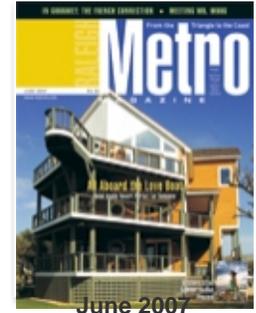




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## Artist-at-Large

Visions of Tomorrow  
May 2007

### Opera Company Triumph

By Louis St. Lewis

The life of an artist is not always a rosy path, and nothing shows off the stereotype of the starving artist more elegantly than Puccini's amazing opera La Bohème, recently performed by our very own Opera Company of North Carolina ([www.operanc.com](http://www.operanc.com)). Like all great operas, there is lots of loving, lots of living, lots of drinking and lots of dying, all the little things that make life interesting.

Under the baton of the talented Francesco Maria Colombo (who flew in from Milan for the production), the singers were put through their paces and delighted the sold-out house at Raleigh's elegant Memorial Auditorium for both performances. The powerful voice of Lisa Daltirus soared in song and left a good portion of the audience in tears.

One special treat that evening was a pre-performance aria by the very, very young and very, very talented

Madeline Edwards, whose haunting and powerful voice heralds a spectacular career in her future. This was the young lady's very first performance with a live orchestra, and she nailed it on the first try ... definitely a star in the making.

Opera magnifies everything about life. The loving is sweeter, the partings more tortuous and everyday dramas are turned into great epics of emotion. Congratulations to the company for 10 years of providing top-notch performances for the people of the Triangle. My friend and Opera NC founder Robert Galbraith is hanging up his hat as artistic director for a much-needed break after this last performance. Under his watch, the company has grown from a tender seedling to a full-grown oak capable of weathering any storm. Word has it that after a much-needed break, Galbraith will be lending his monumental talents to other organizations who have been pestering him for a long, long time. Best Wishes.

In Durham, three talented not-so-starving artists are currently showing at the Durham Art Guild ([www.durhamartguild.org](http://www.durhamartguild.org)) and deserve special attention. Katherine A. Armacost has produced a body of beautiful abstract work on canvas, as well as a series on cigar boxes that reminds me of that old saying, "still waters run deep." Armacost's work is amazingly subtle, yet the color choices, balance and execution are highly sophisticated and possess a dark elegance and a high sheen of intellect.

Danielle Baker's works range from a wall of figure studies — wittily hung floor to ceiling like works in a 19th century salon — to her colorful and engaging abstracts featuring luminous orbs and curves that evoke the feminine spirit and the egg or womb. The third artist, Madelyn Smoak, has long been a favorite of mine, and her delicate and decadent crowns, scepters, jewelry and assorted kinky metal work will give anyone who sees them something to talk about. I am a monarchist by nature and have always been seduced by her crowns. Here a diadem for an oriental potentate, there a coronet for a wild child, each one special, engaging and unique.

Just around the corner in Durham, the talented Harrison Haynes' recent exhibit *Going Home Is Such a Lonely Ride* really made for a beautiful installation at Branch Gallery ([www.branchgallery.com](http://www.branchgallery.com)). The work had the crispness, the ambition and the obvious urban style too rarely seen in galleries here in the Triangle. Branch Gallery is making a name for itself not only here, but also around the world. While many galleries in the area are content to open the doors and be satisfied being more of a "boutique" than a gallery, the savvy folks at Branch put their



enthusiasm to work and stake out claims at prestigious international art fairs around the world. This month, the gallery has a booth at Barcelona's SWAB event ([www.swab.es](http://www.swab.es)), curated by invitation only and featuring dozens of the best young contemporary galleries in the world.

Triangle artists, ask YOUR gallery when was the last time they rented a booth at an international art fair and see what the answer is. The work they represent is edgy, intelligent and of the moment. If they can make a commitment to supporting art like that here in the Triangle, perhaps there is hope for artists here after all.