

## Opera

# Less money, fewer productions

By **Pierre Ruhe**  
For the AJC

Opera is the most glamorous, difficult-to-produce and expensive art form, and historically has been the most susceptible to turbulence in an economy.

The recession has forced the Atlanta Opera to cut a quarter of its season, to three productions for the 2010-11 season. Ticket sales and fundraising at the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre have taken a significant hit. Overall, the budget has dropped by slightly more than 20 percent.

Its only show this fall will be Puccini's "La Bohème," the weepy tale of tubercular love set among the artists and underclasses of bohemian Paris. The opera's bullet-proof popularity sometimes earns it undeserved scorn from hardened opera fans, with their memories of golden-age "Bohèmes" and a shelf full of starry recordings.

Yet on stage, Puccini's classic often plays best when the singers are fresh in voice and youthful in demeanor. Italian



Italian soprano Grazia Doronzio will make her Atlanta Opera debut as Mimi in "La Bohème."

Columbia Artists Management

soprano Grazia Doronzio, as Mimi, and tenor Bryan Hymel, as her paramour Rodolfo, are recent graduates of prestigious opera training programs and are both making their company debuts. Another prizewinner, soprano Jan Cornelius, gets the opera's biggest hit, Musetta's Waltz.

"La Bohème." Atlanta Opera. 8 p.m. Oct. 2 and 8; 7:30 p.m. Oct. 5; and 3 p.m. Oct. 10. Single tickets \$25-\$125. Season tickets \$75-\$459. Cobb Energy Performing Arts Cen-

tre, 2800 Cobb Galleria Parkway. 404-881-8885, [www.atlantaopera.org](http://www.atlantaopera.org)

Where Atlanta Opera has always played it safe, artistically speaking, the community troupe Capitol City Opera finds a niche in English-language productions, offbeat repertoire and strong theatrical values. Living on a shoestring, Cap City Opera uses talented local singers and rarely mis-

steps. The fall production will be "Tartuffe," based on Molière's classical 1660s comedy turned into an opera in 1980 by American composer and librettist Kirke Mechem.

Stage director Michael Nutter promises big hair (think Marie Antoinette to the max) and outlandish action. The religious hypocrite of the story's title cons his way into a wealthy Parisian house-

hold. The villain charms the gullible owner while seducing his wife and wreaking havoc with the family – till he gains control of the house itself and attempts to kick everyone out. It's the sort of subtly over-the-top spectacle at which Cap City excels.

"Tartuffe." Capitol City Opera. 8 p.m. Sept. 10 and 11 and 3 p.m. Sept. 12. \$25 adults, \$20 seniors, students. Oglethorpe University's Conant Center for the Performing Arts, 4484 Peachtree Road N.E., 678-301-8013, [www.cccityopera.org](http://www.cccityopera.org).

Pierre Ruhe is classical music critic of [www.ArtsCriticATL.com](http://www.ArtsCriticATL.com)