

I. Introduction to Verismo

- Definition: Derives from "vero" (true) or "verità" (truth); akin to realism.
- Emergence: Italian literary movement (1875-early 1900s).
- Roots: Inspired by French realist literature, with key practitioners like Flaubert and Zola.
- Italian Exponent: Giovanni Verga, a pivotal figure in Verismo.

II. Shift from Romanticism to Verismo

- Overview: 19th-century operas centered on aristocratic, mythical themes.
- Transformation: Composers embrace realism in the 1890s, rejecting Romantic and mythical subjects.
- Verismo Traits: Gritty plots, lower-class characters, and intense emotions.

III. Musical Realism in Verismo

- Continuous Scores: Departure from divided "numbers," a continuous flow of music.
- Purposeful Melodies: Each note serves to convey scenery, action, or character emotions.
- Wagner's Influence: Verismo composers draw from Wagner's methods, evident in opera fragments.

IV. Pietro Mascagni and "Cavalleria Rusticana" (1890)

- Catalyst: Mascagni's pioneering work in Verismo.
- Innovative Elements: One-act opera, symphonic interlude, and prominent choral group.
- Everyday Characters: Focus on ordinary people in a small Sicilian town.

V. Plot Overview: "Cavalleria Rusticana"

- Turiddu's Return: Turiddu discovers Lola's marriage and seeks revenge.
- Adultery and Revenge: Turiddu's affair with Lola sparks a cycle of jealousy and revenge.
- Tragic Duel: The opera climaxes in a deadly duel, concluding with Turiddu's demise.

VI. Ruggero Leoncavallo's "Pagliacci" (1892)

- Background: A tragic tale of love, jealousy, and murder among touring clowns.
- Realism in Setting: Inspired by a real incident, unfolds in two acts and a prologue.
- Small Theatrical Company: Canio, Nedda, and Silvio's complex relationships.
- Reality vs. Performance: Act 2 mirrors Canio's real-life jealousy, leading to a shocking climax.
- The End: Canio's chilling proclamation, "La commedia è finita!" (The comedy has ended).

VIII. Giacomo Puccini and the Culmination of Verismo

- Artistic Maturity: Puccini's significant contributions to Verismo around the 1900s.
- Iconic Operas: "La Bohème," "Tosca," and "Madama Butterfly" are epitomes of Verismo.
- Realism in Storytelling: Puccini's ability to depict scenes authentically, without artificiality.

IX. Plot Overview: "La Bohème"

- Setting: Bohemian Paris around 1830.
- Tragic Love Story: Rodolfo and Mimi, penniless but hopeful.
- Iconic Arias: "Che gelida manina" and "Si, mi chiamano Mimi" showcase love's budding.