

La Vie Bohème EVENT IDENTITY

This performing arts center hosts an annual gala that celebrates and connects to its current season as they fundraise for their arts and education programs. Based on the Baz Luhrmann film and set among the bohemians of Belle Époque Paris, the touring Broadway production, *Moulin Rouge! the Musical*, was a highlight of the 2024 season and the perfect base to imagine an evening full of drama and delights.

Initial research into La Belle Époque revealed a relatively peaceful time in French and European history between the end of the Franco-Prussian War (1871) and the outbreak of WWI (1914). Nonchalance, light-heartedness, and 'joie de vivre' are the words that could best sum-up this unique period in the history of France — and that were the defining characteristics of our event identity. In this era the arts in Paris flourished, and numerous masterpieces of literature, music, theatre, and visual art gained extensive recognition. The artists gave rise to the popularity of the concept of "la vie bohème" (the bohemian life), which is the milieu of *Moulin Rouge!* and became the name of the 2024 gala event. Paris held multiple expositions during this time that introduced technological, scientific, and cultural innovations to the world. Social barriers collapsed and the industrial revolution gave hope of a better life for all, in a rich cultural profusion of fun and frivolity. The middle-class mixed with the riff-raff; popular culture was enhanced by a happy disorder of joy and vitality.

Bits and pieces from the era were taken for our event identity system and blended with modern typefaces and technology. From the Art Nouveau style of the time and its curvilinear, nature-inspired forms, various bracketing and hierarchical devices were built. The primary typeface, *Metropolitaines*, is taken directly from Hector Guimard's Paris Metro stations. The supporting tiled typeface mimics the mosaic tiling within the highly decorative Metro station interiors.

The invitation structure is an historical form called a "tunnel" book. The overall effect is an illusion of depth and perspective — tunnel books were handy in the time before access to photography or film to help explain how a space looked in three dimensions. The form dates back to the mid-18th century and was originally called a "peep-show", which is also a humorous connection to the *Moulin Rouge!* Many tunnel books were sold as souvenirs at the Paris Exposition of 1889 to commemorate the Eiffel Tower and other buildings created for the world fair. Our invitation tunnel book has a background lithograph of the 1900 Exposition grounds, highlighting the latest technological development, the hot air balloon. Images of this same exposition show children riding ostriches and various other wonders of the natural world. Dancers at the *Moulin Rouge* also used ostrich feathers in their costumes and hair adornments.

The gala identity applied across a multitude of pieces — from large, animated digital banners to table numbers to the accompanying invitation — was inspired by this joyful, sometimes outrageous, fantastical atmosphere of *La Vie Bohème!*





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