



WE ALL SHARE ROOTS

Giacomo Puccini's *La Bohème*, the passionate, timeless, and indelible story of love among young artists in Paris, can stake its claim as the world's most popular opera and it is now coming to Cape Town again.

LA BOHÈME

in District Six

Ever since its world premiere in 1896 at the Teatro Regio in Turin, *La Bohème* has played at sold-out opera houses around the world. The opera has a marvelous ability to make a powerful first impression and to reveal unsuspected treasures after dozens of hearings. At first glance, *La Bohème* is the definitive depiction of the joys and sorrows of love and loss; on closer inspection, it reveals the deep emotional significance hidden in the trivial things – a bonnet, an old overcoat, a chance meeting with a neighbor – that make up our everyday lives.

Once again, *La Bohème*, is coming to Cape Town but this time around the classic opera comes with a local twist,

staged as *La Bohème* in District Six to mark 50 years since the destruction of District Six. Africa Arts, a collaborative production company, will be staging *La Bohème* in District Six at the Suidoosterfees.

District Six was a vibrant neighbourhood with a diverse population who appreciated the arts and music, which is why it became a logical idea for Africa Arts to combine *La Bohème*'s storyline with the historical legacy of District Six. '*La Bohème* means "The Bohemians" and District Six was well known for its bohemian atmosphere. It was a place where South African artists of all races and religions could mix freely and share ideas, which resulted in a collective culture in opposition to the apartheid regime.'

The original *La Bohème* is set in a Paris garret and is a tale of four young struggling bohemians. The opera revolves around a tragic love story between Rodolfo, a poet, and Mimì, a young seamstress.

La Bohème in District Six is a 90-minute version of the classic opera, re-imagined by the seasoned opera veteran, Angelo Gobbato. His arrangement is accessible while still keeping the essence of the most important operatic moments. The opera will be accompanied by a live orchestra conducted by Alex Fokkens.

La Bohème in District Six will feature five emerging South African singers who portray this 120-year-old story in a South African context. Given Nkosi plays Rodolfo; Amanda Osorio will be Mimì; Lynelle Kenned as Musetta; Marcello will be played by Owen Metsileng and Njabulo Sifiso Mthimkhulu will play Schaunard.

This group of talented artists will be led by the award-winning Tara Notcutt as director. She has received best production accolades for *...miskien* and *The Three Little Pigs* and this will be Notcutt's first full scale opera. 'I am beside myself with excitement at having a chance to direct such a well-loved piece. As my first opera, I feel very lucky to be in the hands of such incredible music and the wonderful team at Africa Arts. *La Bohème* in District Six is about the spirit of beauty, love and art and I hope that audiences allow themselves to be swept up in the romance of Puccini's music.'

La Bohème in District Six will be presented at Suidoosterfees 2016, at the Kyknet Theatre in Artscape Theatre Centre, Cape Town on Thursday 28 April, Friday 29 April and Sunday 1 May. **CF**