

MY BOHÈME WITH FILIBECK

by Dante Ferretti



Marco Filibeck with Dante Ferretti

In my career as a set designer for film, I first designed for opera with *La Traviata*, directed by Liliana Cavani and then, again with her and Gabriella Pescucci for the costumes; I continued with many other titles until Macerata, my hometown, asked me to direct and design a production of *Carmen*. At that time, Pier Luigi Pizzi joined me as costume designer, but from that time on, I have always conceived and designed the shows as an entire project.

I first met Marco Filibeck at La Scala when I designed the sets for *La Traviata*. He embodied the legacy of the great lighting designers at La Scala and I sensed his talent.

We would cross paths for many seasons but it was finally in the summer of 2022 that we collaborated on a *La Bohème* for the Hyogo Performing Arts Center in Japan.

The project had a protracted incubation due to the pandemic; there were several meetings in Italy between ourselves and with the Japanese organisers and technicians, and discussion on the aesthetic and lighting went hand in hand with the development of the idea.

I liked to imagine the 'attic' of the protagonists

of *Bohème* as a barge moored along the Seine, the smallness of the space for the stage action could isolate and emphasise the story of love, and death of Mimi, Rodolfo and their friends. The barge almost floated in space against a changing sky, and Marco used light to best develop the intense emotions that blossomed on that chilly Christmas Eve night.

In Act II, I built an enormous wall that was positioned almost at the proscenium to give a sense of the alleyways of the Latin Quarter being crowded on Christmas Eve; through the glass doors of the Café Momus, the warm light of the interior spilling out onto the street. With a single mechanical upward movement of the wall, one immediately entered the Café, a movement that simulated a cinematic zoom, and here too Marco Filibeck succeeded in heightening the contrast between the outside crowd filling the street lit by streetlamps and the warmth, smoke and Christmas lights of the interior.

Act III is typically a rather bleak act, we are at the Barrière on the outskirts of Paris, a few passers-by and small groups enter the town while Rodolfo, Marcello and Musetta interact inside the inn. From the windows we glimpse patrons bathed in the glow of warm light. Here, too, Filibeck succeeded in using light to narrate the development of the protagonists' feelings through an imposing sky that acted as a pivotal backdrop to the stage action, shifting from a frosty dawn to the clearing of the sky on a cold February day, emphasising the transition from the anguish over Mimi's illness to the promise of the two young people to separate in the spring to the decisive quartet of the four lovers in the final part.

The last act takes place, of course, on the barge where we first met the main characters of the story, but everything has changed; it is almost summer, the bright and beautiful sky devised by Filibeck forms the backdrop to the tragedy. The spectacle that I envisioned, majestic and cinematic, was matched by Filibeck's intuitive and painterly skills and his love of contrasts. During the rehearsals, with Marco a wonderful relationship of creative collaboration was born: a rare syntony, a series of ideas and exchanges, a journey within images, and pointers that each one gave to the other that created the perfect synthesis of an opera that was at once romantic and real.

Marco Filibeck, a creator of luminous spaces that have enhanced and made my sets resonate.

A rare mutual trust and partnership created between two fellow journeymen was cemented one day by the discovery of the long-held friendship that bound me to the Roman painter Gilberto Filibeck, Marco's father, during my time at the Academy and the early years. There could not have been a better coincidence.



LA BOHÈME. Music by Giacomo Puccini. Libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa. Conductor: Yutaka Sado. Direction: Dante Ferretti. Set designers: Dante Ferretti and Francesca Lo Schiavo. Costume designer: Dante Ferretti. Lighting designer: Marco Filibeck. Hyogo Performing Arts Center, 2022.

ACT II



In Act II, a large wall appeared that was meant to give the idea of the alleys of the Latin Quarter crowded on the eve of the evening; through the glass doors of the Momus Café, the warm light from inside spilling out onto the street. With a single technical upward movement of the wall, one immediately entered the Café, a movement that simulated a cinematic zoom.

ACT III



Act III is traditionally a rather bleak act, we are at the Barrière on the outskirts of Paris, snow falls and few passers-by enter the town while Rodolfo, Marcello and Musetta interact inside the inn. Act IV takes place again on the barge, but everything has changed, it is almost summer, a clear, pastel-coloured sky is the backdrop to the tragedy.



ACT IV

