!

A fashion is sweeping through fashionable society:
sentimental love!
Oh, don't listen to him! Sentimental love? Rubbish!
Rubbish! Life's too short. "You want me?" "Yes, I do."
That's all!
I don't like the way she behaves.

TRACK 2

PRUNIER: Sguardi amorosi, strette furtive,
baci, sospiri, ma niente più!

YVETTE: Amore!

SUZY: O cielo!

YVETTE: Io struggo!

BIANCA: Svengo!

SUZY: Io cedo!

YVETTE: Io muoio!

BIANCA: Illanguisdisco tutta!

YVETTE: Consolami, Poeta!

SUZY: Assistimi, fortuna!

BIANCA: Dammi un chiaro di luna...

YVETTE: ...e un verso del Musset!

MAGDA: Non scherzate!

Amorous glances, secret embraces,
kisses, sighs, but nothing more!
Love!
Oh heavens!
I'm suffering!
I'm swooning!
I'm giving in!
I'm dying!
I'm totally drained!
Console me, Poet!
Help me, Fortune!
Give me moonlight...
...and a poem by Musset!
Don't joke about it!

TRACK 3

PRUNIER: È un microbo sottile che turbina nell'aria
Vi prende di sorpresa e il cuor non ha difesa!

YVETTE, BIANCA, SUZY: È un microbo sottile che turbina
nell'aria? Ci prende di sorpresa? Ah! Nessuno può
salvarsi, tanto è oscura l'insidia! Mai nessun si salverà!
Mai più! Nessuna?

It's an insidious germ circulating in the air.
It takes you by surprise, and your heart has no defense!
An insidious germ circulating in the air. Taking us by
surprise? Ah! No one is safe from it. It's such a sneaky
danger! No one will ever be cured! Never again! Not one
of us girls?

TRACK 4

PRUNIER: Non sono io! Nel fondo d'ogni anima c'è un
diavolo romantico ch'è più forte di me, di voi, di tutti!

It's not my fault! In the depths of every soul there's
a romantic demon which is stronger than me, than you,
than everyone!

TRACK 5

RAMBALDO: No! Il mio diavolo dorme!

YVETTE: Che peccato! Perché?

RAMBALDO: Mi armo di acqua santa e lo sconfiggo.
Lo volete vedere? Ecco!

MAGDA: A me?

RAMBALDO: Certo! La mia intenzione era di offrirvelo prima
di pranzo. Me ne dimenticai, ma l'occasione sembra
inventata apposta!

No way! My demon's sleeping.
What a shame? How so?
I arm myself with holy water and defy it.
Do you want to see?
For me?
Sure! I planned to give it to you before lunch.
I forgot to, but this seems like the perfect occasion.

TRACK 6

MAGDA: Ho una sola risposta: Non cambio d'opinione.

I've only one thing to say: My feelings haven't changed.

TRACK 7

MAGDA: Chi il bel sogno di Doretta poté indovinar?
Il suo mister come mai fini? Ahimè! un giorno uno
studente in bocca la baciò e fu quel bacio rivelazione:
Fu la passione! Folle amore! Folle ebrezza!
Chi la sottile carrezza d'un bacio così ardente mai ridir
potrà?

YVETTE, BIANCA, SUZY, GOBIN, PÉRICHAUD, CRÉBILLON: Deliziosa!
Deliziosa!

MAGDA: Ah! mio sogno!

YVETTE, BIANCA, SUZY, GOBIN, PÉRICHAUD, CRÉBILLON: È squisita! È
squisita!

MAGDA: Ah! mia vita!

YVETTE, BIANCA, SUZY, GOBIN, PÉRICHAUD, CRÉBILLON: Deliziosa!
Deliziosa!

MAGDA: Che importa la ricchezza se infine è rifiorita la
felicità! O sogno d'or poter amar così!

Who can interpret Doretta's beautiful dream?
How did its secret come to an end? Alas! One day, a
student kissed her mouth and that kiss was
a revelation: It was passion! Crazy love!
Crazy intoxication! Who could hope to tell of the subtle
caress of so passionate a kiss?
Delightful! Delightful!

Ah, my dream
Exquisite! Exquisite!

Ah, my life!
Delightful! Delightful!

What does wealth matter if happiness blooms after all?
O golden dream—to be able to love like that!

TRACK 8

RAMBALDO: Andiamo!

MAGDA: Inutile! Rimango!

RAMBALDO: Restate?

MAGDA: L'amo! L'amo, l'amo!

RAMBALDO: Che follia vi travolge?

MAGDA: Ma voi non lo sapete cosa sia aver sete d'amore e
trovar l'amore, aver voglia di viver e trovar la vita? Ah!
Lasciatemi seguire il mio destino! Lasciatemi! È finita!

Let's go!
It's useless! I'm staying!
You're staying?
I love him! I love him, I love him!
What insanity has taken you over?
But you don't know what it's like to be thirsty for love
and to find love, to lust for live and to find life? Ah!
Leave me to follow my destiny! Leave me! It's over!

TRACK 9

A VOICE FAR OFF: Mi vuoi dir chi sei tu? Son l'aurora che
nasce per fugar ogni incanto di notte lunar! Nell'amor
non fidar!

Will you tell me who you are? I am the dawn, born to dispel
any enchantment of the moonlit night! Do not trust love!

TRACK 10

RUGGERO: Perché se amassi, allora sarebbe quella sola,
e per tutta la vita!

MAGDA: Ah! Per tutta la vita!

Because if I were to fall in love, it would be with her alone,
for life!
Ah! For life!

TRACK 11

RUGGERO: Amore mio! Mia madre! È mia madre che scrive

MAGDA: Tua madre?

RUGGERO: Perché tremi? Non lo sai che acconsente?

My love! It's my mother! My mother wrote!
Your mother?
Why are you trembling? Don't you know she's given her
consent?

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THE METROPOLITAN OPERA: *LIVE IN HD* *LA RONDINE*

Resource Page for Classroom Activity

The Ends of Love

TRACK 12

RUGGERO: Dimmi che vuoi seguirmi alla mia casa
che intorno ha un orto e in faccia la collina
che si risveglia al sole la mattina
ed è piena, alla sera, d'ombre strane!
Il nostro amore troverà in quell'ombra
la sua luce più pura e più serena,
la santa protezione di mia madre
sopra ogni angoscia e fuori d'ogni pena!
E chi sa che a quel sole mattutino
un giorno non si tenda lietamente
la piccola manina d'un bambino.

Tell me you want to follow me to my house,
surrounded by an orchard, across from a hill
which awakens to the sun in the morning and in the evening
is full of strange shadows.
In those shadows, our love will find
its purer, calmer light,
my mother's sacred protection against every worry
and from every pain.
And who knows whether, one day,
the little hand of a child won't stretch
happily toward the morning sun?

TRACK 13

MAGDA (reading the letter from Ruggero's mother): "Donale il bacio mio!"

RUGGERO: Il bacio di mia madre!

MAGDA: No! non posso riceverlo!

RUGGERO: Non puoi?

MAGDA: No! Non devo ingannarti!

RUGGERO: Tu? Tu?

MAGDA: Ruggero! Il mio passato non si può scordare.
Nella tua casa io non posso entrare!

RUGGERO: Perché? Perché?

"Give her a kiss from me!"

My mother's kiss!

No! I can't accept it!

You can't?

No! I must not deceive you!

You? You?

Ruggero! My past cannot be forgotten.

I cannot enter your house.

Why? Why?

TRACK 14

RUGGERO: No! Rimani! Non lasciarmi solo!

MAGDA: Non voglio rovinarti!

RUGGERO: No! Rimani! Non lasciarmi solo!

MAGDA: Non voglio rovinarti!

No! Stay! Don't leave me alone!

I don't want to ruin you!

No! Stay! Don't leave me alone!

I don't want to ruin you!

TRACK 15

MAGDA: Lascia che io ti parli come una madre al suo
figliuolo caro. Quando sarai guarito, te ne ricorderai.

Let me speak to you like a mother to a dear little boy:
When you heal, you will remember.

TRACK 16

PRUNIER: T'amo!

LISSETTE: Menti!

PRUNIER: No! Tu sapessi a quale prezzo ti disprezzo!
Tu non sai che la mia gloria vuole orpello e falsità?
Non può amar che donne ricche un poeta come me!
Io lo dico, c'è chi crede, ed invece son per te!

LISSETTE: Che silenzio!

PRUNIER: Che mistero!

LISSETTE: M'ami?

PRUNIER: T'amo!

I love you!

You're lying!

No! If you knew what price I pay to discount you!

Don't you know that my glory demands shiny falsehoods? A
poet like me can't love any but wealthy women.

I tell you, some people believe that—but I'm actually yours!

How quiet!

What a mystery!

Do you love me?

I love you!

LISETTE: T'avvillisce?
PRUNIER: Ne son fiero!
LISETTE: Ora andiamo! Tutto tace!
PRUNIER: Il cappello non mi piace!
LISETTE: Non ti piace? È il suo migliore
PRUNIER: Non s'intona con il resto!
LISETTE: Cambio?
PRUNIER: Cambia! Ma fa presto! Nove Muse, a voi perdono
se discendo così in basso! L'amo! L'amo e non ragiono!
Nove Muse, a voi perdono!

TRACK 17

LISETTE: M'hai rovinata!
PRUNIER: Non mi stupisce la recompensa! Volli innalzar la
mia conquista improvvisandoti canzonettista. Ma non
appena scoperto, l'astro morì, si spense!
LISETTE: Dio! Che disastro.

TRACK 18

PRUNIER: Mi basta: ho detto tutto! Addio per sempre.
MAGDA: Ve ne andate?
PRUNIER: Parto: con certa gente non più a che fare.
LISETTE: Ne son felice!
PRUNIER: Solo una preghiera.
LISETTE: Dite pure: vi ascolto.
PRUNIER: (to Magda) Permettete, signora?
(to Lisette) A che ora sei libera stasera?
LISETTE: Alle dieci.
PRUNIER: Ti aspetto!

Does it degrade you?
I'm proud of it!
Then let's go. Everything's quiet here.
I don't like your hat.
You don't? It's the best she has.
It doesn't match your outfit.
Should I change?
Change it. But quickly! Oh, nine Muses, I beg your pardon if I
sink so low. I love her! I love her beyond all reason!
Nine Muses, I beg your pardon!

You've ruined me!
The result doesn't surprise me. I wanted to enhance my
conquest by turning you into a singer. But as soon as it was
discovered, the star died, burned itself out!
God! What a disaster!

Enough! I've said everything! Goodbye forever!
You're going?
I'm leaving. I have no more business with certain people here.
Glad of it!
Just one request.
Out with it! I'm listening.
May I, ma'am?
What time do you get off tonight?
At ten.
I wait for you!

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THE METROPOLITAN OPERA: *LIVE IN HD* *LA RONDINE*

Resource Page for Classroom Activity

The Past is Present

TRACK 19

YVETTE: Ah! no! no!

BIANCA: Non dite questo!

PRUNIER: Signore! Vi contesto il diritto di ridere!

YVETTE: E noi quello di parlar sul seno!

PRUNIER: È pura verità!

MAGDA: La verità sarebbe?

PRUNIER: Una cosa assai grave: A Parigi si ama!

Ah! No! No!

Don't say such a thing!

Ladies! I have to object to your laughing!

And we don't think you should be speaking so seriously!

It's the truth!

What's "the truth"?

A very serious thing: In Paris, everybody's falling in love!

TRACK 20

MAGDA: Perché non potrebbe essere ancora domani?

Ore dolce e divine di lieta baraonda

fra studenti e sartine d'una notte a Bullier!

Come andai? Non lo so! Come uscii? Non lo so!

come una madre al suo figliuolo caro.

Quando sarai guarito, te ne ricorderai.

Why couldn't it be that way again tomorrow?

Sweet, heavenly hours of merry chaos among
students and seamstresses one night at Bullier's.

How did I get there? I don't know. How did I leave? I don't
know.

TRACK 21

MAGDA: Quando ci sedemmo, stanchi, estenuati
dalla danza, la goia arsa, ma l'anima
piena d'allegrezza, mi parve che si schiudesse
tutta una nuova esistenza!

"Due bocks," egli disse al garzone!

Stupita fissavo quel grande scialone!

Gettò venti soldi. Aggiunse: "Tenete!"

YVETTE: Che gesto da Cresò!

BIANCA: Che nobile gesto! Che lusso! Che sfarzo!

YVETTE: C'è tutto compreso?

BIANCA, SUZY: La birra ed il resto?

YVETTE, BIANCA, SUZY: Vogliam la chiusa! Vogliam la fin!

When we sat down, tired out, weak from dancing,
my throat dry but my soul full of happiness,
it seemed to me that an entirely new existence had
opened up!

"Two bocks!" he told the waiter!

Stupified, I stared at this big spender!

He tossed down twenty cents, adding "Keep the change!"

The gesture of a rich man!

What a noble gesture! What luxury! What splendor!

So that's it?

Beer and change?

We want the punchline! We want the ending!

TRACK 22

LISETTE: Prendete nota, mia signor!
Scrivete qua. Presto! Sù!
YVETTE: Le Bal Musard!
BIANCA: A Frascati!
SUZY: No, da Cadet!
YVETTE: Pré Catelan!
YVETTE, BIANCA, SUZY: Tutta Parigi scintilla!
Tutta Parigi sfavilla!
LISETTE: No! Da Bullier!
YVETTE, BIANCA: Sì! Da Bullier, va ben!
SUZY: Scelta più bella non c'è!
LISETTE: Qua! Segnate!
YVETTE, BIANCA, SUZY: E andate!
LISETTE: Amore è là, gioia e piacer. Scegliete il cuor che vi
convien, e ricordate che da Bullier tra le risa, luci e flor
canta più ardente Amor!
YVETTE, BIANCA, SUZY: ...tra le risa, luci e flor...
LISETTE: ...canta più ardente Amor!
MAGDA: No, povera figliuolo! Un poco di pietà
Me l'avete intontito.
RAMBALDO: Laggiù si sveglierà!
BIANCA: Bullier fa dei miracoli!
MAGDA: Bullier!
PRUNIER: Avea tutto il profumo della sua gioventù.

Take note, my good sir!
Write this down. Quickly! Let's do it!
Musard's Dance Hall!
Go to Frascati!
No, Cadet's!
Pré Catelan!
All Paris sparkles!
All Paris glows!
No! Bullier's!
Yes! Bullier's, great!
There's no more beautiful choice.
There! Write it down!
And get going!
Love is there, and joy and pleasure. Choose the heart that
suits you best and remember that at Bullier's, amid the
laughter, light and flowers, love sings with greater passion!
...amid the laughter, light and flowers
...love sings with greater passion!
No, poor boy! Have a little pity—you've
overwhelmed him.
That place will wake him up!
Bullier works miracles!
Bullier!
It had all the perfume of her youth.

TRACK 23

MAGDA: Che caldo! Che sete!
RUGGERO: Due bocks!

It's so hot! I'm so thirsty!
Two bocks!

TRACK 26

RUGGERO: Siamo amici e non so ancora il vostro nome.
Qual'è?
MAGDA: Volete che lo scriva?

We are friends and I still don't know your name.
What is it?
Do you want me to write it?

TRACK 27

MAGDA: "Piccola adorata mia, il tuo nome vuoi dire?"
Io sul marmo scrissi; egli accanto il nome suo tracciò.

"My darling little one, will you tell me your name?"
I wrote it on the bar. Next to it, he traced his name.

The translations for Tracks 24–25 and 29–30 are purposely omitted (see the text of the activity)

Performance Activity: Superstars!

THE METROPOLITAN OPERA: LIVE IN HD
LA RONDINE, JANUARY 10, 2009

NAME _____

CLASS _____

TEACHER _____

This Metropolitan Opera production of *La Rondine* features a very special pair of cast members. Angela Gheorghiu and Roberto Alagna, performing in the roles of Magda and Ruggero, are not only internationally renowned, they're also wife and husband! Angela and Roberto met during a production of *La Bohème*. Though their careers sometimes send them to separate continents, they sing together whenever possible. Together, they've recorded such operas as *Carmen*, *Tosca*, and, of course, *La Rondine*. Last June, 50,000 people came to hear Roberto and Angela sing an outdoor concert in New York City, bringing them back for seven encores! With superstars like these, it can be tempting to think about the effect of a real-life relationship on the performance. Here's a chart to help you keep track of any observations you might make.

SCENE	NOTES ABOUT ANGELA	NOTES ABOUT ROBERTO
Ruggero and Magda first meet (Act I)		
Magda sits down near Ruggero in Bullier's restaurant (Act II)		
Magda and Ruggero sing their first duet, "Nella dolce carezza." (Act II)		
Magda and Ruggero dance together. (Act II)		
Magda joins Ruggero in a toast. (Act II)		
The lovers leave Bullier's at the end of Act II.		
Ruggero and Magda enjoy their seaside hideaway. (Act III)		
Ruggero receives a letter from his mother. (Act III)		
Magda leaves Ruggero forever. (Act III)		

La Rondine: My Highs & Lows

THE METROPOLITAN OPERA: LIVE IN HD

JANUARY 10, 2009

CONDUCTED BY MARCO ARMILIATO

REVIEWED BY

THE STARS

	STAR POWER	MY COMMENTS
ANGELA GHEORGHIU AS MAGDA	*****	
ROBERTO ALAGNA AS RUGGERO	*****	

THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN/ STAGING
THE DISCUSSION ABOUT LOVE	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
DORETTA'S DREAM	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
MAGDA'S FOND MEMORY OF BULLIER'S	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
THINKING OF A GREAT NIGHTCLUB FOR RUGGERO	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
PRUNIER AND LISETTE'S LOVE DUET	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
MAGDA PREPARES TO GO TO BULLIER'S	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
THE SCENE AT BULLIER'S	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
MAGDA AND RUGGERO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
RAMBALDO ARRIVES	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
RUGGERO TELLS MAGDA HE'S ASKED HIS FATHER FOR PERMISSION TO MARRY...UPSETTING HER	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
PRUNIER AND LISETTE REAPPEAR	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
MAGDA READS THE LETTER FROM RUGGERO'S MOTHER	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			
MAGDA AND LISETTE LEAVE RUGGERO BEHIND	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MY OPINION			