

La Rondine



University of Washington
Schools of Music and Drama
in association with
Meany Hall for the Performing Arts

present

La Rondine

Music by
Giacomo Puccini

Libretto by
Dr. A. M. Willner, Heinz Reichert, Guiseppe Adami

English version by Robert Hess

Conductor **Robert Feist**
Stage Director **Vincent Liotta**
Set Designer **Robert A. Dahlstrom**
Costume Designer **Daniel James Cole**
Lighting Designer **Frank Butler**

Meany Hall for the Performing Arts
November 15, 16, 17, 1984 -- 8:00 PM
November 18, 1984 -- 3:00 PM

CAST

(in order of appearance)

Rambaldo	Victor Chacon, Timothy Mussard
Perichaud	Erhard Rom
Crebillion	Jeffery Smith
Gobin	Mark Hunter
Prunier	Barton Nye Green, Garren Read
Yvette	Lorna Beckwith
Bianca	Darcy Duruz
Suzy	Marcia Bellamy
Magda	Leslie Chapin, Laurie Haney
Lisette	Elisabeth Rom, Laura Williams
Ruggero	Timothy Campbell, Jeffery Francis
Georgette	Martha Berry
Gabriella	Margaret Cleveland
Colette	Maria Woerne
Major-domo	Aaron Brandon Caughey

The action takes place in France circa 1905.

ACT I: Magda's Salon

ACT II: The Bal Bullier

ACT III: The terrace of a summer house in Nice

There will be TWO intermissions.

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LA RONDINE: The Story

ACT I

Rambaldo and his mistress Magda are giving a party. The poet, Prunier, is maintaining that, shocking though it may seem, falling in love is again becoming fashionable. He sings a ballad which tells of a girl's refusal of riches. Unable to think of an ending, Magda improvises one for him. In her version, the girl finds true love with a poor student. The women then consider the merits of wealth versus romantic love. Magda tells of an encounter she once had at Café Bullier. Prunier then rejoins the ladies and tells their fortunes. For Magda he predicts that, like a swallow, she will fly to a sunnier land, to love and to who knows what ending. Meanwhile, Ruggero Lastouc, the son of a friend of Rambaldo's, arrives. Everyone agrees that, on his first evening in Paris, he should go to Café Bullier. The guests finally leave and Lisette, the maid, reminds Magda that this is her evening off and they part. Lisette returns dressed in Magda's finery, followed by Prunier. They depart for their date together. Magda comes back into the room so well disguised as a grisette that she can hardly recognize herself in the mirror. Putting a flower in her hair, she leaves for an evening of adventure at Bullier's.

ACT II

At Bullier's, the range of Paris' nightlife are all busily having a good time. Seated by himself at a table, Ruggero fends off the unwanted attentions of young, admiring girls. Magda arrives and is, at once, made advances to by a group of young men. She gets rid of them by lying that she has a date. She then joins Ruggero, who is delighted when so pretty a woman (whom he does not recognize as Magda) seats herself beside him. Their initial flirting turns into more serious falling in love. Suddenly Lisette arrives with Prunier, spies her mistress but Magda pretends that she doesn't know what Lisette is talking about. Rambaldo arrives at Bullier's, sees Magda and Ruggero and, despite Prunier's efforts, confronts Magda. Magda refuses to leave with him saying that she is in love and Rambaldo leaves her. Ruggero returns to Magda and, in the light of dawn, they declare their love for each other.

ACT III

Magda and Ruggero are enjoying their new life on the Cote d'Azur. Ruggero tells Magda that he has written to his family to ask for permission to marry her. Magda is shocked, for Ruggero knows nothing of her past. When he leaves, Magda wonders how she can tell him that they can never marry. Lisette and Prunier then arrive quarreling. It seems that Lisette made her debut as an actress the previous night and was a total failure. Thus disillusioned, she now wishes to return to service as Magda's maid. Magda greets them both and welcomes Lisette back to her old job. Prunier then leaves as Ruggero re-enters with a letter from his mother and insists that Magda read it aloud. Heartbroken, Magda tells Ruggero that her past has made her unfit to marry him and that they now must part. Despite Ruggero's frantic pleas, desperately unhappy, but knowing that the swallow must now fly back, she leaves.

LA RONDINE: C

Puccini was the idol of Vienna, and on one of his visits there, the two directors of the Karlstheater, where many of the most famous Viennese operettas were given, came to him with the unusual idea that he write for them a light operetta with spoken dialogue, for which he had only to compose six or eight numbers, a few duets, and waltzes, etc. For this he would be paid a sum reported as between \$50,000 and \$100,000. At first, he was only mildly interested, but after his relations with his publisher, Tito Ricordi, became strained in 1914, the Viennese directors and two librettists came to his villa at *Torre del Lago* with a libretto for a two-act version of *La Rondine*. He liked the subject—a sort of Viennese *La Traviata*—and signed the contract for the work which was to be published in Vienna with Ricordi having no part in it.

Before composing any music, World War I began and in May, Italy declared war on Austria. It was no time for an operetta, but even before this, Puccini knew he could not write an operetta; he was no Strauss or Lehar. He wanted to be absolved from the contract, but the Viennese refused. He then turned to his librettist Adami, asking him to turn *La Rondine* into a light and sentimental opera. Meanwhile the war went on and by 1915, Puccini got in touch with one of the Viennese directors and altered the contract to suit himself. He would retain all rights to the opera for Italy, France, England, Russia, South America and Belgium while the Viennese were to retain rights for Germany, Austria, Scandinavia and North America. Ricordi refused to publish it, calling it "bad Lehar," but immediately the rival firm of Sonzogno (publishers for Giordano, Mascagni, etc.) snapped it up and, thus, it remains the only Puccini opera to appear under a non-Ricordi imprint.

La Rondine was finished in spring, 1916, but the war dragged on; so Puccini offered it to one of the few opera houses unaffected by the war: Monte Carlo. There, *La Rondine* had its first performance on March 17 with a stellar cast including Gilda Della Rizza and Tito Schipa. Its initial success did not last long, neither in Italy and Vienna, nor at the Met, where it was performed with Bori in 1928. He was attacked by French, Italian, Viennese and American critics for having had "an afternoon off," an opinion that persisted for decades. However, as with countless other works of that era, a remarkable awakening of interest has been stirred in

Opera or Operetta?

recent years, leading to new recordings and performances around the globe, many of them in the U.S.A. *La Rondine's* rediscovery is long overdue; as is this, its first appearance in Seattle.

My own impressions go back to Roman years when a Rome opera production, immensely effective, convinced me that you cannot measure this fragile work by the standards Puccini set in his other operas. Its history alone attests to the conflict, doubts, and problems inherent in its conception. *La Rondine* is simply a light opera—a sentimental, moving tale of a French courtesan and her lover. It scales no great heights. It is, however, filled with music of truly better calibre than Lehar or Kalman could ever have mustered: numerous catchy waltzes, some well-known arias for soprano, sumptuous duets for the lovers (which rival some of his more famous ones) and a stage brimming with personages from the Parisian demi-monde.

In truth, there are some superfluous moments and these have been judiciously cut (the result of many years of pondering the *La Rondine* problem). My own score is dotted with annotations from live performances or broadcasts in Italy and from one particularly memorable visit with my mentor and colleague, Maestro Gavazzeni of La Scala, who, about ten years ago, played (and sang!) the entire score for me in his Milan apartment, recalling his own relationship with Puccini in days long past. He pointed out the good and bad features of the score. Although it merits careful cutting, there remain the soaring melodies, the arias, duets and waltzes, and the exuberance of the Café Brullier scene with a superb quartet that is, perhaps, the highlight of the score. Most of all, there is the superb orchestration—surely one of his very finest. *La Rondine* was to be followed by those masterworks of orchestration, *Il Trittico* (1918) and his final work, *Turandot* (1926). *La Rondine*, though a fragile swallow, hints of these works in many subtle ways, and it will be a source of pleasure for any Puccini fan to discover in this rarely-performed work new and magical delights from Puccini's pen.

--Robert Feist

PRODUCTION STAFF

Production Stage Manager	Theodore Deacon
Chorus Master	Paul Klemme
Coach - Accompanist	Lisa Bergman, Glenda Williams
Technical Director	Malcolm Brown
Assistant Conductors	Pil-sung Kim, P. R. Stults
Assistant Stage Director	John Hagen
Assistant Set Designer	Jeanne Franz
Assistant Costume Designer	Gay Howard
Assistant Lighting Designer	Nancy A. Hautala
Assistant Stage Manager	Jane Lyda
Properties Master	Alex Danilchik
Master Electrician	Devin A. Rice
Scenic Artist	Candi Fowler
Lighting Board Operator	David O'Donahue
Shop Crew	Jeanne Franz, Claudia Gallagher, Lynn Graves, Ken Harris, Devin A. Rice, Bob Taft, Dan Tompson, Kurt Walls, Alan Weldin, Walter Wojciechowski, Collier Woods
Stage Crew	Members of MUSEN 107, 307 and DRAMA 210
Wardrobe Supervisor	Laurie Hemingway
Wardrobe Crew Head	Lori Elkin
Wardrobe Crew	Lance Rieck
Costume Accessories	Roo Huigen
Costume Construction	Nancy Bayer, Susan Clement, Lori Elkin, Jose Gardner, Laurie Hemingway, Joy Henrickson, Roo Huigen, Meri Wada, Del Waller, James Wauford

PUBLICIST
Shantha Benegal

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sara Nash Gates, Seattle Repertory Theatre
Intiman Theatre, Seattle Opera Association
Soundstage Hairstyling

Orchestra

Violin I

Paul Culbertson
Louanne Bean
Jim Mihara
Shaun McBride
Hiroka Horada
Rebecca Clemens
Jeroen van Tyne
Ruth Whitlock
Steven Daniels
Paul Dowling
Ewan Magle
Gayle Strandberg
Jennifer Adams

Violin II

Leif Pedersen
Aaron Tarzan
Steven Lee
Amy Iverson
Norma Busby
Shelby Eaton
Louise McKnight
Robyn Bowman
Seng-Woon Lim

Viola

Chris Boyd
Linda Chang
Trevor Lutzenhiser

Cello

Joe Bichsel
Mike Center
Bret Smith
Tony Amone
Nancy Torkelson
Lucy Winter

Bass

Ring Warner
Toni Rush
Marcus Tsutakawa

Flute

Twila Schemmer
Erin Kiyuna

Piccolo

Laura Hamm

Oboe

Tad Margelli
Ailene Munger

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