



THEATER **COMEDY  
& DANCE**

Verdi's *Traviata*, revisited

An awareness of the female body characterizes Italian troupe Artemis Danza's thoughtful version.

By Jena Cutie



**I**n *Traviata*, the consequences of paternalism loom large for Violetta, a Parisian courtesan with tuberculosis. She's just recovered her health enough to throw a party, where she meets a stranger, Alfredo, who charms her into moving to the countryside with him. But Violetta's condition flares up again as Alfredo's scandalized father interferes, and through a series of misunderstandings, father and son separately mortify Violetta so violently that she dies.

**Я** *Traviata*  
Thu 11/14, 8 PM  
Univ. of Chicago Logan  
Center for the Arts  
915 W. 60th  
773-702-2787  
[arts.uchicago.edu](http://arts.uchicago.edu)  
\$15

Verdi's opera directs our sympathies away from hectoring men and dignifies Violetta's supposed loose morals as the complex product of misogyny and oppression, but choreographer Monica Casadei, of the Italian troupe Artemis Danza, takes those ideas to their outer limit. In her version, an awareness of the female body registers as a series of eerie effects: she revises the libretto in the first scene to create an echoing siren song for eight dancers whose frilly white dresses suggest the wilting flower Alfredo and Violetta exchange at the party; later, as Violetta daydreams about Alfredo, she's magnified into eight dancers dressed in red, surging and spasming in a staggered line dance that simulates the blurred vision of her fever. Alfredo gets his share of neurotic depth too. In an aria in which he argues with his father, he sings an eight-bar section that, in traditional stagings, culminates with his father striking him at the highest note; here he smarts under eight blows from an invisible hand.