



# CARMEN

## Study Guide 2009/10 Season

**"I consider it a masterpiece in the fullest sense of the word: one of those rare compositions which seems to reflect most strongly in itself the musical tendencies of a whole generation."**

**- Tchaikovsky on *Carmen***

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## WELCOME TO MANITOBA OPERA!

We're very pleased that you have decided to bring your students to *Carmen*. We appreciate both your interest in this wonderful art form and your willingness to expose students to opera and thank you for that.

This Study Guide has been created to assist you in preparing your students for their visit to the opera. It is our hope that you will be able to add this to your existing curriculum in order to expand your students' understanding of opera, literature, history, and the fine arts. Materials in the Study Guide may be copied and distributed to students.

Some students may wish to go over the information at home if there is insufficient time to discuss in class. You can make the opera experience more meaningful and enjoyable by sharing with them knowledge and background on opera and *Carmen* before they attend Student Night.

### Singing in Full Voice at the Dress Rehearsal (Student Night)

Please Note: The Dress Rehearsal is the last opportunity the singers will have on stage to work with the orchestra before Opening Night. Since vocal demands are so great on opera singers, some singers choose not to sing in full voice during the Dress Rehearsal in order to avoid unnecessary strain.

*Carmen* Study Guide compiled by Manitoba Opera from sources including Bellevue University, *The Billboard Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Opera*, *The Canadian Opera Company*, *Encyclopedia of Manitoba*, *Fort Worth Opera 2000 Study Guide*, *La Scena* Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Manitoba Archives, Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, *Opera Columbus Study Guide*, *Opera News*, *Operas Every Child Should Know*, *Opéra Lyra*, *Ottawa Study Guide*, *Opera Today*, *Orchestra London Study Guide*, *San Diego Opera Study Guide*, *San Francisco Opera Guild Study Guide*, *schubincave.com*, *A Season of Opera*, *Skeletons from the Opera Closet*, *Tulsa Opera Study Guide*, *University of Texas*, *Rimrock Study Guide*, *Virginia Opera Study Guide*, *Winnipeg Free Press*, Wikipedia, [www.musicwithease.com](http://www.musicwithease.com), and [www.spain-info.com](http://www.spain-info.com).

### About Manitoba Opera

Founded in 1969 by a passionate group of Winnipeg Opera lovers, Manitoba Opera is Manitoba's only full time professional opera company. The company attracts great international artists, highlights the best local talent and is supported by Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra under the direction of internationally renowned conductors. Manitoba Opera celebrated its 35th Season in 2007/08 by presenting the world premiere of an opera commissioned by the company, *Transit of Venus*.

### The Principals

The people who have the major roles in an opera are called the principals and are singers who work professionally. Principals usually arrive about three weeks before the first performance. It is generally expected that they arrive with all of their music learned and memorized and have a good sense of their character in the opera. In rehearsal each day, they work with the director who helps them block each of the scenes. The director works with the principals on understanding their characters so that they are convincing in their acting, as well as their singing. For the first

two weeks they are accompanied by a rehearsal pianist. A week before the show opens they move into the Concert Hall and begin work rehearsing on stage with the orchestra in the pit.

### **The Chorus**



The Manitoba Opera Chorus, under the direction of Chorus Master, Tadeusz Biernacki, is hailed for their excellent singing and acting abilities. The chorus boasts a core of skilled singers who give generously of their time and talents. Some are voice majors at university, a few are singing teachers but many work in jobs that aren't music related. By the time you visit the Centennial Concert Hall to see *Carmen*, the chorus of Manitoba Opera will have been busy at work for several months.

### **The Staff**

**Marla Aronovitch**, Company Manager  
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## A SHORT OVERVIEW OF OPERA

An opera, like a play, is a dramatic form of theatre that includes scenery, props, and costumes. In opera, however, the actors are trained singers who sing their lines instead of speaking them. An orchestra accompanies the singers. A conductor coordinates both the singers on stage and the musicians in the orchestra pit.

Opera consists of many dimensions: the human voice, orchestral music, the visual arts (scenery, costumes and special effects), drama (tragedy or comedy), and occasionally dance. The melding of these elements creates one incredible theatrical experience.

Opera has its roots in Greek drama and originated in Florence, Italy, in the late 1500's, with a small group of men who were members of a Camerata (Italian for society). The intellectuals, poets and musicians of the Camerata decided they wanted words to be a featured aspect of music. They used ancient Greek drama as their inspiration, including the use of a chorus to comment on the action.

The Camerata laid down three principles for their new art form:

- The text must be understood; the accompaniment must be very simple and should not distract from the words.
- The words must be sung with correct and natural declamation, as if they were spoken, and must avoid the rhythms of songs.
- The melody must interpret the feeling of the text.

The first significant composer to fully develop the ideas of the Camerata was Jacopo Peri (1561-1633), whose opera *Dafne*, based on a Greek myth, was performed in 1594 and is regarded as the first opera.

Operas are divided into scenes and acts that contain different types of vocal pieces for one or many singers. An aria is a vocal solo that usually focuses on a character's emotions rather than actions. A recitative is sung dialogue or speech that occurs between arias and ensembles. It helps to further the action of the story and shape the relationships between the characters.

The story of the opera is written as a libretto, a text that is set to music. Composers write the score or the music for the opera. Sometimes the composer will also write the text of the opera, but most often they work with a librettist. In the past, the libretto was also bound and sold to the audience. Today, the audience can easily follow the plot with the use of surtitles - the English translation of the libretto, which are projected onto a screen above the stage.

There are several differences between opera and musicals like *Phantom of the Opera*. One significant difference is the 'partnership' found between the music and the drama in an opera. While musicals use songs to help tell a story, in an opera, the music contributes to the drama, it does not only accompany it.

The musical style is another important difference between the two art forms; opera is usually classical and complex, while musicals feature pop songs and sometimes rock and roll. Also, singers in musicals have microphones hidden in their costumes or wigs to amplify their voices. The voices of opera singers are so strong no amplification is needed, even in a large venue. Furthermore, operas are almost completely sung while the use of spoken words are more common to musicals. There are some operas with spoken words and these are called singspiels (German) and opera-comique (French). Examples are Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and Bizet's *Carmen*, respectively.

## PRODUCTION INFORMATION

# CARMEN

An Opera in Four Acts

April 17, 20, 23, 2010

(Dress Rehearsal / Student Night: April 15)

Centennial Concert Hall

Music by Georges Bizet

Libretto by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy

Based on the story by the Prosper Mérimée

Premiere Performance: Opéra Comique, Paris, March 3, 1875

APPROXIMATELY 3 HOURS, 20 MINUTES WITH TWO 20-MINUTE INTERMISSIONS

Sung in French (with French dialogue) with projected English translations

### PRINCIPAL CAST

(In Order of Vocal Appearance)

MORALES, a soldier	Benjamin Covey	Baritone
MICAËLA, a country girl	Monica Huisman	Soprano
DON JOSÉ, a corporal	David Pomeroy	Tenor
ZUNIGA, a lieutenant	Alain Coulombe	Bass
CARMEN, a gypsy	Kirsten Chávez	Mezzo
FRASQUITA, a gypsy	Arianna Sovernigo	Soprano
MERCEDES, a gypsy	Catherine Daniel	Mezzo
ESCAMILLO, a toreador	Luis Ledesma	Baritone
DANCAIRO, a smuggler	Benjamin Covey	Baritone
REMENDADO, smuggler	Keith Klassen	Tenor

### Also Appearing

Lillas Pastia, an innkeeper	Raymond Sokalski	Spoken
A Guide	Raymond Sokalski	Spoken

### with

Manitoba Opera Chorus  
Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra

Conductor	Tyrone Paterson
Director	Rob Herriot
Sets and Props provided by	Austin Lyric Opera (Austin, Texas)
Costumes provided by	Malabar Ltd. (Toronto)
Assistant Director/Choreographer	Brenda Gorlick
Fight Director	Jacqueline Loewen
Lighting Designer	Bill Williams
Stage Manager	Paul Skirzyk
Chorus Master	Tadeusz Biernacki
Children's Chorus Director	Carolyn Boyes

For more information on the artists,  
go to [www.manitobaopera.mb.ca](http://www.manitobaopera.mb.ca) and click on *Carmen*

# NEW



## OPERA IN A TRUNK - *CARMEN* Enhance Your Students' Opera Experience

Manitoba Opera is pleased to unveil a new initiative to enhance your students' opera-going experience and general appreciation for the art form.

Opera in a Trunk was developed as a teaching aid for use in a classroom setting to provide a more hands-on learning experience for students. This particular case is designed around the Manitoba Opera April 2010 production of *Carmen*.

The trunks include items such as wardrobe pieces, props, photos, books, CDs, DVDs, information related to the opera and other background information, as well as the study guide. The study guide is provided by Manitoba Opera free of charge as an educational aid to assist educators in maximizing their students' preparation for attendance at the **Student Night at the Opera** dress rehearsal performance.

**Five *Carmen* trunks are available to rent** at any time of the year.

Bookings are processed on a first come, first served basis.\*

\*In March and April, schools who have purchased tickets to the *Carmen* Student Night will receive priority during trunk scheduling.

### WINNIPEG SCHOOLS:

One-week rentals available.

Trunks are sent to your school by Manitoba Opera via courier Monday morning (you will receive the trunk by noon at the latest) and **must be ready to be returned to Manitoba Opera by noon on Friday** of the same week.

Manitoba Opera will arrange for the courier both ways.

Cost: \$50 per week (includes couriers and GST), plus a refundable \$50 security deposit. TOTAL: \$100

### RURAL AND NORTHERN SCHOOLS:

Rental periods and method of transportation will vary depending on the location of your school.

Cost: \$50 per week, plus a refundable \$50 security deposit.\* TOTAL: \$100

\*There will also be an additional transportation fee, which will vary from school to school, and will be determined in consultation with each school.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Sally Sweatman, Education & Outreach Coordinator  
(204) 942-7470 [ssweatman@manitobaopera.mb.ca](mailto:ssweatman@manitobaopera.mb.ca)  
(9am – 4pm, Monday – Wednesday)

**SEE ONLINE BOOKING REQUEST FORM FOR MORE INFORMATION & TO BOOK**

[www.manitobaopera.mb.ca](http://www.manitobaopera.mb.ca)





## THE "SKINNY" ON *CARMEN* STUDENT NIGHT AT THE OPERA

### **CARMEN** Thursday, April 15, 2010, 7:30 pm

Centennial Concert Hall, Winnipeg

Music by Georges Bizet  
Libretto by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy

**APPROXIMATELY 3 HOURS, 20 MINUTES WITH TWO 20-MINUTE INTERMISSIONS**  
Sung in French (with French dialogue) with projected English translations

**THE "SKINNY" ON CARMEN: WHY YOUR STUDENTS SHOULD ATTEND**  
**Still Reigns as One of the World's Most Popular Operas**  
**Features Opera's Favourite Bad Girl in Bizet's Masterwork & Sure to be a Highlight of the Season**

**THE MUSIC:** Bizet's music pulsates with the spirit of Spain & features many opera favourites:

- Carmen's Habanera,  
"L'amour est un oiseau rebelle"
- Escamillo's Toreador Song
- Don José's Flower Song,  
"La fleur que tu m'avais jeté"
- Micaëla's aria

**THE STORY:** A sensational story filled with seduction, jealousy, & deceit  
This passionate, tragic tale features one of opera's most intriguing characters, the Gypsy cigarette girl who spurns her lover, soldier Don José, for a celebrated matador. Carmen's fate is sealed when José, wracked with jealousy, realizes the temptress will never be his.

#### **THE ARTISTS:**

- **Kirsten Chávez** is "...the Carmen of a lifetime...dark, generous mezzo, earthy eroticism, volcanic spontaneity, and smoldering charisma, Chávez has it all..."  
— *Opernhaus Graz*
- As Escamillo, **Luis Ledesma's** "mahogany toned voice, excellent Italian and riveting stage presence anchored every scene he was in..." — *Kansas City Star*
- **David Pomeroy's** "Don José sparked an electricity which totally engrossed the audience..." — *Irish Examiner*

#### **THE BEST DEAL IN TOWN!**

- Manitoba Opera offers one of the lowest student prices in the country.

## INTRODUCING *CARMEN*



*Carmen* is the opera which has ensured Bizet's lasting fame but which, somewhat uniquely, was partly fashioned by pressures from the directorate of the commissioning theatre, the Opéra-Comique. The revenue from this theatre was largely dependent on attracting the bourgeoisie, providing an evening out for chaperoned couples with an eye on marriage. Thus a setting including a cigar factory, a murder outside a bullring and a tavern habituated by gypsies somewhat contravened the norm. Bowing to administrative pressure to soften the tone, the character of Micaëla, the good Catholic girl, was introduced to counterbalance the free-living Carmen and her compatriots.

The opera was ahead of its time in its introduction of real popular music: the *Habanera* in Act I where Carmen advocates free love was taken from a book of Spanish-language cabaret songs and the *Chanson Bohème* and the *Seguidilla*, among other movements, employ Spanish modes and dance rhythms. The theme which introduces Carmen and accompanies the fateful card-scene and her death imitates a gypsy scale.

Originally conforming to the Opéra-Comique norm of a mix of spoken dialogue and operatic numbers, it was for a long time preferred in its posthumous adaptation where the dialogue was replaced by recitatives.

More recently, productions prefer its richer version with the details of the full dialogue retained.

## SYNOPSIS OF *CARMEN*

Composed by Georges Bizet

Libretto by Henri Heilhac and Ludovic Halévy

Based on the story of the same name by the French novelist, Prosper Mérimée

Place: In and near Seville

Time: About 1820

First Performance: Opera-Comique, Paris, March 3, 1875

Original Language: French



### ACT I.

In a public square in front of a tobacco factory, soldiers watch the passers-by. Among them is Micaëla, a peasant girl, who is looking for an officer named Don José. Moralès, the corporal, tells her that he will arrive soon with the changing of the guard. The soldiers try to flirt with Micaëla, but she runs away. The relief guard approaches, headed by Lieutenant Zuniga, and José learns from Moralès that a girl has been looking for him. When the factory bell rings, the men of Seville gather to watch the female workers return from their lunch break—especially their favorite, the gypsy Carmen. She tells her admirers that love

obeys no rules ("L'amour est un oiseau rebelle"). Only one man pays no attention to her: Don José. Coquettishly, Carmen throws a flower at him, and the girls go back into the factory. José picks up the flower. Micaëla returns, bringing a letter—and a kiss—from José's mother (Duet: "Parle-moi de ma mère"). When he starts to read the letter, Micaëla leaves him alone. He is about to throw away the flower when a fight erupts inside the factory

between Carmen and another girl. Zuniga sends José to retrieve the gypsy. Carmen refuses to answer Zuniga's questions, and José is ordered to take her to prison. Left alone with him, she seduces him with visions of a rendezvous at Lillas Pastia's tavern ("Près des remparts de Séville"). Mesmerized, José agrees to let her escape. As they leave for prison, Carmen slips away and Don José is arrested.

## ACT II.

Carmen and her friends Frasquita and Mercédès entertain the guests at Lillas Pastia's tavern ("Les tringles des sistres tintaient"). Zuniga tells Carmen that José has just been released from prison. The bullfighter Escamillo enters and boasts about the pleasures of his profession, in particular those relating to the ladies ("Votre toast, je peux vous le rendre"). He flirts with Carmen, but she coyly puts him off. When the tavern guests leave with Escamillo, the smugglers Dancaïre and Remendado explain their latest schemes to the women (Quintet: "Nousavons en tête une affaire"). Frasquita and Mercédès are willing to help, but Carmen refuses to join them because she is in love. José is heard singing in the distance, and the smugglers withdraw. Carmen arouses José's jealousy by mentioning that she has been dancing with Zuniga. He declares his love, but when bugles are heard, he says he must return to the barracks. Carmen mocks him, claiming that he doesn't love her. To prove her wrong, he shows her the flower she threw at him and confesses how its fading scent sustained his love during the weeks in prison ("La fleur que tu m'avais jetée"). She is unimpressed: if he really loved her, he would desert the army and join her in a life of freedom in the mountains. José refuses, and Carmen tells him to leave. Zuniga bursts in, and in a jealous rage José draws his sword. The smugglers return and disarm Zuniga. José now has no choice but to desert and join them.



## ACT III.

The smugglers take a rest at their mountain hideaway. Carmen and José quarrel. She admits that her love is fading and advises him to return to live with his mother. When the women turn cards to tell their fortunes, Frasquita and Mercédès foresee love and fortune for themselves, but Carmen's cards spell death—for her and for José ("En vain pour éviter les réponses amères"). As the smugglers set off for the city, a frightened Micaëla appears ("Je dis que rien ne m'épouvante"). A shot rings out, and she hides. José has fired at an intruder, who turns out to be Escamillo. He tells José that he has come to find Carmen and mentions her former lover, a soldier who deserted to be with her. José identifies himself, and the two men fight. The returning smugglers separate them, and Escamillo invites everyone, Carmen in particular, to his next bullfight in Seville. Escamillo leaves and Micaëla emerges. She begs José to return home. He agrees only when he learns that his mother is dying. Assuring Carmen that they will meet again, he leaves with Micaëla.

## ACT IV.



The crowd cheers the bullfighters as they enter the arena. Carmen arrives on Escamillo's arm, and Frasquita and Mercédès warn her that José is present in the crowd. She tells them that she is not afraid and waits while a crowd enters the arena. José appears and begs Carmen to forget the past and start a new life with him, but she calmly tells him that their affair is over (Duet: "C'est toi!—C'est moi!") and moves towards the entrance. When José tries to block her way, she finally loses her temper and throws the ring that José gave her at his feet. José stabs her to death and surrenders to the gathering crowd.

# ABOUT THE COMPOSER

## Biography : Georges Bizet (1838 - 1875)



### ***Vital Stats***

**Born:** October 25, 1838, Paris

**Died:** June 3, 1875, Paris

**Nationality:** French

**Genre:** Romantic

**Performed as:** Pianist

Georges Bizet was born in Paris into a musical family: his father was an amateur singer and his mother was sister to **François Delsarte**, a renowned vocal teacher. His parents fostered his interest in music, and when he had absorbed everything they could teach him, they enrolled him at the Paris Conservatory. Bizet was barely ten years old, the minimum age required for entry into the conservatory. There he studied composition with **Fromental Halévy**, whose daughter **Geneviève** he later married. He also developed into a virtuoso pianist, noted for his technical proficiency and full-score reading (playing the piano from an orchestral score).

In 1857 Bizet won the Prix de Rome scholarship for study in Italy; his first opera dates from the same year, the one-act *Le Docteur Miracle*. Besides composing, he often worked as a rehearsal pianist and orchestrator, which gave him an uncommon familiarity with the works of the Parisian theater. Today Bizet is remembered primarily as an opera composer, although he did not win fame as such during his short lifetime. In his thirty-seven years he wrote six operas that survive in a performable format, as well as nearly thirty unpublished or incomplete works.

The first of Bizet's operas to reach the professional stage was *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* (*The Pearl Fishers*), which lasted eighteen performances after its premiere at the Théâtre Lyrique in 1863. Of the various opera projects on which he worked, two more were staged-*La Jolie Fille de Perth* in 1867, *Djamileh* in 1872-without establishing him as a major talent. Though discouraged by the indifference of theater managers and the public, he continued to pursue his great love. With *Carmen*, at the Opéra Comique in 1875, the tide of fortune started to turn, but Bizet died that year, thinking he had written another failure. The work caught on soon afterward and, together with the incidental music for Daudet's play *L'Arlésienne*, has carried Bizet's reputation.

Bizet seemed to have trouble finding direction as a composer; he frequently began operatic projects but then abandoned them before completion. He often borrowed from these, incorporating their material into later projects. Bizet paid more attention to the meaning and emotional content of the words than to the rhythm and metrical patterns (called "word painting", because the composer uses music to "paint" or illustrate the word's meaning). His choice of subject matter and compositional style presaged the development of verismo opera.

*Carmen* was drawn from a popular short novel of the same title by **Prosper Mérimée** (1845), inspired in turn by the writing of **George Henry Borrow**, an Englishman who had lived among the Spanish Gypsies. Bizet's libretto, conventionalized for the conservative, bourgeois audience of the Opéra Comique, was the work of **Ludovic Halévy** (a cousin of his wife's) and **Henri Meilhac**. Since the opéra-comique genre called for spoken dialogue, sung recitatives had to be added if the work was ever to be performed at a grand-opera theater. This was done after Bizet's death by his friend **Ernest Guiraud**. The work's initially poor reception is attributable to the novelty and daring of presenting "low life" in this genre and allowing the heroine to die instead of contriving the customary happy ending. Gypsies smoking cigarettes onstage was another risqué element, as was the "immoral" character of the heroine. *Carmen* survived to become one of the most frequently performed operas everywhere in the world. Several of its melodies are familiar to thousands who have never seen or heard an opera.

## The Operas of Bizet

- 1832      *Le Docteur Miracle*
- 1859      *Don Procopio*
- 1862 - 65      *Ivan IV*
- 1863      *Les pêcheurs de perles*
- 1867      *La jolie fille de Perth*
- 1871 - 72      *Djamileh*
- 1873 - 74      *Carmen*



Bizet's manuscript of the habanera

## Timeline of Bizet's Life

- 1813 Georges Bizet born, Paris
- 1848 Accepted into the Paris Conservatoire of Music, where he influenced by **Gounod**
- 1856 Writes one-act operetta *Le Docteur Miracle*
- 1857 *Le Docteur Miracle* wins first prize in a competition organized by **Jaques Offenbach**; Bizet wins the Prix de Rome, allowing him to spend three years in Italy
- 1859 Writes *Don Procopio* while living in Rome
- 1862 Work begins on *Ivan IV*, but the opera is not staged
- 1863 Writes *Les pêcheurs de perles*, which premieres at the Théâtre-Lyriques as commissioned by director Léon Carvalho
- 1867 Writes *La jolie fille de Perth*, which premieres at the Théâtre-Lyriques
- 1869 Marries **Geneviève Halévy**, daughter of composer **Fromental Halévy**
- 1870 Outbreak of Franco-Prussian war, closing all Paris theatres; Bizet joins National Guard
- 1871 Work begins on *Djamileh*
- 1872 Premiere of *Djamileh* at the prestigious Opéra-Comique, Paris, to little success
- 1873 Abandons work on an opera called *Don Rodrigue*, due to a fire at the Paris Opéra and the theatre's decision to stage a different work
- 1875 Premiere of *Carmen*, Paris, to shocked audiences and scathing critics; Bizet dies three months later, unaware that *Carmen* will go on to become one the world's most popular operas



Poster from the 1875 premiere of *Carmen*



## The Life and Times of Georges Bizet



- 1837 Rebellion in Quebec. The French and British battle for Upper and Lower Canada.
- 1838 Georges Bizet is born in Paris, France, on Oct. 25.
  - **Charles Dickens'** *Oliver Twist* is published.
  - **Samuel Morse** demonstrates his electrical telegraph for the first time.
- 1840 Russian composer **Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky**, British novelist **Thomas Hardy**, French painter **Claude Monet** and French sculptor **Auguste Rodin** are born.
  - The world's first postage stamp is issued in Britain.
  - **Victoria** is crowned Queen of England.
- 1841 The first university degrees are granted to women in the United States.
  - Upper and Lower Canada are united by an Act of Parliament.
  - **Sir Wilfrid Laurier**, Canada's seventh Prime Minister, is born.
- 1844 Controversial Métis hero, **Louis Riel**, is born on the Red River Settlement in Manitoba. He is later hanged for treason for his part in the Red River and Northwest rebellions.
  - **Alexandre Dumas** publishes *The Three Musketeers*.
- 1845 "Carmen", the novella by **Prosper Mérimée**, is first published in *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, to universally disapproving reviews for its perceived immorality.
  - **Edgar Allen Poe's** *The Raven* is published in the *New York Evening Mirror*.
  - The rubber band is invented in England.
- 1847 Nine-year-old Bizet begins studying music at the Paris Conservatory of Music.
  - **Alexander Graham Bell** is born in Edinburgh, Scotland.
  - **Johnny Appleseed** (born John Chapman), who introduced apple trees to Indiana, Ohio, and Illinois, dies in Indiana.
- 1848 **Richard Wagner** begins work on the libretto for the *Ring Cycle*.
  - The first women's rights convention is held in Seneca Falls, N.Y.
  - The first medical school for women is opened in Boston.
  - The University of Ottawa is founded.
  - **Karl Marx** publishes *The Communist Manifesto*.
  - **Charles Darwin** and **Alfred Russel Wallace** publish their theory of evolution through natural selection.
- 1855 Bizet completes his most famous symphony, *Symphony in C*. It is not performed until 1935.
  - The Bunsen burner is invented by **Robert Wilhelm Bunsen**.
  - Pucks replace balls for the first time in hockey.
- 1857 Bizet writes the cantata *Herminie*.
  - Bizet wins the Prix de Rome for the one-act opera *Le Docteur Miracle* and goes to Italy for three years.
  - **Queen Victoria** chooses Ottawa as Canada's capital from a selection that includes Toronto, Kingston, Quebec City and Montreal.
  - Milton S. Hershey, founder of the Hershey Chocolate Company, is born.
- 1861 Bizet's mother dies.
  - Bizet fathers a child with his mother's nurse.
  - Several southern states secede from the U.S. and form the Confederate States of America. **Jefferson Davis** is elected president.
- 1863 Bizet composes *Les pêcheurs de perles* (*The Pearl Fishers*), which debuts at the Théâtre-Lyrique in Paris.
  - The first segment of London's Underground subway system begins operation.
  - Union forces win the Battle of Gettysburg, which becomes the turning point in the American Civil War.
- 1867 Bizet premieres *La jolie fille de Perth* at the Théâtre Lyrique in Paris.
  - The British North America Act establishes the Dominion of Canada. **Sir John A. Macdonald** becomes Canada's first prime minister.
  - The U.S. purchases Alaska from the Russians for approximately two cents an acre.

- **Alexander Muir** writes "The Maple Leaf Forever" which becomes an unofficial national anthem in Canada.
- 1868** Bizet suffers from attacks of quinsy (inflammation of the tonsils) and begins to re-examine his religious beliefs.
- **Louisa May Alcott** publishes *Little Women*.
  - **Tchaikovsky's** Symphony No. 1 in G minor receives its first performance.
  - **Wagner's** *Die Meistersinger* premieres at the Hoftheater in Munich.
- 1869** Bizet marries **Geneviève**, daughter of his former teacher, **Halévy**. They have one son.
- **Wagner's** *Das Rheingold*, the first opera of his Ring Cycle, debuts in Munich.
  - **Leo Tolstoy** publishes *War and Peace*.
  - **Mohandas (Mahatma) Ghandi** is born in Gujarat, India.
- 1870** **Prosper Mérimée**, author of the novella *Carmen*, dies in Cannes
- France declares war on Prussia (Franco-Prussian War). Bizet enlists in the National Guard.
  - The province of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories are created.
  - **Louis Pasteur** and **Robert Koch** develop the theory that germs are responsible for disease.
- 1872** Bizet begins to take an interest in Mérimée's novella, *Carmen*.
- The *Toronto Mail*, which would later become the *Globe and Mail*, begins publishing.
  - The Canadian Pacific Railway is formed.
  - The Metropolitan Museum of Art opens in New York City.
- 1875** *Carmen* premieres at the Opéra-Comique on March 3. The media criticizes *Carmen* as having an "obscene" libretto and obscure, colourless, undistinguished and unromantic music.
- The reception of *Carmen* leaves Bizet acutely depressed. He suffers another attack of quinsy. Three months to the day after *Carmen's* premiere, Bizet dies of heart failure. He is 36.
  - The Supreme Court of Canada is established.

## Bizet Posthumously

Bizet's widow **Geneviève** later had an alliance with **Élie-Miriam Delaborde**; indeed, there exists an application for registration of a marriage between them, which never took place. Instead, she married **Émile Straus**, a banker with **Rothschild** family connections, and became a noted society hostess. The writer **Marcel Proust** used her as a model for the Duchesse de Guermantes in his roman fleuve *À la recherche du temps perdu*. (The Bizets' son, **Jacques Bizet** (1872-1922), who became a writer, had been a friend of Proust's while they were schoolboys together at the same school.)



Bizet's music has been used in the twentieth century as the basis for several important ballets. The Soviet-era *Carmen Suite* (1967), set to music drawn from *Carmen* arranged by **Rodion Shchedrin**, gave the Bolshoi ballerina **Maya Plisetskaya** one of her signature roles; it was choreographed by **Alberto Alonso**. In the West the *L'Arlesienne* of **Roland Petit** is well-regarded, and *Symphony in C* by **George Balanchine** is considered to be one of the great ballets of the twentieth century. It was first presented as *Le Palais de Crystal* by the Paris Opera Ballet in 1947, and it has been in the repertory there ever since. The ballet has no story: it simply fits the music. Each movement of the symphony has its own ballerina, cavalier, and corps de ballet, all of whom dance together in the finale.

Bizet's work as a composer has overshadowed how fine a pianist he was. He could easily have had a career as a concert pianist had he so wished. On 26 May 1861, at a dinner party at the Halevys at which **Franz Liszt** was present, Bizet gave a faultless performance of an elaborate work of Liszt's, reading at sight from the unpublished manuscript. Liszt proclaimed that Bizet was one of the three finest pianists in Europe. Bizet's skill at the piano was also praised by **Hector Berlioz**, his teacher **Marmontel**, and many others.

## ABOUT THE DRAMATIST

### Prosper Mérimée



**Prosper Mérimée** (1803 – 1870) was a French dramatist, historian, archaeologist, and short story writer. He is perhaps best known for his novella "Carmen", which became the basis of Bizet's opera *Carmen*.

Prosper Mérimée was born in Paris. He studied law as well as Greek, Spanish, English, and Russian. He was the first interpreter of much Russian literature in France.

Mérimée loved mysticism, history, the unusual, and the mystification, the historical fiction popularised by **Sir Walter Scott** and the cruelty and psychological drama of **Aleksandr Pushkin**. Many of his stories are mysteries set in foreign places, Spain and Russia being popular sources of inspiration.

In 1834, Mérimée was appointed to the post of inspector-general of historical monuments. He was a born archaeologist, combining linguistic faculty of a very unusual kind with accurate scholarship, with remarkable historical appreciation, and with a sincere love for the arts of design and construction, in the former of which he had some practical skill. In his official capacity he published numerous reports, some of which, with other similar pieces, have been republished in his works.

Mérimée met and befriended the **Countess of Montijo** in Spain in 1830 whom he credited as being his source for the *Carmen* story. Together with the countess, he coached her daughter, **Eugenie**, during the courtship with **Napoleon III** (though his correspondence indicates he was opposed to their marriage). When the daughter became the Empress Eugénie of France in 1853 he was made a senator.

In 1841, Prosper Mérimée and his friend **George Sand** made a major contribution to the history of medieval art by discovering the luminous tapestries of The Lady and the Unicorn during a stay at the Château de Boussac in the Limousin district of central France, which entered immediately into history thanks to the writings of George Sand.

Prosper Mérimée died in Cannes, France.



Mérimée's own watercolor "Carmen"



## ABOUT THE LIBRETTISTS

### Ludovic Halévy



Librettist **Ludovic Halévy** was born in Paris on Dec. 31, 1833, into a family of musicians and playwrights. His father **Léon** was a scholar and playwright and his paternal uncle, **Jacques François Halévy**, was a well-known composer.

Halévy followed in the family tradition and, even though he became a government official, he started his career as a librettist in 1855, working with **Offenbach**. Thereafter, he wrote libretti with **Hector Crémieux** and **Henri Meilhac** for other operas and operettas. His collaboration with Meilhac was all-important because together they created the ideal libretti for Offenbach and, most memorably, also wrote the libretto to *Carmen* for Bizet. Among Offenbach's operas the most important are *Orphée aux enfers*, *La Belle Hélène*, *La Vie parisienne*, *La Grande-duchesse de Gérolstein* and *La Périhole*.

Ludovic Halévy died in Paris on May 7, 1908.

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### Henri Meilhac



Librettist **Henri Meilhac** was born in Paris, Feb. 21, 1831. After finishing his secondary school studies, Meilhac was employed in a book shop. However he also devoted himself to drawing, as well as working as a cartoonist and humorous writer with the newspapers *Journal pour rire* and *Vie parisienne*, employment in which he initially used the pseudonym Ivan Baskoff.

In 1856, he made his debut as a comedy writer in a one-act musical comedy *La Sarabande du cardinal* and subsequently wrote exclusively for the theatre. He created at least 115 works of various genres, including musical comedies, five-act comedies and opera libretti.

Many of his works were written in collaboration with other authors, in particular with **Ludovic Halévy**, and their combined literary output greatly influenced the style of comic libretti of the 19th century. Together, they wrote libretti for **Offenbach**, which included *La Belle Hélène*, *La Vie parisienne*, *La Grande-duchesse de Gérolstein* and *La Périhole*, the libretto for Bizet's *Carmen* and opera libretti for other French composers.

Meilhac became very popular in England, thanks to Offenbach's operas. He was elected a member of the Académie Française for his artistic talents in 1888, and died in Paris on July 6, 1897.

# CARMEN LISTENING GUIDE

- 1. Overture** Overture *An overture is an orchestral piece which introduces a larger musical work.*

The overture is comprised of three major themes that are used later in the opera; it begins with the music that is sung by the chorus at the beginning of Act IV as they excitedly prepare for the bull fight, with an interjection of the theme from the famous Toreador Song sung by Escamillo in Act II. The overture finishes [2:12] with a mysterious and unsettling musical theme which is meant to represent both Carmen as well as the concept of "fate." This theme will appear many times during the opera, usually accompanying important events in the plot.



Enrico Caruso's sketch of himself as Don José in *Carmen*, 1904



**"L'amour est un oiseau rebelle" ("Love is a rebellious bird")** A crowd of men gather to watch the cigarette-girls pass by as they leave their factory. The men hope to see the gypsy woman Carmen, who makes a grand entrance and sings. Don José is the only one who seems uninterested in Carmen; she responds by singing the Habañera.

The Habañera is perhaps the most recognizable aria (solo) in the opera. It is heavily influenced by Spanish musical style, both metrically and melodically. The *habañera* is a song style that originated in Cuba and became popular in the 19th century, spreading throughout Spanish colonies all over the world, including those in Europe. The four-note tango rhythm heard at the very beginning can be continuously heard throughout the entire duration of the aria. The cellos play this rhythm over one hundred times!



**"Les tringles des sistres tintaient" ("The jingles of the sistres")** Popular tavern, officers and gypsies are entertained by singing and dancing led by gypsy friends Frasquita and Mercédès.

The music begins very calmly, both in tempo (speed) and dynamics (volume). After a lengthy orchestral introduction, Carmen sings three verses (each followed by a refrain in which she is joined by Frasquita and Mercédès). With each passing verse, the music becomes faster, louder, and more heavily orchestrated, thus progressively increasing the excitement and rhythmic drive of the piece. The piece is about gypsy girls being seduced by gypsy boys with music.



**Toreador Song: "Votre toast... je peux vous le rendre" ("Your toast... I can return")** The famous toreador (bull fighter) Escamillo has just entered the tavern, surrounded by an entourage of admirers. He leads the crowd in a lively song depicting the life of a toreador.

The Toreador Song alternates between two contrasting styles; the verses are sung in a minor key, which give Escamillo's words a heightened sense of drama and suspense as he sings about the heroic activities of the toreador during a bull fight. The refrain (line or lines of music that are repeated in a song), however, is in a major key. This change of key complements the Toreador's words: he switches from singing about bull fights to dreaming of potential love. Still very dramatic, the music sets a more joyful mood, and as the chorus joins Escamillo later in the refrain, the excitement of the crowd becomes increasingly apparent.



5. **"La fleur que tu m'avais jetée"** ("The flower that you tossed to me") *Having just been released from prison, Don José has traveled to the tavern to find Carmen, where he tells her of his obligation to return to service. This infuriates Carmen, who begs him to instead follow her to the mountains. Don José then sings about how he has saved the flower that she threw to him when they first met.*

The aria begins with the "fate" motif played by the English horn; the same theme that was heard at the end of the overture. The placement of this theme directly before Don José begins to sing implies that it was destiny that led him to meet Carmen, and is an example of using music as a storytelling device.

6. **"Je dis que rien ne m'épouvante"** ("I say that nothing can frighten me") *Micaëla is traveling to the mountains in search of Don José with the intention of convincing him to return home. She is afraid, but also very determined, and prays for the courage to continue.*

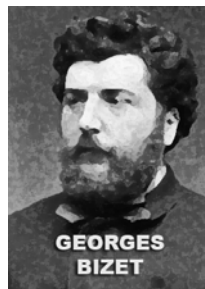
This is Micaëla's only aria in the opera, and a prime example of the extent to which a character can be represented by the music they sing. The mood of this aria is completely different than that of any of the music Carmen sings, which is indicative of how dissimilar the two women are. Micaëla sings of the courage she will need when facing Carmen who has bewitched her beloved Don José. The aria starts off quite timid, with the tempo and dynamics increasing as Micaëla gains strength and conviction in her quest, and ends with a gentle plea for God to protect her and give her courage.

7. **"Les voici, voici le quadrille!"** ("Here they are, here's the quadrille!") *A large crowd of spectators has gathered and excitedly awaits the procession of the bull fighters and Escamillo.*

This section begins quietly as members of the crowd sing the words "Les voici!" ("Here they are!"); this text is sung numerous times throughout the chorus as the excitement builds. The entrance of the *toreadors* is marked with a cymbal crash and a reprise of the lively music that was heard at the beginning of the overture. To achieve the effect of a large crowd of people who are all talking excitedly, Bizet divides up the chorus and has them take turns singing about different aspects of the procession. When Escamillo finally enters, the crowd once again sings the theme from the Toreador Song.

**What did Bizet think of the competition – the other composers of his era?**

"**Rossini** is the greatest of all because he has, like **Mozart**, all the qualities: loftiness, style, and, finally, the melodic sense..."



"I place **Beethoven** above the greatest, the most famous. Neither **Mozart** with his divine form, nor **Weber** with his powerful, colossal originality, nor **Meyerbeer** with his thundering, dramatic genius can, in my opinion, dispute the crown of this Titan, this Prometheus of music. He is overwhelming."

## Historical Background

France was the operatic capitol of Europe during the first half of the nineteenth century. During this period a type of musical drama was established that came to be known as “grand opera.” This term helped to differentiate it from the less serious or more melodramatic *opéra comique* which had spoken dialogue in between the musical numbers. In addition to sung dialogue, called recitative, grand opera had other essential features. These included subject matter of a serious and heroic nature, and a grandiose treatment of the subject with regard to singing, instrumental music and staging. Over time, *opéra comique* broadened its scope to include more serious subjects, but the tradition of spoken dialogue remained. As the century progressed, grand opera became somewhat more predictable and less original and the *opéra comique* became the venue for the introduction of new and more innovative works. This was particularly true after the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1871 which shocked the French body politic and created ripple effects that reached into the world of opera.

Literary trends in France also had an impact on the arts and eventually, opera librettos. In a reaction to the prevailing spirit of Romanticism there was a desire to challenge idealism and replace it with realism. Eventually, literary realism evolved into a movement called naturalism. These developments resulted in *vérisme* opera in France and eventually, *verismo* opera in Italy. There was a desire by writers, artists and opera composers to portray everyday life, the common man in his personal struggles, and even those who were considered immoral or degenerate.



The opera *Carmen* is based on a literary work, the novella “Carmen” by **Prosper Mérimée**. It was written in 1845 and is an early example of realism. In addition to its unsentimental view of its characters’ lives, it contained other elements that fascinated the public, such as the allure of the foreign and the exotic. Its setting was in southern Spain and the main character was a gypsy, which highlighted an ethnic group the public found titillating. Mérimée used the framing device of a narrator, and his characters were coarse and unscrupulous. Carmen herself was a thief and the leader of a band of smugglers and bandits, of whom Don José was a member.

When Bizet was commissioned by the Opera-Comique theater to write a full-length opera in 1873, he actively pushed for the Mérimée novella to be used as the basis for the libretto. He worked closely with the librettists, **Ludovic Halévy** and **Henri Meilhac**, to shape the libretto, even writing some of the words himself. The resulting opera differed from Mérimée’s story in several ways. The realist setting was retained but the narrator was eliminated. The Carmen character became one of the smugglers, not the leader, and her criminal activities were minimized. She was portrayed more as a *femme fatale* and in many ways her character was ennobled. The role of Don José was also softened, showing his downfall and making him more of a victim. The characters Micaëla and Escamillo were created to serve as foils for Carmen and Don José. These changes streamlined the story and heightened the drama.

In the opera, Bizet clearly defines Carmen as a woman who had deliberately thought through her philosophy of life and refuses to depart from it. For Carmen, to be free and independent is primary. She has rejected all restraints of accepted society. The fact that Carmen is a gypsy reinforces this independent, outside-respected-society image. Conversely, Don José has been raised in a small village with a strict, moral upbringing. For him marriage is a commitment by two people to be faithful to one another. The conflict between them arises when Don José is confronted with Carmen’s philosophy, which is in direct opposition to his own. The introduction of Micaëla and Escamillo sharpen this conflict. Micaëla represents the moral society in which Don José was raised and symbolizes his ideal woman. Don José feels great passion for Carmen but also wants the same relationship with her that he might have had with Micaëla. Carmen does not share his values and therein lies Don José’s downfall. Escamillo is Carmen’s ideal lover. He is patient and does not require her eternal faithfulness. He adores her but doesn’t need to possess her. The opera *Carmen* is more about the downfall or transformation of Don José than about

Carmen herself. Even though Carmen is the central focus of the opera, she is the catalyst that undermines Don José's life.

Some of these changes were a result of the needs of stage adaptation and the intent of the librettists and composer to be true to their art and present a work of significance. Other changes, however, were clearly an attempt to fashion a plot that would be acceptable to the patrons of the Opéra-Comique. Unfortunately, the brilliance of the opera, its directness, its characterizations and its musical realism was too much for the opening night audience, the critics and even Parisian society at large.

The failure of this early example of French *véritisme* opera and its subject matter has been well-documented. After the end of the fourth act (an act received in icy silence by the audience), Bizet walked the streets of Paris all night, frustrated by the public's inability to understand his music and what he was trying to achieve. He retired to the country, depressed by the outpouring of criticism, and believed his greatest work was a failure. Within three months he was dead, having suffered two heart attacks.

Interest in the opera was not dead, however. Many famous composers were effusive in their praise. Some in the musical community felt the opera might be better received as a grand opera. A fellow composer and friend of Bizet, **Ernest Guiraud**, composed recitatives to replace the spoken dialogue so that *Carmen* could be presented as a grand opera for its premiere at the State Opera House in Vienna on October 23, 1875. In little more than four months after Bizet's untimely death, his opera was a resounding success. *Carmen* had been produced in Vienna as a spectacle, with a ballet added in Act IV using music from another Bizet opera, as well as an expanded bullfighters procession. The composer **Johannes Brahms** saw the Viennese production twenty times and was fulsome in his praise. Soon afterward the opera was presented in Brussels with the newly-composed recitatives but without the extra ballet and spectacle. Again, it was a sensation. In the next few years *Carmen* made the rounds of the great opera houses of the world before returning to success in Paris eight years later.

The triumph of Bizet's *Carmen* had been predicted by a towering figure of the music world, the Russian composer **Peter Illyich Tchaikovsky**. He had seen an early performance of *Carmen* and stated in a letter, "Carmen is a masterpiece in every sense of the word; that is to say, one of those rare creations which expresses the efforts of a whole musical epoch....I am convinced that in ten years Carmen will be the most popular opera in the whole world." Those prophetic words have been borne out by history.



### ***Realism, Naturalisme and Verismo***

In Italian they called it *verismo*, in French *naturalism*. Bizet's *Carmen* was the starting point of a movement which increasingly probed the problems of modern life by representing a series of realistic events. *Carmen* was an *opéra comique* where "realistic" spoken dialogue was essential, communicating more like a play than an opera, and raising more contemporary questions than mythical or historical operas.

And there's more local colour too: here are real Spanish dances and gypsies girls singing. Bizet originally wrote Carmen's entry as an operatic aria, with all its clichés. But he replaced it in the staging process, having found a *habanera* – a dance-song – in a book of South American cabaret songs. Would *Carmen* have been such a success without this flash of inspiration? Definitely not! Suddenly we had real events onstage: not just a heroine singing about herself, but presenting her body, and her ideals of free love, to the characters around her. Strong stuff for an opera house whose function was basically a marriage bureau for chaperoned females! This was the start of a trend which affected opera profoundly. Suddenly in tune with literature and painting, it became interested in contemporary life: observation rather than literary research became the source for subject-matter

## CARMEN AND CARMEN JONES

Carmen's entry into the canon of Western operas gave rise to several revisionist interpretations, each of them foregrounding a particular issue of concern to the society and culture that produced it. A production in Moscow in 1925, for example, made over Carmen as a Jewish Communist girl fighting for the rights of the workers in a cigarette factory. Nazi productions in the thirties, however, focused more on the threat of gypsy crime and miscegenation. As a text that exists in relation to both the original Prosper Mérimée story and to various productions of *Carmen*, *Carmen Jones* can be read as a reconfiguration of race, class, and gender issues that are already present in its previous guises.



### CARMEN to CARMEN JONES, 1875 – 1944

In 1943, **Oscar Hammerstein Jr.** took Georges Bizet's opera *Carmen*, rewrote the lyrics, changed the characters from 19th century Spaniards to World War II-era African-Americans, switched the locale to a Southern military base, and the result was *Carmen Jones*. Hammerstein defended his reworking of the opera as an all-black musical by pointing to the Moorish influence on Spanish culture.

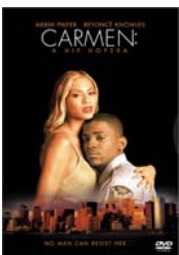


### CARMEN JONES, 1954

**Otto Preminger's** film *Carmen Jones* is often considered a landmark--both positively and negatively--in the history of black representations in the cinema. **Dorothy Dandridge** stars as Carmen Jones, tempestuous employee of a parachute factory. **Harry Belafonte** plays Joe (originally José), a young military officer engaged to marry virginal Cindy Lou (Olga James). When Carmen gets into a fight with another girl, she is placed under arrest and put in Joe's charge. Succumbing to her attractiveness, Joe accompanies Carmen to her old neighborhood, where, after killing a sergeant sent to retrieve him, he deserts the army. Carmen tries to be faithful, but fortune-telling Frankie (**Pearl Bailey**) warns her that she and her soldier are doomed.



Enter **Joe Adams** in the role of boxer Husky Miller (a play on Carmen's bullfighter Escamillo), who sweeps Carmen off her feet, ultimately with tragic consequences. Although both Dorothy Dandridge and Harry Belafonte were singers, their opera voices were dubbed in by **LeVern Hutcherson** and **Marilyn Horne**.



### CARMEN: A HIP HOPERA, 2001

The story was retold on MTV as a "hip-hopera," featuring **Beyoncé Knowles** and blending rap with some of Bizet's original melodies. The film also starred **Mos Def, Rah Digga, Wyclef Jean, Mekhi Phifer, Da Brat, Joy Bryant, Jermaine Dupri** and **Lil' Bow Wow**. It is based upon Georges Bizet's opera, *Carmen*, set in Philadelphia and Los Angeles in modern times, and features a mostly original hip-hop/R&B score in place of Bizet's opera.

## FILM ADAPTATIONS

The following is a list of film adaptations, based on the opera and/or the novella.

- 1907 *Carmen* – Arthur Gilbert, director; a 12-minute British film.
- 1909 *Carmen* – Gerolamo Lo Savio, director; an Italian film based on the novella.
- 1911 *Carmen* – Jean Durand, director; a French film starring Gaston Modot.
- 1912 *Carmen* – Theo Frenkel, director; a British film.
- 1913 *Carmen* – Lucius Henderson, director.
- 1913 *Carmen* – Stanner E.V. Taylor, director.
- 1914 *Carmen* – Giovanni Doria and Augusto Turqui, directors; a Spanish-Italian co-production based on the opera.
- 1915 *Carmen* – Cecil B. DeMille, director; a 65-minute film credited as being based on the novella, because the producers couldn't afford the rights to the opera; nevertheless it included some plot elements from the opera, and was shown with an orchestral arrangement of music from the opera by Hugo Riesenfeld. Starring Geraldine Farrar.
- 1915 *Carmen* – Raoul Walsh, director; starring Theda Bara.
- 1915 *Burlesque on Carmen* – Charlie Chaplin, director.
- 1918 *Carmen* – Ernst Lubitsch, director; with Pola Negri and Harry Liedtke.
- 1921 *Carmen* – Ernesto Vollrath, director; a Mexican film.
- 1922 *Carmen* – George Wynn, director; a British film.
- 1926 *Carmen* – Jacques Feyder, director; starring Raquel Meller.
- 1927 *Carmen* – H.B. Parkinson, director; a British film.
- 1927 *The Loves of Carmen* – Raoul Walsh director; starring Dolores del Río.
- 1929 *Carmen* – Shunichi Takeuchi, director; a Japanese film.
- 1931 *Carmen* – Cecil Lewis, director; a British film.
- 1933 *Carmen* – Lotte Reiniger, director; a nine-minute German animated film.
- 1938 *Carmen la de Triana / Andalusische Nächte* – Florián Rey, director; a Spanish-German film starring Imperio Argentina.
- 1941 *Carmen* – A Filipino film.
- 1943 *Carmen* – Luis César Amadori, director; an Argentine film.
- 1945 *Carmen* – Christian-Jaque, director; a French film with Jean Marais and Viviane Romance.
- 1948 *The Loves of Carmen* – Charles Vidor, director; based on the novella.
- 1954 *Carmen Jones* – Otto Preminger, director; based on the 1943 adaptation by Oscar Hammerstein II, *Carmen Jones*.
- 1959 *Carmen la de Ronda* – Tulio Demicheli, director; a Spanish film starring Sara Montiel and Maurice Ronet.
- 1960 *The Wild, Wild Rose* – Wong Tin-Lam, director.
- 1967 *Carmen* – Herbert von Karajan director and conductor; a film of the opera starring Grace Bumbry and Jon Vickers.
- 1983 *Carmen* – Carlos Saura, director; dance film.
- 1983 *La Tragédie de Carmen* – Peter Brook, director; a short film of Brook's own stage adaptation.
- 1983 *Prénom: Carmen* – Jean-Luc Godard, director; a loose modern adaptation.
- 1984 *Carmen* – Francesco Rosi, director; a film of the opera starring Julia Migenes and Plácido Domingo.
- 1990 *Carmen on Ice* – Horant H. Hohlfeld, writer and director.
- 2001 *Carmen: A Hip Opera* – Robert Townsend, director.
- 2001 *Karmen Gei* – Joseph Gaï Ramaka director; set in Dakar, Senegal and sung in French and Wolof.
- 2003 *Carmen* – Vicente Aranda, director.
  - 2005 *U-Carmen eKhayelitsha* – Mark Dornford-May, director.





## RELATED TOPICS OF STUDY

### The Roma or Gypsies

#### *Carmen and Gypsy History*

Carmen and her friends are Gypsies, a word used to describe an ethnic group of people known for their music, fortunetelling, and nomadic lifestyle. Many misconceptions of Gypsies exist, arising from ignorance and misunderstanding. Some of Carmen's characteristics are based on negative Gypsy stereotypes, but other things are true.

#### **Gypsies**

"Gypsy" is actually a derogatory (insulting) word. The group of people it refers to are more accurately called Roma, and the language they speak is Romanes, or Romani. There are four Roma tribes, or nations (the Kalderash, the Machavaya, the Lovari, and the Churari), plus many other smaller groups (such as the Sinti, the Luri, and the Xoraxai). Most Roma refer to themselves by their tribal name or by "Rom" or "Roma", meaning "Man" and "People".



There are approximately 12 million Roma living in several nations around the world, but it is hard to get an exact number since they are not usually included in official census counts. Roma tend to live in their own communities, separate from the gajikané (foreign) society around them. Centuries of discrimination and ethnic hatred have made them suspicious of outsiders, and they fear that integrating into gajikané society will cause them to lose their unique cultural identity.

Over the centuries, Roma have spread into many different countries worldwide and have adapted to varying degrees to their different cultural environments. For this reason, there is no universal Roma culture, and there are many differences; what is "true Roma" to one group may be "gadje", or foreign, to another. However, there are some things characteristic of all Roma, for example: loyalty to family, belief in predestiny, and adaptability to changing conditions.

#### **Origins**

Although the words "Roma" and "Romani" look like they are related to "Rome" and "Roman", the Roma did not come from Italy. Scholars have traced the Roma's ethnic heritage to India through clues in the language. Romani is an Indo-Aryan language whose origin is ancient Punjabi, or



Hindi, an Indian language. Today there are many spoken dialects of Romani, but no standardized written language. There were several waves of migrations in the Roma's history. They first left India about 1000 years ago, probably due to a war that the Hindu peoples were fighting with the Muslims. The ethnically mixed army spread out along the territorial limits of Islam, so they moved into Persia (today's Iran) and reached southeastern Europe around 1300. The next major migration occurred in the 19th and early 20th century, when Roma moved from Europe to the Americas after the abolition of Romani slavery.

#### **Clothing**

Roma women in the stories and movies usually wear a long colorful skirt, a flower in their hair, and lots of gold jewelry. This is actually not far from the truth. A Roma woman will grow her hair long, and it is usually worn braided until she is married. Once she is married, she will cover her hair with a diklo, or head scarf, that she will always wear when she is in public.

Roma women wear long skirts because of strong ideas about cleanliness and uncleanness. The lower half of a woman's body is associated with menstruation, and is therefore viewed as



shameful and unclean. A woman must keep this part of her body (including legs) covered at all times, and the bottom of her skirt must never touch any man other than her husband.

A Roma woman will wear lots of jewelry, not just because it looks pretty, but also because it is worth money. Most Roma do not have bank accounts or safe-deposit boxes, so they feel more comfortable converting their wealth into gold and carrying it themselves, as jewelry, hair, or clothing decorations.

Roma men have no typical costume. Since the head is viewed as the body's focal point, many men will grow a mustache and/or wear a large hat to accentuate it. Both men and women wear bright colors. Do the clothes of Carmen and her friends fit these patterns?

### Music and dance



Traditionally, Roma have been known in every country as entertainers, whether they were acrobats, bear trainers, musicians, or dancers. Roma musicianship in particular has had a wide influence, reaching classical artists such as **Liszt, Brahms, Dvorak**, and of course **Bizet**. The Roma trace their unique musical styles to Middle Eastern music, Jewish klezmer music, flamenco, and jazz. **The Gipsy Kings** are perhaps the most famous Roma musical performers. Other musical and non-musical performers claim that they were descended from Roma, among them **Yul Brynner, Rita Hayworth, and Bob Hoskins**. Carmen's skill at singing and dancing is quite true to her character.

### Fortunetelling

Another negative stereotype of the Roma is one of the old woman, reading palms or tarot cards and charging an exorbitant fee. It is true that the Roma practice this, but only for the gadje and as a source of livelihood, never among themselves. Although she might have believed in predestiny, as many Roma do, Carmen and her friends would most likely not have been telling their own fortunes.

### Attitudes towards gadjikane society

Roma are fearful of being corrupted by gadjikane society; they are afraid that immersion in non-Roma society will lead to a loss of traditionally strong family and community ties. Centuries of anti-Roma discrimination and hatred have made most Roma suspicious of outsiders. Roma are expected to marry within the tribe to maintain ethnic and social purity, but occasionally someone will marry outside the group. If a Roma male marries a gadji (female foreigner), she may be accepted if she adopts the Roma way of life. It is more difficult if a Roma woman wishes to marry a gadjo; women are viewed as the guarantors for the survival of the group, and having children with someone from outside the group dilutes the ethnic purity. In many instances, children of a mixed marriage are considered Roma only if the father is Roma.

Another mistaken impression of Roma is that they are immoral; this image is personified by Carmen, a seductive, manipulative woman with several lovers. Actually, Roma adhere to a strict code of sexual conduct; women are expected to remain virgins until they are married, and adultery is forbidden. Traditionally, a girl was married between the ages of nine and fourteen, but gadjikane influence has changed this in recent years. In light of this, how would Carmen's friends and family feel about her love affair with Don José? About her attitude towards men?

### Discrimination



Throughout European history, the Roma have been reviled and persecuted, usually without any kind of governmental or legal protection. The Nazi purge is the most infamous: 1.5 million Roma perished in the Holocaust (the Romani word is Porrajmos). Today the Roma are still the subject of negative portrayals in the popular media and ethnic discrimination.

## Canada

Roma people have emigrated to Canada and the U.S. since the 1870s. By the 1990s there were at least 80,000 Roma integrated into Canadian society. Canadian media and the public most recently became aware of the Roma when Czech-Romani refugees began to arrive in Canada in 1997. Unlike previous refugees, the Czech-Roma came fleeing persecution for being Roma in the Czech Republic.

The public has long been fascinated with the mythological, racial and stereotypical image of the Romani people created by Victorian writers and perpetuated by writers such as the noted Canadian author **Robertson Davies**; his novel *The Rebel Angels* depict Roma as magical, surrealistic, phantasmagorical, light-fingered characters likely to pick pockets of Canadians in general. Fortunately, perceptions have improved but the Roma, even in Canada, are sometimes viewed with suspicion and fear.



## A Timeline of the Roma or Gypsies in Europe

**1300** Romani groups begin to be enslaved in southeast Europe.

**1445** **Prince Vlad Dracul** of Wallachia transports some 12,000 persons "who looked like Egyptians" from Bulgaria for slave labour.

**15th Century** (**Verdi** sets his opera *Il trovatore* in Spain, during this time of social unrest.)

**1499** Medina del Campo in Spain orders Gitanos to find a trade and master and to cease traveling with other Gitanos. Punishment for failure to obey is 100 lashes and banishment. Repeat offences are punished by amputation of ears, 60 days in chains, and banishment. Third-time offenders become the slaves of those who capture them.

**1505** Roma are recorded in Scotland, probably from Spain.

**1560** **The Archbishop of the Swedish Lutheran Church** forbids priests to have any dealings with Roma. Their children are not to be christened and their dead not to be buried.

**Early 17th century** Spanish legislation becomes harsher, forbidding Gitanos from dealing in horses. The local populace is given permission to form armed groups to pursue Gitanos.

**1745** Gitanos in Spain must settle in assigned places within two weeks. The punishment for failure is execution. "It is legal to fire upon them to take their life." The Churches no longer provide asylum. Armed troops are ordered to comb the countryside for Roma in hiding.

**Early 1800s** "Gypsy hunts" become a common and popular sport in Germany.

**1830** German authorities remove Roma children from their families for fostering with non-Roma.

**1885** Roma are excluded by United States immigration policy; many are returned to Europe.

**1909** Recommendations from a "Gypsy policy conference" in Hungary include the confiscation of animals and carts, and permanent branding for identification.



**1934** Roma in Germany are selected for transfer to camps for processing.

**1940** At Buchenwald, 250 Romani children are used as guinea-pigs to test Zyklon-B gas crystals.

**1933-45** Up to 1,500,000 Sinti and Roma are killed in Europe by the Nazi regime.

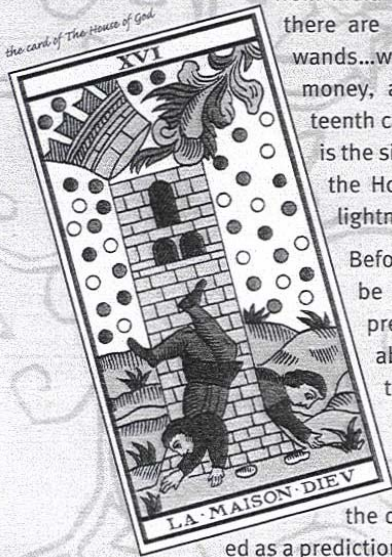
## TAROT CARDS: Diamonds! Spades! Death!

### *Carreau! Pique!...La Mort!*

Gypsies had many ways to tell fortunes, including crystal balls and palm reading, but the use of Tarot cards was the most important. In the Act III card scene Carmen reads her own cards and comes up with a prediction of death. A real Gypsy would have used Tarots, but Bizet used traditional cards, setting the words "Carreau! Pique!...La Mort!" (Diamonds! Spades! Death!). Legend has it that the original Carmen, Celestine Galli-Marié, used real Tarot cards and drew the death card on the night Bizet died. She was so shaken that she became faint.

The twenty-two numbered Tarot cards trace the history of the gypsy migration from India to Europe. Like our contemporary cards there are four suits...clubs, spades, hearts and wands...which correspond to matters of the heart, money, aggression and spirituality. The thirteenth card is the death card but the worst card is the sixteenth card, the tower, which depicts the House of God being struck to ruin by lightning.

Before cards are dealt, a question must be posed, then the spread of cards is interpreted by a reader. The meaning of a card is not absolute, but read in the context of the question and subject to interpretation. A card can be read as a firm prediction of the future, or it can be a warning...something that might happen if the person does not change. Carmen sees the death card as her fate, unchangeable and absolute, but the card does not always mean death. It can also be interpreted as a prediction of a life-altering transition, as in the passing of something that must end in order to pave the way for gain.



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## Flamenco



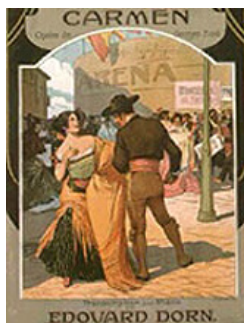
**Flamenco** is a style of music which is considered part of the culture of Spain, but is actually native to only one region: Andalusia. The term is also applied to the dance style performed to flamenco music.

Andalusian, Gypsy, Sephardic, Moorish and Byzantine influences have been detected in flamenco, often said to have coalesced prior to and after the Reconquista was completed, in the 15th century. The origins of the term are unclear; the word *flamenco* itself was not recorded until the 18th century.

Flamenco is the music of the Andalusian gypsies and played in their social community. Andalusian people who grew up around gypsies were also accepted as "flamencos" (Paco de Lucía). Other regions, mainly Extremadura and Murcia, have also contributed to the development of flamenco, and many flamenco artists have been born outside Andalusia. Latin American and especially Cuban influences have also contributed, as evidenced in the dances of "Ida y Vuelta".



# Bullfighting



*Carmen* features a character named Escamillo who is a champion bullfighter. His famous aria, known as the “Toreador Song,” is one of the best known pieces in opera. Similar to professional athletes today, Escamillo is idolized by the crowd – and by Carmen.

## Bullfighting in Spain

Bullfighting is considered an art form in Spain, and is intimately linked with the country’s history, art and culture. Today bullfighting is big business in Spain with the top **matadores** earning comparable salaries to the nation's top soccer stars and rock idols. It is very popular with several thousand Spaniards flocking to their local bull-ring each week.

It is said that the total number of people watching bullfights in Spain reaches one million every year. Pressure groups attempt to lobby against bullfighting yet the King of Spain himself has been quoted as saying that the day the EU bans bullfighting is the day Spain leaves the EU.

## History of Bullfighting in Spain

The spectacle of bullfighting has existed in one form or another since ancient days. For example, a contest of some sort is depicted in a wall painting unearthed at Knossos in Crete, dating from about 2000 BC. It shows male and female acrobats confronting a bull, grabbing its horns as it charges, and vaulting over its back.



Bullfighting can be traced back to ancient days. They were popular spectacles in ancient Rome, but it was in the Iberian Peninsula that these contests were fully developed by the Moors from North Africa who overran Andalusia in AD 711. Bullfighting developed into a ritualistic occasion observed in connection with

feast days, on which the conquering Moors, mounted on highly trained horses, confronted and killed the bulls.

As bullfighting developed, the men on foot, who by their capework aided the horsemen in positioning the bulls, began to draw more attention from the crowd, and the modern **corrida** began to take form. Today the bullfight is much the same as it has been since about 1726, when Francisco Romero of Ronda, Spain, introduced the **estoque** (the sword) and the muleta (the small, more easily wielded worsted cape used in the last part of the fight).

### Bull fighting: The Spectacle

Six bulls, to be killed by three matadors, are usually required for one afternoon's **corrida**, and each encounter lasts about 15 minutes. At the appointed time, generally 5 PM, the three matadors, each followed by their assistants, the **banderilleros** and the **picadors**, march into the ring to the accompaniment of traditional **paso doble** (“march rhythm”) music. The matadors (the term **toreador**, popularized by the French opera *Carmen*, is erroneous usage) are the stars of the show. They wear a distinctive costume, consisting of a silk jacket heavily embroidered in gold, skintight trousers, and a **montera** (a bicorne hat). A **traje de luces** (“suit of lights”), as it is known, can cost many thousands of dollars; a top matador must have at least six of them a season.

When a bull first comes into the arena out of the **toril**, or bull pen gate, the matador greets it with a series of manoeuvres, or passes, with a large cape; these passes are usually **verónicas**,

the basic cape manoeuvre (named after the woman who held out a cloth to Christ on his way to the crucifixion).

The amount of applause the matador receives is based on his proximity to the horns of the bull, his tranquillity in the face of danger, and his grace in swinging the cape in front of an infuriated animal weighing more than 460 kg (1,000 lb). The bull instinctively goes for the cloth because it is a large, moving target, not because of its colour; bulls are colour-blind and charge just as readily at the inside of the cape, which is yellow.

Fighting bulls charge instantly at anything that moves because of their natural instinct and centuries of special breeding. Unlike domestic bulls, they do not have to be trained to charge, nor are they starved or tortured to make them savage. Those animals selected for the corrida are allowed to live a year longer than those assigned to the slaughterhouse. Bulls to be fought by **novilleros** (beginners) are supposed to be three years old and those fought by full matadors are supposed to be at least four.

The second part of the corrida consists of the work of the picadors, bearing lances and mounted on horses (padded in compliance with a ruling passed in 1930 and therefore rarely injured). The picadors wear flat-brimmed, beige felt hats called **castoreños**, silver-embroidered jackets, chamois trousers, and steel leg armour. After three lancings or less, depending on the judgment of the president of the corrida for that day, a trumpet blows, and the banderilleros, working on foot, advance to place their **banderillas** (brightly adorned, barbed sticks) in the bull's shoulders in order to lower its head for the eventual kill. They wear costumes similar to those of their matadors but their jackets and trousers are embroidered in silver.

After the placing of the banderillas, a trumpet sounds signalling the last phase of the fight. Although the bull has been weakened and slowed, it has also become warier during the course of the fight, sensing that behind the cape is its true enemy; most gores occur at this time. The serge cloth of the **muleta** is draped over the **estoque**, and the matador begins what is called the **faena**, the last act of the bullfight. The **aficionados** (ardent fans) study the matador's every move, the ballet-like passes practised since childhood. (Most matadors come from bullfighting families and learn their art when very young.) As with every manoeuvre in the ring, the emphasis is on the ability to increase but control the personal danger, maintaining the balance between suicide and mere survival. In other words, the real contest is not between the matador and an animal; it is the matador's internal struggle.

The basic muleta passes are the **trincerazo**, generally done with one knee on the ground and at the beginning of the faena; the **pase de la firma**, simply moving the cloth in front of the bull's nose while the fighter remains motionless; the **manoletina**, a pass invented by the great Spanish matador Manolete (Manuel Laureano Rodríguez Sánchez), where the muleta is held behind the body; and the natural, a pass in which danger to the matador is increased by taking the sword out of the muleta, thereby reducing the target size and tempting the bull to charge at the larger object—the bullfighter.

After several minutes spent in making these passes, wherein the matador tries to stimulate the excitement of the crowd by working closer and closer to the horns, the fighter takes the sword



and lines up the bull for the kill. The blade must go between the shoulder blades; because the space between them is very small, it is imperative that the front feet of the bull be together as the matador hurtles over the horns. The kill, properly done by aiming straight over the bull's horns and plunging the sword between its withers into the aorta region, requires discipline, training, and raw courage; for this reason it is known as the "**moment of truth**".

## Seville

"Seville is the asylum of the poor, and the refuge of the outcasts." Cervantes



Seville was guaranteed an important place in history by its location. It forms the apex of a triangle that joins it with Gibraltar- the connection with Africa and the opening to the Mediterranean- and the Atlantic port of Cadiz, gateway to trade with the New World. This southwestern part of Spain is known as Andalusía. Seville reveals its history in its beautiful buildings decorated with graceful grillwork, and in the activity along the Guadalquivir River, which runs through the city. It has been a multicultural city since it was first visited in ancient times by the

Phoenicians, Greeks and Romans. Since the Middle Ages, it has been home to Spaniards, Jews, Moors (North African Moslems), slaves from other parts of Africa, and by the end of the 14th century, the Gypsies.

Seville has been the home of the very rich and the very poor for centuries, and the gypsies formed a part of a larger community of the poor who lived on the outskirts of established society. This larger group also included the "Moriscos" (Moslems who had converted to Catholicism when the Catholics had defeated and driven out the Moslem rulers of the peninsula), and African slaves. The Moriscos, like their counterparts in the Jewish community (the "Conversos"), had often had to convert to Catholicism to avoid execution or expulsion. Since they were not considered to be "legitimate" Christians, due to the circumstances of their conversions, they often did Seville's most menial jobs, working as farm laborers, peddlers and dockworkers. Even though many worked hard, they lived at a bare subsistence level, and many suffered from malnutrition. Both groups suffered much religious prejudice, and their religious practice was often called into question. Some were burned at the stake in "autos da fe" (acts of faith) performed by the Inquisition of the Catholic Church. Ultimately, the remaining Jews and some of the Conversos were expelled in 1492, and the Moriscos were expelled in 1610. Many gypsies took the menial jobs they left behind.

For several centuries, the outcasts of Seville included not only the working poor, but also a large criminal element. It was very hard for the institutions of the city to maintain order against these bands of homeless transients, prostitutes, pickpockets and bandits. Government-regulated brothels and taverns surrounded the city. At the other end of the spectrum, and in a completely different area of the city, sat the elite classes. This group encompassed professionals such as doctors, lawyers and notaries at its lower socio-economic end, all the way to wealthy merchants and the nobility at the top. These are characters we meet in *The Barber of Seville*.

The Moorish era in Spain had been one of great prosperity, but the merchants and nobles of the newly Catholic Spain created a new era of trade and wealth, beginning with the discovery of the New World. Membership in this group implied vast riches gained in the trade of gold, jewels and slaves. Its members also participated in the governance of the city of Seville, and Spanish colonies abroad. However, their positions in city government put them in opposition to the outcasts they were compelled to control.

In order to participate in the nobility, people had to prove that their families had been members of the Catholic Church for many generations. This situation caused a problem for the remaining Conversos (Jews who had been forced to convert to Catholicism). In order to protect their social positions and their lives, they forged documents proving their falsified genealogies. The Conversos were by and large successful for several hundred years in using their "genealogies" to help them to become part of Spain's establishment. During the boom times, the lines between the merchant families and the nobility began to blur. Traditionally, the nobility did not participate in trade, but because of the lure of such tremendous profits and wealth, they did become involved. There was much intermarriage between the two classes, until they became one.

## Royal Tobacco Factory



*The Cigar-makers*, painted in 1915, shows the interior of the Royal Tobacco Factory.

The Royal Tobacco Factory in Seville, Spain is a stone building constructed in the 18th century. Since the 1950s it has been the seat of the rectorate of the University of Seville. Prior to that, it was, a tobacco factory: the most prominent such institution in Europe. It is one of the most notable and splendid examples of industrial architecture from the era of Spain's Antiguo Régimen. Carmen is a *cigarrera* at the Royal Tobacco Factory.

## What was going on in Spain at the time of the Opera?



Spain, in 1820, was past its years of imperial glory. The occupation by **Napoleon** and the determined resistance by Spaniards fighting the first guerrilla was (literally "little war" in Spanish) followed by **Wellington's** Peninsular War which caused terrible destruction. When the French retreated across the Pyrenees to France in 1814, they left behind an impoverished and deeply divided country, a weak monarchy and a demoralized army, into which Don José was conscripted.

## What was going on in France when *Carmen* premiered?



France, in 1875 was still suffering from its defeat in the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71), which resulted in the loss of the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine and their incorporation into the newly proclaimed German Empire. The war also ended the reign of **Emperor Napoleon III**, who was captured by the Prussians at the battle of Sedan. Subsequently, the French Assembly declared the creation of the Third Republic. The next several years were marked by infighting between monarchists and republicans. The only thing they seemed to agree on was the need to avenge the loss of Alsace and Lorraine to Germany. This was achieved only through the horror of the First World War.

## What was going on in Winnipeg in the 1870s?



Once the new provincial government decided to locate the legislature in Winnipeg, the community lobbied the legislature for incorporation as a city. Winnipeg was incorporated as a city in 1873, just two years prior to Carmen's première. The CPR had not yet reached Manitoba, and both Selkirk and Winnipeg were locked in a struggle as to where the railway would cross the Red River. The community that won would be the one that would boom. In 1879, the Federal Government advised Winnipeg that the crossing would be there if the city would build the railway bridge. It was a

small price to pay as once the location of the bridge had been decided, the real estate and industrial boom began with eastern money pouring into Winnipeg. The Manitoba Club was founded in 1874, the Manitoba Scientific and Historical Society in 1875, and the University of Manitoba, the Law Society, and the College of Physicians and Surgeons were all founded in 1877.



## Opera and Media Technology

Electronic slow motion was invented for sports video. Tapeless camcorders were created for TV news. But something else that seems to drive media-technology innovation is opera. Really. Opera.

**The European Digital Cinema Forum's 2008 *EDCF Guide to Alternative Content for Digital Cinema*** begins with a chapter on opera because opera happens to be the number-one form of alternative (non-movie) content worldwide, beating out rock concerts, sports, and political events. In many countries, a single opera showing is enough to out-earn a weekend's worth of continuous movie showings to finish in the top-10 box-office grosses.



**The Metropolitan Opera** received an Engineering **Emmy Award** and a **Peabody Award** for their technological contributions to television. Their first global HD cinema transmission was in 2006, but their first multi-city live cinema transmission was in 1952, and *The Los Angeles Times* noted then that the Orpheum theatre there had been equipped with a stereophonic sound system for the occasion.



Although FM stereo wouldn't be introduced until the following decade, 1952 wasn't opera's first stereo sound. A 1925 *Radio News* article described the **Berlin Opera's** stereo broadcasts, and the **Paris Opera's** first stereo transmissions (by wire) were in 1881!



opera in stereo 1925...

...and 1881

Why would they even consider such a thing? Perhaps it's because the first electronic-media entertainment service was actually opera via telephone lines. It began in Switzerland in 1878 and spread around the world. In 1930, there were more than 91,000 paying subscribers in the city of **Budapest**, alone.

More interested in the moving-image media? The first color-TV broadcast is sometimes said to have been the Rose Parade on New Year's Day in 1954, but **NBC** broadcast the opera ***Carmen*** in color the previous year. NBC Television had its own opera company for 16 years, and **ABC** and **CBS** (among others worldwide) also commissioned operas for network television broadcast. **BBC** television's first commission of an opera was in 1938, a year before television was supposedly introduced at the New York World's Fair; and they had been televising operas since 1936.

Some say the first sound movie was *The Jazz Singer* in 1927, using the Vitaphone process. Vitaphone was located in the **Manhattan Opera House**. It was a good process and a good movie, but a sound movie of the complete opera ***Faust*** had been released in Britain in 1907, and sound movies of opera arias were seen and heard in 1900 in **Paris**.

Incidentally, the first movie score was written by opera composer **Camille Saint-Saens** in 1908. In 1914, 24 years before **Erich Korngold** won an **Oscar** for the score of 1938's *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, he completed his first two operas. Alfred Hitchcock's favourite



movie-score writer, **Bernard Herrmann**, wrote an opera scene for ***Citizen Kane*** and later composed an opera based on ***Wuthering Heights***.

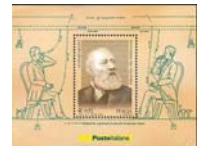
In 1896, a movie of a bullfight was used as a scenic element for the opera ***Carmen*** in a production in Elizabeth, NJ. Ten years earlier the concept of using movies as opera backgrounds was patented by **Louis Le Prince**. Clips from his experiments are the oldest known existing movie sequences. And the **Hamburg Opera** had already been using projected backgrounds by 1726 (and perhaps as early as 1678).



That projection didn't use electric light, of course, not that electricity was needed for lighting. Specifications for a mechanical dimming system for candle-based opera lighting were published in 1638. Stockholm's **Drottningholm Opera House** still uses an 18th-century lighting-control system, updated recently to deliver light via fiber optics to the mechanically controlled candle reflectors. But it's worth noting that the **Paris Opera** used an electric-light effect in ***Le Prophete*** in 1849, 30 years before Edison's light bulb.

#### 1849 electric light

Also in 1849, Italian-born **Antonio Meucci**, **Havana Opera's** technical director, began his work on the transmission of sound over electrical wiring. In 2005, Italy issued a postage stamp honoring him as the inventor of the telephone.



opera stagehand Meucci

Location recording, remote broadcasts, image intensifiers, contrast compression, diplexed audio, and live subtitling are just some of the other media technologies pioneered for opera. 3-D and interactivity have already found their way into opera. And an opera project has already used the technical facilities of the **European Center for Nuclear Research**, home of the giant supercollider featured in ***Angels & Demons***. Yes, opera.

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## THE OPERATIC VOICE & PROFESSIONAL SINGING

Operatic singing, which was developed in Europe during the 17th century, places far greater vocal demands on an opera singer than on any other type of singing. Opera singers rarely use microphones, and therefore must develop their voices to make a sound that will project and be heard above an orchestra and be heard throughout a large theatre.

After years of practice and study, an opera singer learns to use his or her body as an amplification device. By controlling the muscles of the diaphragm (a muscle beneath the lungs and above the stomach) the singer can regulate the amount of breath used. The diaphragm expands and contracts, regulating the air that passes through the vocal cords, which, in turn, causes them to vibrate. The speed at which the cords vibrate determines the pitch. As the sound passes through the mouth, it resonates in the upper chest cavities and the sinus cavities of the face and head. These cavities act as small echo chambers and help amplify the sound. The shape of the mouth and the placement of the tongue near the lips contribute to the tone and sound of the words.

Many singers begin their operatic training in university. Opera students study singing, music history, composition and vocal pedagogy (voice teaching). In addition to music classes, they study diction and often study at least one foreign language. After university, singers begin to work in the professional world. Their first roles are usually small parts, but if they continue to study and train, they may move on to the bigger principal roles.

Professional singers develop a number of roles in their repertoire. Since the principal artists are required to have their parts memorized before rehearsals begin, singers must prepare well in advance of each contract. Singers have voice teachers who help them refine their singing techniques and many will also have an acting coach. Even a well established singer will have a vocal coach to teach singing and acting techniques for specific roles.

Each person's vocal tract is constructed differently. The roles that a singer performs are dependent mostly upon their vocal range, but within the vocal ranges, there are many colours and weights of voice that further determine which roles he or she can sing safely. Vocal colour refers to the richness of the sound and vocal weight refers to how powerful a voice sounds.

After the role has been studied intensely and the singer is hired to perform, they arrive at the opera company for the rehearsals. This time is spent refining the music with the conductor and staging the action with the stage director. Each director has a different idea of how the character should be played, and each conductor has a different idea of how the character should sound, therefore the singer must modify his or her techniques to reach the desired result.

Physical health is a major priority to a singer. Contrary to popular belief not all opera singers are overweight. Conventional wisdom used to state that excessive weight gave added volume and richness to the voice however, in recent years, people have discovered that physical fitness can give similar benefits to a voice. Plus, the overall health benefits of being in shape overshadow any loss of vocal power. Most singers, like professional athletes try to avoid such substances as tobacco, alcohol and caffeine.

## Vocal Categories

### Women:

**Soprano:** The highest female voice, similar to a flute in range and tone colour. Usually plays the heroine in the opera since a high, bright sound can easily suggest youth and innocence.

**Mezzo-Soprano:** The middle-range female voice, similar to an oboe in range and tone colour. Called an alto in choral arrangements, can play a wide variety of characters including gypsies, mothers and even the part of a young man (trouser role).

**Contralto:** The lowest female voice, similar to an English horn in range and tone colour. Usually play unique roles including fortune-tellers, witches and older women. Not very common.

### Men:

**Tenor:** The highest male voice, similar to a trumpet in range, tone color and acoustical "ring." Usually plays the hero or the romantic lead in the opera.

**Baritone:** The middle-range male voice, similar to a French horn in tone color. Often plays the leader of mischief in comic opera or the villain in tragic opera, sometimes even the hero.

**Bass:** The lowest male voice, similar to a trombone or bassoon in tone color. Usually portrays old, wise men, or foolish, comic men.

The vocal parts overlap each other. The notes that are high for baritone to sing are low for a tenor. The notes that are low for a baritone to sing are high for a bass. For this reason you may see a high range mezzo-soprano singing a soprano's role or a low range baritone singing a bass' role.

The following terms can be used to describe special characteristics in a vocal range:

**Coloratura:** A light, bright voice that has the ability to sing many notes quickly, usually with an extended upper range.

**Lyric:** A light to medium weight voice, often singing beautiful sweeping melodies.

**Dramatic:** Dark, heavy and powerful voice, capable of sustained and forceful singing.

	Coloratura	Lyric	Spinto	Dramatic
<b>Soprano</b>	Norina ( <i>Don Pasquale</i> ) Gilda ( <i>Rigoletto</i> ) Lucia ( <i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i> )	Liu ( <i>Turandot</i> ) Mimi ( <i>La Bohème</i> ) Pamina ( <i>Magic Flute</i> )	Tosca ( <i>Tosca</i> ) Amelia ( <i>A Masked Ball</i> ) Leonora ( <i>Il Trovatore</i> )	Turandot ( <i>Turandot</i> ) Norma ( <i>Norma</i> ) Elektra ( <i>Elektra</i> )
<b>Mezzo-Soprano</b>	Rosina ( <i>Barber of Seville</i> ) Angelina ( <i>La Cenerentola</i> ) Dorabella ( <i>Così fan tutte</i> )	Carmen ( <i>Carmen</i> ) Charlotte ( <i>Werther</i> ) Giulietta ( <i>Hoffmann</i> )	Santuzza ( <i>Cavalleria</i> ) Adalgisa ( <i>Norma</i> ) The Composer ( <i>Ariadne auf Naxos</i> )	Azucena ( <i>Il Trovatore</i> ) Ulrica ( <i>A Masked Ball</i> ) Herodias ( <i>Salome</i> )
<b>Tenor</b>	Count Almaviva ( <i>Barber of Seville</i> ) Don Ottavio ( <i>Don Giovanni</i> ) Ferrando ( <i>Così fan tutte</i> )	Alfredo ( <i>La Traviata</i> ) Rodolfo ( <i>La Bohème</i> ) Tamino ( <i>Magic Flute</i> )	Calaf ( <i>Turandot</i> ) Pollione ( <i>Norma</i> ) Cavaradossi ( <i>Tosca</i> )	Dick Johnson ( <i>Fanciulla</i> ) Don Jose ( <i>Carmen</i> ) Otello ( <i>Otello</i> )
<b>Baritone</b>	Figaro ( <i>Barber of Seville</i> ) Count Almaviva ( <i>Le nozze di Figaro</i> ) Dr. Malatesta ( <i>Don Pasquale</i> )	Marcello ( <i>La Bohème</i> ) Don Giovanni ( <i>Don Giovanni</i> ) Sharpless ( <i>Madama Butterfly</i> )	<b>Verdi Baritone</b> Germont ( <i>La Traviata</i> ) Di Luna ( <i>Il Trovatore</i> ) Rigoletto ( <i>Rigoletto</i> )	Scarpia ( <i>Tosca</i> ) Jochanaan ( <i>Salome</i> ) Jack Rance ( <i>Fanciulla</i> )
<b>Bass</b>	Bartolo ( <i>Barber of Seville</i> ) Don Magnifico ( <i>Cenerentola</i> ) Dr. Dulcamara ( <i>Elixir of Love</i> )	Leporello ( <i>Don Giovanni</i> ) Colline ( <i>La Bohème</i> ) Figaro ( <i>Marriage of Figaro</i> )	<b>Buffo Bass</b> Don Pasquale ( <i>Don Pasquale</i> ) Don Alfonso ( <i>Così fan tutte</i> )	<b>Basso Cantate</b> Oroveso ( <i>Norma</i> ) Timur ( <i>Turandot</i> ) Sarastro ( <i>Magic Flute</i> )

## GLOSSARY: IMPORTANT WORDS IN OPERA

**Act-** a section of the opera that is then divided into scenes.

**Aria-** means "air" in Italian. This is a piece of music written for a one singer (soloist), usually with instrumental accompaniment.

**Aside-** a secret comment from an actor directly to the audience that the other characters cannot hear.

**Baritone-** the middle singing range of the male voice.

**Bass-** the lowest singing range of the male voice.

**Basso buffo** (Italian)- a bass singer who specializes in comic characters.

**Basso profondo** (Italian)- the most serious bass voice.

**Baton-** short stick that the conductor uses to lead the orchestra.

**Bel Canto-** Italian phrase literally meaning "beautiful singing." A traditional Italian style of singing emphasizing tone, phrasing, coloratura passages, and technique. Also refers to the operas written in this style.

**Blocking-** directions given to the performers for movement on stage.

**Bravo-** (Italian)- a form of appreciation shouted by audience members at the end of a particularly pleasing performance. Technically, Bravo refers to a male performer, Brava refers to a female performer and Bravi refers to many performers.

**Buffo-** from the Italian for "buffoon." A singer of comic roles (basso-buffo) or a comic opera (opera-buffa.)

**Cadenza-** a passage of singing, often at the end of an aria, which shows off the singer's vocal ability.

**Castrato-** (Italian)- a castrated male prized for his high singing voice.

**Choreographer-** the person who designs the steps of a dance.

**Chorus-** a group of singers of all vocal ranges, singing together to support the vocal leads.

**Classical-** the period in music which comes after the Baroque and before the Romantic, roughly from the birth of Mozart to shortly after the death of Beethoven. It represents the greatest standardization in orchestral form and tonality.

**Coloratura-** elaborate ornamentation of music written for a singer using many fast notes and trills. Also used to describe a singer who sings this type of music.

**Composer-** the individual who writes all the music for both voice and instrument.

**Comprimario-** (Italian)- a nineteenth century term referring to secondary or supporting roles such as confidantes, messengers, and matchmakers.

**Contralto-** the lowest female voice range.

**Conductor-** the person responsible for the musical interpretation and coordination of the performance. The conductor controls the tempo, the dynamic level and the balance between singers and orchestra. You will see this person standing in the orchestra pit conducting the musicians and the singers.

**Countertenor-** a male singer with the highest male voice range, generally singing within the female contralto or mezzo soprano range.

**Crescendo-** a build in the volume or dynamic of the music.

**Cue-** a signal to enter or exit from the stage, to move or to change lighting or scenery; or a signal given by the conductor to the musicians.

**Curtain Call-** occurs at the end of the performance when all the cast members and the conductor take bows. This can occur in front of the curtain or on the open stage.

**Designer-** a production can have two or three designers: a lighting designer, a costume designer, a set designer, or someone who is both costume and set designer. They work closely with the stage director to give the production a distinctive look.

**Diva-** literally, "goddess" in Italian. An important female opera star. The masculine form is divo.

**Dress Rehearsal-** the final rehearsal before opening night, includes costumes, lights, makeup, etc. Sometimes it is necessary to stop for adjustments, but an attempt is made to make it as much like a regular performance as possible.

**Duet-** music that is written for two people to sing together.

**Encore**- a piece that is performed after the last scheduled piece of a concert. An encore is usually performed because the audience wants to hear more music even though the concert is over.

**Ensemble**- a part of the opera written for a group of two or more singers. This may or may not include the chorus.

**Falsetto**- the upper part of a voice in which the vocal cords do not vibrate completely. Usually used by males to imitate a female voice.

**Finale**- the last musical number of an opera or an act.

**Grand Opera**- spectacular French opera of the Romantic period, lavishly staged, with a historically-based plot, a huge cast, an unusually-large orchestra, and ballet. It also refers to opera without spoken dialogue.

**Helden**- German prefix meaning "heroic". Can also apply to other voices, but usually used in "heldentenor."

**House**- the auditorium and front of the theatre excluding the stage and backstage areas.

**Impresario**- the proprietor, manager, or conductor of an opera or concert company; one who puts on or sponsors an entertainment; manager, producer.

**Interlude**- a short piece of instrumental music played between scenes and acts.

**Intermission**- a break between acts of an opera. The lights go on and the audience is free to move around.

**Librettist**- the writer of the opera's text. **Libretto**- Italian for "little book." It is the text or story of the opera.

**Lyric**- used to describe a light to medium weight voice with an innocent quality, capable of both sustained, forceful singing and delicate effects.

**Maestro**- means "master" in Italian. Used as a courtesy title for the conductor (male or female).

**Mark**- to sing, but not at full voice. A full-length opera is very hard on a singer's voice so most performers mark during rehearsals. During the Dress Rehearsal singers try to sing at full voice for part if not all of the rehearsal.

**Mezzo-soprano**- the middle singing range for a female voice.

**Motif or Leitmotif**- a recurring musical theme used to identify an emotion, person, place, or object.

**Opera**- a dramatic presentation which is set to music. Almost all of it is sung, and the orchestra is an equal partner with the singers. Like a play, an opera is acted on stage with costumes, scenery, makeup, etc. Opera is the plural form of the Latin word opus, which means "work".

**Opera buffa**- (Italian)- an opera about ordinary people, usually, but not always comic. First developed in the eighteenth century.

**Opera seria**- (Italian)- a serious opera. The usual characters are gods and goddesses, or ancient heroes.

**Opera-comique**- (French) or Singspiel (German)- a form of opera which contains spoken dialogue.

**Operetta**- lighthearted opera with spoken dialogue, such as a musical.

**Orchestra**- an ensemble, led by a conductor, that is comprised of string, woodwind, brass and percussion instruments.

**Orchestra pit**- sunken area in front of the stage where the orchestra sits.

**Overture**- an orchestral introduction to the opera played before the curtain rises. Usually longer than a prelude and can be played as a separate piece.

**Pitch**- how high or low a note sounds.

**Prelude**- a short introduction that leads into an act without pause.

**Prima Donna**- literally, "first lady" in Italian. The leading woman in an opera. Because of the way some of them behaved in the past, it often refers to someone who is acting in a superior and demanding fashion. The term for a leading man is primo uomo.

**Principal**- a major singing role, or the singer who performs such a role.

**Production**- the combination of sets, costumes, props, and lights etc.

**Props**- objects carried or used on stage by the performers.

**Proscenium**- the front opening of the stage which frames the action.

**Quartet**- four singers or the music that is written for four singers. Also quintet, sextet, etc.

**Raked Stage**- a stage that slants downwards towards the audience.

**Recitative**- lines of dialogue that are sung, usually with no recognizable melody. It is used to advance the plot.

**Rehearsal**- a working session in which the singers prepare for public performance.

**Score**- the written music of an opera or other musical work.

**Serenade**- a piece of music honouring someone or something, an extension of the traditional performance of a lover beneath the window of his mistress.

**Soprano**- the highest range of the female singing voice.

**Soubrette**- (French)- pert young female character with a light soprano voice.

**Spinto**- (Italian)- a lyric voice that has the power and incisiveness for dramatic climaxes.

**Stage Areas**- refers to the various sections of the stage as seen by those on stage.

**Stage Director**- the person in charge of the action on stage. He or she shows the singers, chorus and cast where and when to move and helps them create their characters. The stage director develops a concept for how the entire performance should look and feel. He or she works closely with the stage managers, lighting designer, set designers, costume designer and wig and make-up artists to make his or her vision into reality.

**Stage Manager**- the person who coordinates and manages elements of the performance.

**Supernumeraries**- (Supers)- appear on stage in costume in non-singing and usually, non-speaking roles.

**Surtitles**- the English translations of the opera's language, in this production Italian, that are projected above the stage during a performance to help the audience follow the story. Much like subtitles in a foreign film.

**Synopsis**- a short summary of the story of the opera.

**Tableau**- occurs at the end of a scene or act, when all cast members on stage freeze in position and remain that way until the curtain closes. It looks as though that moment has been captured in a photograph.

**Tempo**- speed of the music.

**Tenor**- the highest natural adult male voice.

**Trill**- very quick alternation between two adjacent notes. See coloratura.

**Trio**- an ensemble of three singers or the music that is written for three singers.

**Trouser role**- the role of an adolescent boy or young man, written for and sung by a woman, often a mezzosoprano. Also known as a pants role.

**Verismo**- describes a realistic style of opera that started in Italy at the end of the 19th century.

## What is a sitzprobe??

Pronounced "zits-probe" this German word is not what you may think! It is the name given to the type of rehearsal that is held the first day of moving on to the main stage. For the first time, the principals and chorus are together with the Maestro and the orchestra. The entire opera is sung through without any costumes or blocking. This gives everyone a chance to check the ensemble and balance between the singing and the orchestra (remember, up until now rehearsals have been accompanied by piano.)



## AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

The following list will help you (and those around you) enjoy the experience of a night at the opera:

- Dress to be comfortable. Many people enjoy dressing up in formal attire.
- Arrive on time. Latecomers disturb the singers and others in the audience. Latecomers will only be seated at suitable breaks - often not until intermission.
- Find your seat with the help of your teacher or an usher.
- Remove your hat. This is customary and is respectful to the artists and to people sitting behind you.
- Turn off cell phones, ipods, pagers, digital watch alarms and all electronic devices.
- Leave your camera at home. A flash can be very disturbing to the artists and audience members.
- Save all conversations, eating and drinking, and chewing gum, for the intermission. Talking and eating can be disruptive to other audience members and distracts from your ability to be absorbed by the show. The audience is critical to the success of the show – without you, there can be no performance.
- Settle in and get comfortable before the performance begins. Read your program before the performance – rustling through the program during the show can disrupt everyone.
- Clap as the lights are dimmed and the conductor appears and bows to the audience. Watch as the conductor then turns to the orchestra and takes up his or her baton to signal the beginning of the opera.
- Listen to the prelude or overture before the curtain rises. It is part of the performance. It is an opportunity to identify common musical themes that may reoccur during the opera.
- 
- Read the English surtitles projected above the stage.
- Sit still during the performance. Only whisper when it is absolutely necessary, as a whisper is heard all over the theatre, and NEVER (except in an emergency) stand during the performance.
- Applaud (or shout Bravo!) at the end of an aria or chorus piece to show your enjoyment. The end of a piece can be identified by a pause in the music.
- Laugh when something is funny – this is a performance and you are expected to respond!
- Listen for subtleties in the music. The tempo, volume and complexity of the music and singing often depict the “feeling” or “sense” of the action or character.
- Notice repeated words or phrases; they are usually significant.
- **Finally, have fun and enjoy the show!!!**

# WHAT'S IN A REVIEW? LET'S REVIEW

Being a music critic has its rewards -- but it also has its drawbacks. On one hand, you get to go to tons of concerts -- and you get in free. On the other hand, you can't just sit back and enjoy the listening experience. You spend most of the time analyzing, evaluating and scribbling notes about what you're hearing and seeing.

## Star Ratings



One especially difficult part of the job is deciding the star ratings. Reviewers are required to rate performances on a five-star scale, five being the highest rating.

## Criteria

**Musical interpretation and expression:** Did the soloist/ensemble project and capture the spirit of the work?

**Technical execution:** Was this an accurate, well prepared performance?

**Creativity and originality:** Did the conductor/musicians bring their own personality to the work, possibly showing us something new?

**Programming:** Was this a well-balanced, cohesive combination of musical choices?

Quality/style of works: This applies especially to new works.

**Venue:** Was it suitable for the genre of show, offering good acoustics and sightlines?

**Costuming (in opera or some pops concerts):** Did they add authenticity and flair to the performance?

**Choreography (opera and some pops concerts):** Was it well done, creative and suitable?

**Demeanour:** Did the performers project personality, confidence, energy, etc. and connect with the audience?

**Atmosphere:** What was the overall feeling at this concert? Was it an event? Was there warmth, excitement, etc.?

**Introductory remarks:** Were they useful in giving us background that would enhance the listening experience or were they just lengthy lists of housekeeping items that detracted from the reason we were there?

## Considerations contributing to an overall rating

### Gut feeling

One thing we can't ignore, as human beings, is the gut feeling we get at a concert. This is the intuitive, perhaps partly emotional reaction to a performance. Every work and every performance contributes to the whole, and not until the end can one render a decision.



# STUDENT ACTIVITIES



## Optional Activity #1 – A Review

### Step 1 – Think-Group-Share

Individually students will write, in point form, the answers to the following questions:

1. What did you like about the opera? What did you dislike?
2. What did you think about the sets, props and costumes?
3. Would you have done something differently? Why?
4. What were you expecting? Did it live up to your expectations?
5. What did you think of the singers' portrayal of their characters?

Break the students into groups to discuss their feelings and reactions to the production. Have the students write on poster papers their answers or important points of their discussion. Encourage the students to go beyond the questions posed. Place their poster papers on the walls.

### Step 2 – Class Discussion

Have the whole class examine the poster papers and discuss the different ideas from each group.

### Step 3 – Outlining your review

Go over the essential aspects of a review including: a clearly stated purpose, a coherent comparison/contrast organizational pattern, a summary paragraph capturing the interest of the reader, precise nouns, revision for consistency of ideas. You might give your students a few samples of reviews for fine arts events from the newspaper as examples – or ask them to bring in some reviews they find themselves. Have the students fill out the review outline worksheet below. Once this has been completed, students may write their rough draft.

Purpose (why are you writing this and who is your audience?)

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Plot Synopsis (including who sang what role, etc.)

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Paragraph 1 (compare and contrast, things you liked or didn't like)

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Paragraph 2 (compare and contrast, things you liked or didn't like)

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Paragraph 3 (compare and contrast, things you liked or didn't like)

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Summary/Closing Paragraph

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#### **Step 4 - Peer Conferencing**

Students will exchange reviews to critique and edit. Encourage the students to focus on effective coordination of ideas in sentences and the correct use of grammar and punctuation.

#### **Step 5 - Creating the final draft**

Have students make the appropriate adjustments to their reviews. You could also have the students type the pieces up and organize them into a newspaper.

### **Optional Activity #2 – A 19<sup>th</sup> Century Newspaper Review**

**Be a music critic in France. Students imagine they are living at the time of the first performance of *Carmen*.**

#### **Step 1 - Historical Research**

Students will need to learn about the historical context in Spain and France in the 1870s, around the time Bizet composed *Carmen*. They may want to learn more about what was happening in other art forms (e.g., literature and painting).

#### **Step 2 - Writing the Review**

Students may want to create a newspaper in which their review is included. The review itself could incorporate quotes and/or headlines from actual historical reviews. The students' reviews can follow a similar outline to that for the activity above, but they must remember the time period in which they are writing. If they design a newspaper, they can try to use similar type styles (font) and page layout as were used in the 1870s.

### Optional Activity #3 – Create a Costume, Set, Poster, News Ad, or Press Release

- **Sketch a costume** for a character in *Carmen*. The costume can be traditional or modern.
- **Draw a set** for a production of *Carmen*. The set can be traditional or modern.
- **Design a poster** for *Carmen* Student Night at the Opera, including the date, the time, and the people involved. The poster can be traditional or modern.
- **Create a newspaper ad** for *Carmen*. Include whatever you feel is the biggest "selling point" of the opera - what makes it exciting? Why should people come to see it?
- **Write a press release** about *Carmen* Student Night at the Opera, including the date, the time, the people involved, and why it would be exciting or fun to attend.

### Optional Activity #4 - Discussion Questions



1. What is Carmen's philosophy of how she will lead her life?
  2. How does Carmen's philosophy compare with that of Don José?
  3. Why was Micaëla introduced into the libretto? What does she represent?
  4. Compare the characters Micaëla and Carmen.
  5. Contrast the music sung by Micaëla and Carmen.
  6. Compare and contrast the characters Don José and Escamillo.
  7. Describe the function and importance of the chorus.
  8. Do the chorus add to the sense of realism?
9. What is the function of the chorus in the final scene of Act IV?
  10. Why is the opera's most dramatic musical theme (leitmotif) called the "fate" theme?
  11. How does Bizet's use of this musical leitmotif foreshadow the end of the opera?
  12. How would you describe the nature of Carmen's character?
  13. Who is the story about – Carmen or Don José?
  14. Which character changes or transforms as a result of the plot? How?
  15. Would you describe Carmen as a catalyst? Why?
  16. How does Bizet's music affect characterization and mood?
  17. How does Bizet's music support the realism of the story?
  18. What elements seen on stage would have been shocking to audiences in 1875?

Manitoba Opera would love to receive a copy of any activities produced by the students.  
Please forward them to the attention of:

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**Manitoba Opera**

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## Opera Comprehension Tests

### General Opera

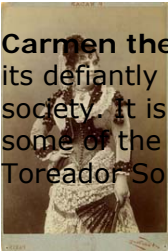
1. \_\_\_\_\_ A theatrical production incorporating both vocal and instrumental music, drama, and sometimes dance.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ The lowest male vocal range.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ An instrumental introduction to an opera.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ The area where the orchestra is seated.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ The female vocal range lying between soprano and contralto.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ A song for solo voice in an opera.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ The highest female vocal range.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ A song for two voices.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ The lowest female vocal range.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ The Italian word meaning "little book."
11. \_\_\_\_\_ The middle male vocal range.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ He/she has the artistic view for the performance of the opera.

### *Carmen*

1. Bizet's work as a composer has overshadowed how fine a \_\_\_\_\_ he was.
2. Name an historical event that occurred during Bizet's lifetime \_\_\_\_\_.
3. *Carmen* takes place in \_\_\_\_\_ (location & date).
4. *Carmen* is an early example of French \_\_\_\_\_ opera.
5. The opera *Carmen* is based on on a literary work by \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The libretto for *Carmen* was written by \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The role of Don José is sung by a \_\_\_\_\_ (name the singing voice).
7. The role of Carmen is sung by a \_\_\_\_\_ (name the singing voice).
8. The role of Escamillo is sung by a \_\_\_\_\_ (name the singing voice).

## BIZET: And Did You Know?



- **During the composer's lifetime:** Railroads helped create the suburbs of Paris. Baron Haussmann redesigned Paris, leveling entire districts and creating the city's modern face. A new opera house, the Palais Garnier, was built. War with Prussia, in 1871, brought down France's Second Empire, and 20,000 Parisians died fighting their own government during the Paris Commune.
- **Name game:** Bizet's given name was Alexandre-César-Léopold. He just liked Georges better.
- **Dual nature:** Bizet was sincere, guileless, and vivacious. However, he was also moody and indecisive, which caused a break in his marriage. A theater composer has to take charge of his librettists and the staging of a work, and deal effectively with theater directors. Bizet could do none of this, floating from project to project without a clear path. That's a major reason for his theatrical failures.
- **Highest praise:** Bizet's ability as a pianist, particularly as a sight-reader, was so great that Liszt pronounced him his equal.
- **Parisian to the core:** Aside from his three years in Italy after winning the Prix de Rome, Bizet rarely left Paris and its suburbs.
- **Recycler:** Bizet always reused material from unproduced or unfinished works. That's a good thing, because Bizet left a lot of unfinished work: Only six of 30 opera projects he started were ever completed.
- **Melody Man:** Bizet had a huge melodic gift. Aside from *Carmen*, *The Pearl Fishers* has recently become quite common onstage. Bizet's other operas are almost never produced. The L'Arlesienne suite is a staple of orchestral programs, along with the Symphony in C Major, written when he was 17. Many of his melodies (art-songs) are brilliant, and *Jeux d'enfants* is delightful.
- **Carmen the great:** Bizet's *Carmen* is a landmark in 19th-century opera for its grittiness, its defiantly sexual leading female character, and its non-heroic portrayal of a wide slice of society. It is consistently one of the five most performed operas in the world and contains some of the most famous opera melodies ever written, foremost the Habanera and the Toreador Song.

Galli-Marié was the original *Carmen*
- **To sing, or to speak:** The dialogue in *Carmen* was originally meant to be spoken. Recitatives were added by Bizet's friend Ernest Guiraud after the composer's death, to help broaden the work's appeal to producers.
- **Puccini's review:** "Yesterday I sneaked in for nothing to hear *Carmen*. It really is a beautiful work."