

## Opera review update: Canadian Opera Company raises curtain on spectacular alternate cast for *La Bohème*

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Tenor Michael Fabiano sings Rodolfo on three more dates: October 19, 27 & 30

There was absolutely nothing wrong with the original cast in the Canadian Opera Company's season-opening production of Giacomo Puccini's popular *La Bohème*. But the alternate cast introduced at the Four Seasons Centre on Wednesday night was nothing short of spectacular.

Out of the seven remaining shows, there are three magic dates left — October 19, 27, & 30 — in which to catch fabulous 29-year-old American tenor Michael Fabiano, who has been cast as Rodolfo. His Mimi is Canadian soprano Joyce El-Khoury, who not only sings and acts beautifully, but also brings real stage chemistry to play in her relationship with Rodolfo.

There's much shuffling of other cast members, fine singers all, that manages to maintain the original ensemble's youthful energy and appeal. The other notable casting change on these three dates is for Musetta, the other significant female cast member.

At Wednesday's performance, Canadian soprano Simone Osborne slipped into El-Khoury's shoes, singing strongly and gamely acting up a storm, but lacking the seductive charisma El-Khoury brought to the role on opening night.

Seeing an opera twice with two different casts was a great way of experiencing El-Khoury's dramatic breadth, playing the outsize Musetta one night, and shrinking down to a tubercular Mimi the next. It's no easy feat — yet El-Khoury somehow manages to be equally convincing in both roles.

With great singers in place, this opera is also held aloft by its rich score, passionately realised on stage as well as in the orchestra pit — and, on Wednesday night, sung with a cast that included a tenor that operatic dreams are made of.

Hearing Michael Fabiano's voice ring through the interior of R. Fraser Elliott Hall is alone worth the price of admission.

You'll find my full original review [here](#) — and all production and ticket details [here](#).