

# OPERA NEWS

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Sound Bites spotlights up-and-coming singers and conductors in the world of opera.

## Sound Bites: Rachele Gilmore

by ADAM WASSERMAN



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Dario Acosta 2010

**Rachele Gilmore**'s unexpected Met debut as Olympia over last year's Christmas holiday was notable for just how notable it actually was. With just two-hours' notice, the soprano from Atlanta made *Hoffmann's* doll song entirely her own, enacting the automaton in Bart Sher's production with a zany charm and wowing the audience by ornamenting the second couplet of her aria with runs that culminated in stratospheric Gs and an A-flat above high C.

"I think there are two types of coloraturas," says Gilmore. "There are those that come out of the womb singing high notes — they just know how to do it. Then there are the coloraturas that have to really work at it and figure out exactly what they're doing. I'm definitely the latter — it's been a long, slow path for me." Gilmore's route to the stage, she says, has had a few pit-stops along the way: she was first drawn to opera back in high school by way of an interest in art song, and, after earning her undergraduate degree from Indiana University, she spent "a good three years just kind of floating around, trying to figure out what to do with myself." A year of postgraduate work at Boston University was followed by a stint in Florida Grand Opera's young-artist program. Gilmore then moved to New York, where she "almost gave up, because I knew that vocally I wasn't where I needed to be at that point, and I wasn't sure how to get there." She credits her teacher, Michael Paul, with turning her voice around "after three years of taking three or four voice lessons a week."

The hard work appears to have paid off: Gilmore possesses a strikingly lovely instrument that retains its fresh, distinctly feminine timbre from her strong middle voice all the way to its upper limits. And her technique is now solid enough to accommodate a variety of styles. Last summer she sang Alice in Geneva performances of Unsuik Chin's vertiginous *Alice in Wonderland*, and in February she'll travel to Munich to sing the Fire and the Nightingale in performances of *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* under Kent Nagano's baton. Stateside engagements this season, which include *Puritani's* Elvira in Knoxville (April) and her first Gilda in Detroit in May, hew closer to the bel canto rep that she considers her home base.

Gilmore's eye is also firmly fixed on another bel canto gem: Marie in *La Fille du Régiment* is the role she's "been waiting to do," having been scheduled to sing it last year with Connecticut Opera before the company went belly-up. "There is just something about the character and my personality that really mesh," she says. "She's a comedienne, but yet she's really heartfelt." Gilmore isn't even deterred by the possibility of being upstaged by the opera's tenor and his nine high Cs, saying, "You can't be the star every night."

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