



2019/20
STUDY GUIDE

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2019/20 STUDY GUIDE

CARMEN

THE PRODUCTION

Fast Facts	4
Production Information	5
Introduction & Synopsis	6
The Principal Characters	8
The Principal Artists	9
The Composer	14
The Librettists	15
The Dramatist	16
Musical Highlights	17

HISTORICAL CONNECTION

Historical Background of <i>Carmen</i>	19
Who are the Roma?	22
<i>Carmen</i> in the 20 th Century	26
Evolving Perspectives on <i>Carmen</i>	27

STUDENT RESOURCES

Student Activities	28
Winnipeg Public Library Resources	37
Student Programming	38



Kirstin Chávez (Carmen) and David Pomeroy (Don José).
Carmen, 2010. Manitoba Opera. Photo: R. Tinker.

FAST FACTS

- Even though it is considered by many to be the most popular opera of all time, *Carmen* had a rocky start, and was not well received at its premiere.
- Rehearsing the opera for its premiere was a challenge; the orchestra found some parts of the score to be too difficult to play, and members of the chorus were shocked to find out that they had to act as individuals, even smoking and fighting on stage.
- Georges Bizet died shortly after *Carmen* was premiered. Following a production in Vienna later that year, the opera went on to achieve worldwide acclaim.
- Carmen* remains an extremely well-known and well-loved opera. Over the past decade, *Carmen* has been the third-most performed opera worldwide.
- Although the role of Carmen was written to be performed by a mezzo-soprano, several high-profile sopranos have taken on the role to critical acclaim, including Maria Callas and Leontyne Price.
- Traditionally, the tragic tale of *Carmen* ends with Don José killing Carmen in a fit of jealousy. Some modern productions have addressed the issue of violence perpetrated against women by altering the ending, in which Carmen kills Don José in self-defense.
- The “Habanera” from Act I and the Toreador Song from Act II are among the best-known opera arias.
- A habanera is a style of Spanish-American dance popular in Cuba in the 19th century. Carmen’s famous “Habanera” is an adaptation of a song by the Spanish musician Sebastián Iradier, although Bizet believed it to be a folk melody when he composed the opera.
- Music from *Carmen* has been used in commercials (advertising everything from pasta to Doritos), television cartoons (*Tom & Jerry*, *Animaniacs*, *Family Guy*), and movies, including *Bad News Bears* (1976) and more recently Disney/Pixar’s *Up* (2009).



David Pomeroy (Don José) and Kirstin Chávez (Carmen). *Carmen*, Manitoba Opera 2010. Photo: R. Tinker.

THE PRODUCTION

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

March 28, 31, April 3, 2020
Dress Rehearsal / Student Night: March 26, 2020

Centennial Concert Hall

Music composed by George Bizet
Libretto by Ludovic Halévy & Henri Meilhac
Based on the novella by Prosper Mérimée

Approximately 3 hours in four acts, including two 20-minute intermissions

Premiered Performance: Opéra-Comique, Paris, March 3, 1875

Sung in French with spoken French dialogue; projected English translations

PRINCIPAL CAST

Carmen	Mezzo-soprano	NORA SOUROUZIAN
Don José	Tenor	DAVID POMEROY
Escamillo	Baritone	TIMOTHY RENNER
Micaëla	Soprano	LIDA SZKWAREK
Frasquita	Soprano	LARA SECORD-HAID
Mercédès	Mezzo-soprano	LAURELLE CZAPLINSKI
Moralès/Dancairo	Bass-baritone	JONATHON KIRBY
Remendado	Tenor	JEAN-PHILIPPE LAZURE
Zuniga	Bass	GILES TOMKINS

ALSO APPEARING

Lillas Pastia	Spoken	TBD
A Guide	Spoken	TBD

Manitoba Opera Chorus

Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra

PRODUCTION

Conductor	TYRONE PATERSON	Lighting Design	BILL WILLIAMS
Director	BRIAN DEEDRICK	Stage Manager	ROBERT PEL
Chorus Master	TADEUSZ BIERNACKI	Assistant Stage Managers	KATHRYN BALL, HEATHER LEE BRERETON
Set Design	EDMONTON OPERA	Projected Titles	SHELDON JOHNSON
Costume Design	MALABAR		

INTRODUCTION & SYNOPSIS

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 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 Hungarian (or "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.



Alain Coulombe (Zuniga) and Kristin Chávez (Carmen) in *Carmen*, Manitoba Opera, 2010. Photo: R. Tinker.

SYNOPSIS

Setting: In and near Seville, about 1820.

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, 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 reenter 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 Carmen. 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. Carmen slips away and Don José is arrested.

THE PRODUCTION

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: "Nous avons 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



Kirstin Chávez (Carmen) and David Pomeroy (Don José)
Carmen, Manitoba Opera 2010. Photo: R. Tinker.

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.

THE PRODUCTION

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

CARMEN A free-spirited and confident Roma woman

DON JOSÉ A corporal of the dragoons

MICAËLA A young woman from José's home village

ESCAMILLO A renowned bullfighter

ZUNIGA A lieutenant of the dragoons, José's superior officer

FRASQUITA A friend of Carmen

MERCEDES A friend of Carmen

DANCAIRO A smuggler

REMENDADO A smuggler

MORALES A corporoal of the dragoons

LILLAS PASTIA An innkeeper



Carmen, 2010. Manitoba Opera. Photo: R. Tinker

THE PRINCIPAL ARTISTS



NORA SOUROUZIAN CARMEN

"[Ms. Sourouzian's Carmen is] a subtle portrayal of an attractive, sexy, confident young woman who knows exactly who she is and what she wants."

- Liz Byron, *Aisle Say Twin Cities*, 2015.

French-Canadian mezzo-soprano Nora Sourouzian is an acclaimed international interpreter of Carmen, and makes her Manitoba Opera debut in that role. Ms. Sourouzian has performed the title role with Theater St. Gallen, Palm Beach Opera, Welsh National Opera, Den Norske Opera, Opéra de Québec, Oper Leipzig, Minnesota Opera, Oper Köln, Latvian National Opera, Teatro Lirico di Cagliari, Teatro Comunale di Bologna, Latvian National Opera, Teatro Amilcare Ponchielli Cremona, Oper Klagenfurt, Opernfestspiele St. Margarethen, Teatro Sociale di Como, and Opéra de Lausanne, both in Lausanne and on tour to Japan.



DAVID POMEROY DON JOSÉ

Canadian tenor David Pomeroy returns to the Manitoba Opera stage to reprise the role of Don José, which he last performed in Winnipeg in 2010. Mr. Pomeroy is enjoying a career that is placing him in the spotlight on the world's most important stages. The Newfoundland native made his Metropolitan Opera debut, portraying the title role of

Hoffmann in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, opposite soprano Anna Netrebko under the baton of Maestro James Levine. He has performed with Manitoba Opera in recent seasons as Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* (2017) and as Florestan in *Fidelio* (2014).

THE PRINCIPAL ARTISTS



TIMOTHY RENNER ESCAMILLO

“Boasting a rich resonant baritone,” (*Greenville News*) Timothy Renner strides onto the Canadian opera stage with Manitoba Opera as Escamillo, a role he recently debuted with the new National Theatre in Tokyo. Other recent debuts include Vero Beach Opera as Eisenstein in their new *Die Fledermaus* in January 2016 and in performance with the

Ravinia Festival singing five selected “Romances” by Rachmaninoff with the Ravinia Stearns Music Institute Program (2016). In May of 2019, Mr. Renner was a finalist in the 2019 Jensen Foundation Vocal Competition.

Mr. Renner’s appearance as Escamillo is his debut performance with Manitoba Opera.



LIDA SZKWAREK MICAËLA

“Soprano Lida Szkwerek turned the character of Micaëla into one of considerable depth, well acted and well sung.”

-Edmonton Journal

Born in Winnipeg, and currently based in Toronto, soprano Lida Szkwerek is quickly establishing herself as a prominent young artist on the Canadian opera scene. In 2018 she debuted as Gretel in Humperdinck’s *Hansel and Gretel* with Guelph Symphony Orchestra. In 2017, Ms. Szkwerek was praised “with vocal talent and technical skill of professional calibre,” by the *Calgary Herald* in her portrayal of Filumena in the remounting of John Estacio’s *Filumena* with Calgary Opera. A graduate of Calgary Opera’s Emerging Artist Program Ms Szkwerek also had the honour of competing as a semi-finalist with the Metropolitan Opera’s National Council Auditions in New York.

THE PRINCIPAL ARTISTS



LARA SECORD-HAID FRASQUITA

Praised by international publications, soprano Lara Secord-Haid has been described as “possessing a rich and expressive overall quality” (*Atencion San Miguel*), “charismatic” (*Opera Today*) and was praised for her “flinty acuity” by the *New York Times*.

Ms. Secord-Haid is enjoying a diverse and dynamic international career. Recent performances include Sophie in *Werther* with Manitoba Opera (2017), a concert in the Jeonju International Sori Festival in Korea, and a concert at Opera Helikon in Moscow, a 15-city operatic concert tour throughout China, Cendrillon in *Cendrillon* (New York Lyric Opera), a solo concert with Opera San Miguel (San Miguel, Mexico), Marsinah in *Kismet* (Little Opera Winnipeg), and Miss Jessel in *The Turn of the Screw* (Opera on the Avalon).



LAURELLE CZAPLINSKI MERCÉDÈS

Winnipeg-based mezzo-soprano Laurelle Czaplinski made her operatic debut in Saskatoon Opera’s *Die Zauberflöte* as Second Lady (2014), and joined Vancouver Opera’s Yulanda M. Faris Young Artist Program for the 2014/15 Season. Recent seasons’ performances have included a recital in Toronto with up-and-coming composer Ian Cusson, singing in Edmonton

Opera’s production of *Elektra*, and the role of Kate Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* with Manitoba Opera (2017). Ms. Czaplinski was also a 2016 recipient of Opera America’s Emerging Artists Grant Awards. She has sung the role of Mercédès for Vancouver Opera “with verve and great stage presence” (*Vancouver Classical Music*).

THE PRINCIPAL ARTISTS



JOHNATHON KIRBY MORALÈS/DANCAIRO

From Newmarket, Ontario, Mr. Kirby made his professional opera debut with Opera Nova Scotia in their Canadian premier of Mozart's *Zaide*. He has appeared in subsequent Opera Nova Scotia seasons for their mainstage productions of *The Beggar's Opera* as Macheath, *Don Giovanni* as Masetto, and *Luisa Miller* as Miller. He received critical acclaim for his

portrayal of Figaro in *The Barber of Seville* with Opera 5 in Toronto (2018). Mr. Kirby brings to every performance his "heroic baritone" (*Schmopera*), and a "total command of the stage" (*Opera Canada*).

Mr. Kirby made his Manitoba Opera debut in 2018 as Masetto in *Don Giovanni*.



JEAN-PHILIPPE LAZURE REMENDADO

Jean-Philippe Lazure is a graduate of the Canadian Opera Company's elite Ensemble Studio. He performed the roles of Remendado in their mainstage productions of *Carmen*, Don Curzio in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and Conte Almaviva (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*). Mr. Lazure portrayed Cartier and Father Andre in Canadian Opera Company's acclaimed 2017 production of

Louis Riel in Toronto, Ottawa, and Quebec.

Mr. Lazure makes his Manitoba Opera debut as Remendado in this season's production of *Carmen*.

THE PRINCIPAL ARTISTS



GILES TOMKINS ZUNIGA

Giles Tomkins' operatic roles include Don Basilio (*The Barber of Seville*), Raimondo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Pistola (*Falstaff*), Superintendent Budd (*Albert Herring*), Leporello/Commendatore (*Don Giovanni*), and Sergeant of Police (*Pirates of Penzance*). He has been engaged by Vancouver

Opera, Toronto Operetta Theatre, Pacific Opera Victoria, and Edmonton Opera. Mr. Tomkins performed the role of Colline in Manitoba Opera's 2014 production of *La Bohème*.

On the contemporary music scene, Mr. Tomkins starred as Gandalf in Dean Burry's *The Hobbit* with Canadian Children's Opera Company and joined the cast of *The Bells of Baddeck*, Lorna MacDonald and Dean Burry's music drama based on the life of Alexander Graham Bell.

Mr. Tomkins' last performance with Manitoba Opera was as Don Basilio in *The Barber of Seville* in 2019.

THE COMPOSER

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 enrolled him at the Paris Conservatory when he was barely 10 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).

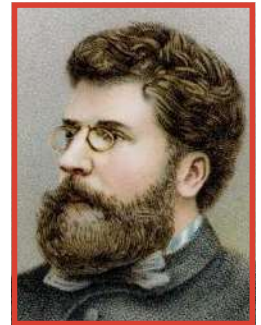
In 1857 Bizet won the Prix de Rome scholarship for study in Italy; his first opera dates from the same year, the one-act *Le Docteur Miracle*. Besides composing, he often worked as a rehearsal pianist and orchestrator, which gave him an uncommon familiarity with the works of the Parisian theater. Today Bizet is remembered primarily as an opera composer, although he did not win fame as such during his short lifetime. In his 37 years he wrote six operas that survive in a performable format, as well as nearly 30 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 18 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 theatre 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.

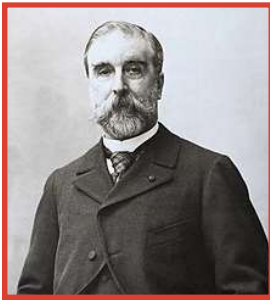
Carmen was drawn from a popular short novel of the same title by Prosper Mérimée (1845), inspired in turn by the writing of George Henry Borrow, an Englishman who had lived among the Spanish Gypsies. Bizet's libretto, conventionalized for the conservative, bourgeois



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 in the world. Several of its melodies are familiar to millions who have never seen or heard the opera.

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 Périochole*.

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 Périochole*, 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.

WHAT IS A LIBRETTO?

Libretto means "little book" in Italian. It refers to the written text of an opera set to music by the composer. Today, we commonly refer to an opera as being "by" the composer of the music, but the text is a vital component and is normally written first. In earlier times it was often regarded as more important than the music, and it was common for audience members to purchase the libretto to read.



Early composers were usually contracted to set music to a pre-existing text. Only later did composers (such as Mozart and Verdi) work in close collaboration with their librettists. A few composers - notably Wagner - wrote their own texts.

THE DRAMATIST

PROSPER MÉRIMÉE

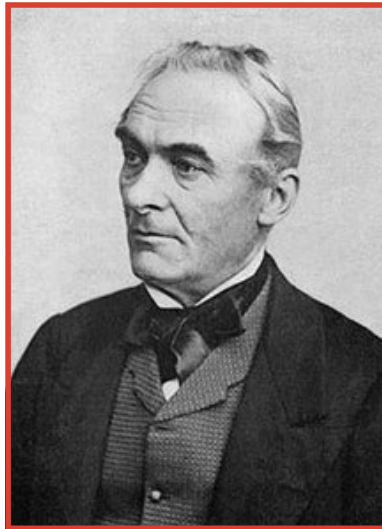
Prosper Mérimée (1803–1870) was a French dramatist, historian, archaeologist, and short story writer. He is perhaps best known for his novella “Carmen”, which became the basis of Bizet’s opera *Carmen*.

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

Mérimée loved mysticism, history, the unusual, and the mystification, the historical fiction popularized 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, and he was instrumental in the restoration and preservation of many historic sites in France, including the Cathedral of Notre Dame and the citadel Carcassonne. In this 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. He coached the Countess’ daughter, Eugenie, during the courtship with Napoleon III (though his correspondence indicates he was opposed to their marriage). When the daughter became 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 Sand.

Prosper Mérimée died in Cannes, France.

***George Sand** was the pseudonym used by Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin, a French novelist who is recognized as one of the most notable authors of the Romantic era in Europe. She was known for adopting mannerisms that were, in 19th-century France, thought to be appropriate

for men, but not for women, such as wearing trousers and smoking in public. Sand was very active politically in the 1840s; she was a staunch proponent of women’s rights and a supporter of the working class, authoring literary criticism and political texts, and even publishing her own newspaper. Many of her works draw on her own life experiences.

She wrote novels based on her early life in the French countryside, autobiographical works for theatre, memoirs, and stories based on her romantic relationships, including that of her involvement with pianist and composer Frédéric Chopin.



MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS

HABANERA (from *Carmen*, Act I)

Elina Garanča (Carmen)
Metropolitan Opera 2009

<https://youtu.be/K2snTkaD64U>

“In a way, every woman has a part of Carmen inside, a desire for emancipation & freedom. I’ve been fortunate to sing in many productions, modern & traditional, & the most important aspect has always been to capture the spirit of Carmen: her desire for freedom & independence.”

- Elina Garanča, 2018



Elina Garanča (Carmen), *Carmen*, Metropolitan Opera, 2009.
Photo: Ken Howard.

TOREADOR SONG (“Votre toast...”)

Mariusz Kwiecien (Escamillo)
Metropolitan Opera 2009

<https://youtu.be/Bf5VG2vMTIk>

(see next page for translation)



Mariusz Kwiecien (Escamillo), *Carmen*, Metropolitan Opera, 2009. Photo: Ken Howard.

CARMEN: ENTRACTE (Between Act II and III)

Berliner Philharmoniker, 2010
Gustavo Dudamel, conductor

<https://youtu.be/eChLCFAGyx0>

“When people feel that something really special is happening on the stage, things change.”

- Gustavo Dudamel



Berliner Philharmoniker, 2010 Gala Concert.

TOREADOR SONG (“VOTRE TOAST...”)

CHORUS

Hurrah! Hurrah for the Toreador!
Hurrah! Hurrah for Escamillo!

ESCAMILLO

I can return your toast,
gentlemen, for soldiers -
yes - and bullfighters understand each other;
fighting is their game!
The ring is packed, it's a holiday,
the ring is full from top to bottom.
The spectators, losing their wits,
yell at each other at the tops of their voices!
Exclamations, cries and uproar
carried to the pitch of fury!
For this is the fiesta of courage,
this is the fiesta of the stouthearted!
Let's go! On guard! Ah!
Toreador, on guard!
And remember, yes, remember as you fight,
that two dark eyes are watching you,
that love awaits you!
Toreador, love awaits you!

CHORUS

Toreador, on guard! etc.

ESCAMILLO

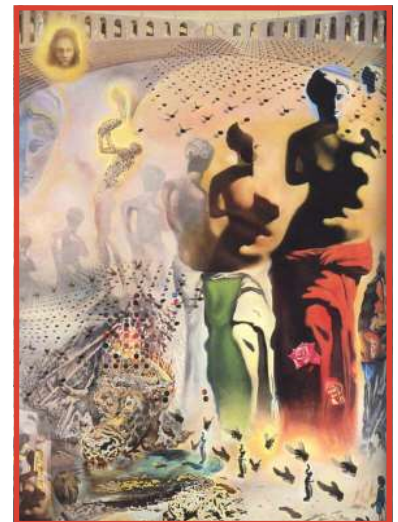
Suddenly everyone falls silent;
ah - what's happening?
No more shouts, this is the moment!
The bull comes bounding
out of the toril!
He charges, comes in, strikes!
A horse rolls over, dragging down a picador!
“Ah! Bravo bull!” roars the crowd;
the bull turns, comes back,
comes back and strikes again!
Shaking his banderillas,
maddened with rage, he runs about!
The ring is covered with blood!
Men jump clear, leap the barriers.
It's your turn now!
Let's go! On guard! Ah!
Toreador, on guard! etc.



Pablo Picasso, *Bullfight III*, 1960.



Pablo Picasso, *Bullfight Scene*, 1960.



Salvador Dali, *The Hallucinogenic Toreador*, 1968-1970.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF *CARMEN*

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



Opéra Comique, Paris

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 Opéra-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.



Georges Bizet

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.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF *CARMEN*

Celestine Galli-Marié as Carmen by
Henri Lucien Doucet

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 paramount. She has rejected all restraints of accepted society. The fact that Carmen is a Roma woman 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 were too much for the opening night audience, the critics and even Parisian society at large.

The failure of this early example of French *vérisme* 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



Ernest Guiraud

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF *CARMEN*

well as an expanded bullfighters procession. The composer Johannes Brahms saw the Viennese production 20 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.



Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

The triumph of Bizet's *Carmen* had been predicted by a towering figure of the music world, the Russian composer Peter Ilyich 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 10 years *Carmen* will be the most popular opera in the whole world." Those prophetic words have been borne out by history.



Géraldine Chauvet (*Carmen*) and Jeffrey Gwaltney (*Don José*), *Carmen*, 2016, Edmonton Opera. Photo: Nanc Price.

NATURALISME, VERISMO AND REALISM

In Italian they called it verismo, in French naturalisme. 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 Roma 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.



Kate Aldrich (*Carmen*), *Carmen*, 2014, Vancouver Opera. Photo: Tim Matheson.

WHO ARE THE ROMA?

CARMEN & ROMA HISTORY

Carmen and her friends are Roma, who have historically been referred to as “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 cultural identity.



Carmen, 2010. Manitoba Opera. Photo: R. Tinker.

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 “gadjé,” 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 Roma history. They first left India about 1,000 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.



WHO ARE THE ROMA?

MUSIC & 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

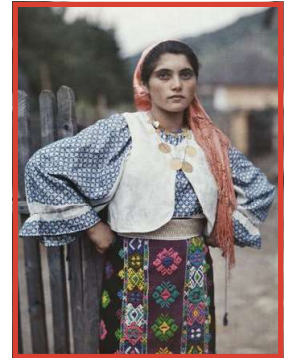
music, flamenco, and jazz. The Gipsy Kings are perhaps the most famous Roma musical performers. Other musical and non-musical performers claim that they were descended from Roma, among them Yul Brynner, Rita Hayworth, and Bob Hoskins. Carmen's skill at singing and dancing is quite true to her character.

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?

FORTUNE TELLING

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 fortune telling, 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.

WHO ARE THE ROMA?

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.

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 authors 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.

Prominent Romani Canadians include Hungarian-Canadian jazz musician Robi Botos, and author and activist Ronald Lee.



Robi Botos won the Juno Award for Jazz Album of the Year: Solo for his album *Old Soul* in 2019.

A TIMELINE OF THE ROMA 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.

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.



“Gypsy Woman” by Nikolai Yaroshenko (1886)

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.

CARMEN IN THE 20TH CENTURY

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



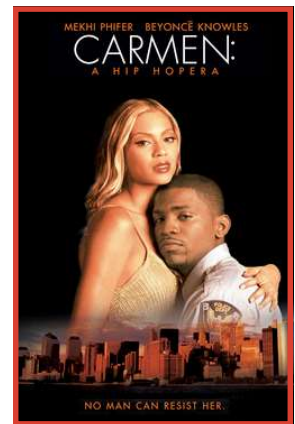
Otto Preminger's film *Carmen Jones* is often considered a landmark - both positively and negatively - in the history of black representations in the cinema. Dorothy Dandridge stars as Carmen Jones, tempestuous employee of a parachute factory.

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.



EVOLVING PERSPECTIVES ON CARMEN

Carmen's 1875 premiere came as a shock to the Opéra-Comique's (predominately male) middle-class subscribers. They were ruffled at the sight of a woman who smokes, who moves through her life making no excuses or apologies for her actions, and who is aware of the power of her own sexuality. An early review reveals the deeply entrenched misogynistic attitudes of *Carmen's* first audience:

"A plague on these females vomited from hell!...To preserve the morale and the



Ginger Costa-Jackson (*Carmen*) and Rodion Pogosssov (*Escamillo*). *Carmen*, 2019, Seattle Opera. Photo: Sunny Martini.

behavior of the impressionable dragoons and toreadors who surround this demoiselle, she should be gagged, a stop put to the unbridled twisting of her hips. The pathological condition of this unfortunate woman, consecrated unceasingly

and pitilessly to the fires of the flesh...is fortunately a rare case, more likely to inspire the solicitude of physicians than to interest the decent spectators who come to the Opéra-Comique accompanied by their wives and daughters...ingenious orchestral details, risky dissonances, instrumental subtlety cannot express the uterine frenzies of Mlle. Carmen." - Oscar Commetant, *Le Siecle*, 1875

Much of the ongoing conversation about opera focuses on the outdated ideas that permeate much of the repertoire, especially regarding attitudes towards women and ethnic minorities (as a Roma woman, the character of Carmen represents both). Where *Carmen* is concerned, some recent productions have featured altered endings

(in which Carmen survives, or even kills Don José in self-defense), and many companies pair the opera with presentations or panels that discuss gender, bias, and violence.

Fast forward to the present day, and more recent reviews applaud productions that take a direction more consistent with modern attitudes towards women. One reviewer writes of Seattle Opera's 2019 production:

"This production makes it clear that the more Carmen is played as a relatable person and less as a symbolic archetype, the less culpable she seems for 'making' Jose snap. Here, his emotional collapse, from Act 1's Boy Scout to Act 4's demented killer, is not played as something that Carmen does to him; not every *Carmen* I've seen makes so shrewd a distinction. No victim-blaming here: [Seattle Opera's] *Carmen* is a piece about one man's pathetic inability to deal with a strong, self-determining (as opposed to callously manipulative) woman, and the destructiveness that results."
- *Seattle Magazine*, May 2019



Zanda Švēde (*Carmen*), *Carmen*, 2019, Seattle Opera. Photo: Sunny Martini.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Curriculum Connections to the Manitoba Curriculum Frameworks for Grade 9 - 12 are provided below each activity. For a more in-depth look at the connections, view our Manitoba Curriculum Connections documents at <http://mbopera.ca/school-programs/study-guides/>

ACTIVITY #1 USING THE FIVE C'S

Have Your Students Analyze the Opera as Drama

CHARACTERS

Are they interesting? Believable? Are their actions, words, thoughts consistent?

CONCLUSION

How well does the conclusion work? Is it consistent? Satisfying? Believable?

CONFLICT

What conflicts are established? How are they resolved?

CONTEXT

What are the historical, physical, and emotional settings? Sets and costumes?

CLIMAX

To what climax does the conflict lead?

DIRECTIONS

- Give students the synopsis to read and have them re-tell the story after they have read it.
- Ask comprehensive questions.
- Present and discuss the composer and librettist.
- Listen to excerpts from the opera. Watch a DVD of the opera. Have students identify and recognize recurring themes.
- Discuss the historical background, emphasizing the visual and performing arts and history-social science frameworks. Discuss the results of certain events. Whom did they affect? How? Why? Did any changes occur as a result?
- Review the glossary of terms.
- Have the students watch for references to themes in the opera in their everyday lives. The internet, radio, TV, magazines, and movies often refer back to classics.

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 1.2.1; 2.1.2; 5.2.2

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-M2; DR-C1; DR-R3

Music Curriculum Connections: M-M2; M-C2; M-R1

ACTIVITY #2 CREATE A PRODUCTION

- Choose a time and place to set your production.
- Have the students design a poster for *Carmen* including such details as the date, the time, and the people involved.
- Have them draw a set for a production of the opera.
- They might also sketch a costume, wig, and makeup for a character in *Carmen*.
- Have the students write a media release about *Carmen* including the date, the time, the people involved, and why it would be exciting or fun to attend.
- Have the students create an ad for the opera. Include whatever you feel is the biggest “selling point” of the opera - what makes it exciting? Why should people come to see it?

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 2.3.5; 2.3.4; 4.1.2

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-C2; DR-C3

Music Curriculum Connections: M-C2; M-C3

ACTIVITY #3 A REVIEW

STEP 1 THINK-GROUP-SHARE

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

- What did you like about the opera?
What did you dislike?
- What did you think about the sets, props, and costumes?
- If you were the stage director, would you have done something differently? Why?
- What were you expecting? Did it live up to your expectations?
- 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.

STEP 2 CLASS DISCUSSION

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

STUDENT RESOURCES

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, and revision for consistency of ideas. You might give your students a few samples of reviews for arts events – or ask them to bring in some reviews they find themselves. Have the students fill out the review outline, then complete a rough draft.

- Purpose (why are you writing this and who is your audience?)
- Plot Synopsis (including who sang what role, etc.)
- Paragraph 1 (compare and contrast things you liked or didn't like)
- Paragraph 2 (compare and contrast things you liked or didn't like)
- Paragraph 3 (compare and contrast things you liked or didn't like)
- Summary/Closing Paragraph

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 and organize them into a newspaper.

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 1.1.1; 1.1.2; 1.2.2; 3.1.3; 3.3.1; 4.1.3; 4.3.1; 4.3.2; 4.3.3; 4.4.1; 4.2.2; 5.2.1; 5.1.1

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-R1; DR-R2; DR-R3; DR-R4

Music Curriculum Connections: M-R1; M-R2; M-R3; M-R4

ACTIVITY #4 ACT OUT THE STORY

Have students consider the characters and the role they play in the story. Choose one of the following:

CARMEN / DON JOSÉ / ESCAMILLO / MICAËLA / FRASQUITA / MORALÈS

If you were going to play this character, you would have to discover, create, and imagine background, personality, and physical qualities. Some clues are provided in the story and the music and some you need to make up yourself.

PRETEND YOU ARE THAT CHARACTER AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- What motivates you? How does this affect your actions? What obstacles stand in your way?
- What steps in the opera do you take to achieve your objectives? What are the results?
- What obstacles are beyond your control (laws, social status, others' actions)?
- What are your (character's) greatest strengths? Greatest weaknesses?
- What is your relationship to the other characters?
- How is your character's personality expressed through the music of the opera?
- Can you think of a modern-day character who has similar characteristics and traits?
- If your character were alive today, how would s/he be more or less successful?
- What different steps would s/he take to achieve an objective?

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 1.1.1; 2.1.2; 3.3.2

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-M1; DR-M2; DR-M3

ACTIVITY #5 WRITE A LETTER

Have the students choose a moment in the story and have one character write a letter to another. Explore how they would be feeling about the events of the day.

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 1.1.2; 1.1.3; 2.3.5; 4.2.2; 4.1.2; 4.1.3; 5.2.2

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-R3

ACTIVITY #6 CAST *CARMEN*

Have the students cast modern-day singers or bands as the performers in *Carmen*. Who did you choose? What are their costumes like? What did you base your decisions on?

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 2.3.1; 2.2.1; 2.2.2; 4.1.2; 5.2.2

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-M1; DR-C3; DR-R3

Music Curriculum Connections: M-C2; M-R4

ACTIVITY #7 RESEARCH AND REPORT

Have the students study the history and politics of France at the time that Bizet was writing *Carmen*. What authors were popular? What scientific discoveries were being made? How did the social and political life in France compare to that in Canada at the time?

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 2.2.1; 2.2.2; 3.3.1; 3.3.3; 3.2.2; 3.2.3; 4.3.1; 4.3.2; 4.3.3; 4.2.2; 4.2.3; 5.2.2

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-C2

Music Curriculum Connections: M-C2

ACTIVITY #8 *CARMEN* MOOD BOARD

Often before artists and designers create their work, they make a mood board to set the tone for the piece. This is usually a poster-sized piece of paper covered in images and words, usually from the pages of magazines and newspapers, that together communicates the complex mood of the piece in a way that words can't. It's the same as making a collage, except a mood board is for the purpose of communicating a focused concept.

Have your students go through a stack of old magazines and newspapers to create a mood board for *Carmen*. They can create one each or work together on a large one for the class. Consider elements like colours, textures, phrases, faces, patterns, and images that represent the opera.

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 2.3.5; 2.3.4; 2.2.3; 4.1.1; 4.1.2; 4.1.3; 4.4.1; 5.1.1

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-M3; DR-R3

Music Curriculum Connections: M-R2

ACTIVITY #9 MUSICAL INTERPRETATION OF LITERATURE

STEP 1 PREPARE A MUSICAL OUTLINE

Working in small groups, have your students choose a play, novel, or story that they've read and think about how they'd go about adapting it into an opera. Have them write out an outline and try to structure the beginnings of the opera. Which parts of the drama would be highlighted with which types of music? Would they have a large chorus to back up the principal singers or would the opera be more intimate? Which singing voices (soprano, baritone, tenor, etc.) would best suit each character?

STEP 2 COMPOSE AND PERFORM AN OVERTURE

How could the elements of music (ie., rhythm, pitch, dynamics, etc.) be used to communicate the mood of the piece within the overture? Which instruments would be used? Allow students some time to work on composing their overture based on their answers to these questions. Students can then perform their overture for the class either as a composed and rehearsed piece or improvised. Alternatively, they may choose to present their overture by describing the characteristics of the elements of the music within their piece.

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 1.1.2; 2.3.5; 2.2.1; 3.1.2; 3.1.3; 4.1.2; 4.4.3; 4.4.2; 4.2.5; 5.1.1; 5.1.2; 5.1.4

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-CR2; DR-M1; DR-M2

Music Curriculum Connections: M-CR2; M-CR3; M-M3

ACTIVITY #10 ACTIVE LISTENING

Play the first few minutes of the *Carmen* CD. Ask your students to listen closely to the music and jot down their thoughts, feelings, and first impressions. Then have your students share their reactions with the classroom. Ask them to listen again and pay close attention to the elements of music (rhythm, pitch, dynamics, etc.) then explore questions such as the following:

- What are the instruments used to make the music?
- How does this music make me feel?
- What is the mood of the piece?
- What type of emotions do the singers bring forth?
- Does the music have a steady beat or pulse?
- What is the size of the ensemble?
- What do the singing voices tell us about those characters?

Language Arts Curriculum Connections: 1.1.1; 1.1.2; 1.2.2; 2.3.1; 2.2.3; 4.4.3; 5.2.1

Drama Curriculum Connections: DR-R1

Music Curriculum Connections: M-R2

ACTIVITY #11 OPERA POP QUIZ

- 1 _____ A theatrical production incorporating both vocal and instrumental music, drama, and sometimes dance.
- 2 _____ The lowest male vocal range.
- 3 _____ An instrument introduction to an opera.
- 4 _____ The area where the orchestra is seated.
- 5 _____ Considered the first opera.
- 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 _____ The person who is in charge of all the action on stage.

ACTIVITY #12 *CARMEN* POP QUIZ

- 1** Who is the composer? _____
- 2** Who wrote the libretto? _____
- 3** In what year did the premiere performance take place? _____
- 4** In what language is the opera performed? _____
- 5** Where did the opera premiere? _____
- 6** Where is the opera set? _____
- 7** The role of Carmen is sung by what voice part? _____
- 8** The role of Don José is sung by what voice part? _____
- 9** In the “Habanera,” to what does Carmen compare love? _____
- 10** What does Carmen read in the tarot cards? _____
- 11** What is Escamillo’s profession? _____
- 12** Which character tries to convince Don José to return home? _____

ANSWER KEY POP QUIZ #11 & #12

OPERA

1. Opera
2. Bass
3. Overture
4. Orchestra Pit or “The Pit”
5. Daphne
6. Aria
7. Soprano
8. Duet
9. Contralto
10. Libretto
11. Baritone
12. Stage Director

CARMEN

1. Georges Bizet
2. Ludovic Halévy and Henri Meillac
3. 1875
4. French
5. Opéra-Comique, Paris
6. Seville, Spain
7. Mezzo-soprano
8. Tenor
9. A rebellious bird
10. Death
11. Bullfighter
12. Micaëla

Manitoba Opera would be pleased to receive a copy of any work related to this opera produced by your students. Please forward to:

Scott Miller

Education and Outreach Coordinator
Manitoba Opera, 1060-555 Main St., Winnipeg, MB R3B 1C3

or
smiller@mbopera.ca

WINNIPEG PUBLIC LIBRARY

BLU-RAY

Carmen

Bizet, Georges.
[S.I.] : BBC/Opus Arte, c2008.
Call Number: BLU-RAY 782.1
CAR

SCORES

Carmen: Opera in Four Acts

Bizet, Georges.
New York : G. Schirmer,
[1958]
Call Number: SCORE 782.1
BIZ

ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

Bizet: Carmen

Berganza, Teresa.
[United States] : DG : Made
available through hoopla,
2005.
Call Number: STREAMING

Bizet: Carmen

hoopla digital.
[United States] : Warner Clas-
sics : Made available through
hoopla, 2003.
Call Number: STREAMING

Bizet: Carmen

hoopla digital.
[United States] : Warner Clas-
sics : Made available through
hoopla, 2000.
Call Number: STREAMING

Bizet: Carmen

Orchestre National de
France.
[United States] : Decca :
Made available through
hoopla, 2012.
Call Number: STREAMING

Bizet: Carmen

Rattle, Sir Simon.
[United States] : Warner Clas-
sics : Made available through
hoopla 2012.
Call Number: STREAMING

Bizet: Carmen

Karajan, Herbert von.
[United States] : Universal
Classics & Jazz : Made avail-
able through hoopla, 1983
Call Number: STREAMING

MANITOBA OPERA

BOOKS

Canadian Opera Guide Carmen

English National Opera Guide - Carmen

Ticket to the Opera Phil G. Goulding

CDS

Carmen

Bizet: Carmen Highlights

Introduction to ... BIZET Carmen

DVDS

Carmen

Glyndebourne Festival Opera
[1985]
Conducted by Bernard Hait-
ink

Carmen

Royal Opera House [2007]
Conducted by Antonio Pap-
pano

RECORDS

Carmen

If you need recommendations for additional resources, please contact:
Scott Miller, Education & Outreach Coordinator - smiller@mbopera.ca

STUDENT NIGHT

EDUCATE THROUGH LIVE EXPERIENCE

Give your students the opportunity to experience the timeless art form of opera through Manitoba Opera's Student Night at the Opera.

Student Night at the Opera occurs at the final dress rehearsal before Opening Night and is an opportunity for students to experience a fully staged professional opera production at a greatly reduced price.



STUDENT NIGHT TICKETS FOR CARMEN: \$14

Group tickets

K-12 schools, home schools, or youth groups. Tickets must be ordered by the educational institutions.

Individual tickets

Full-time post-secondary students (must provide valid student ID).

*If your educational group no longer qualifies for Student Night at the Opera tickets under our new policy, please contact Scott Miller at 204-942-7470 to find out about our group rate discounts.

All performances, including the dress rehearsals, take place at the Centennial Concert Hall.

OPERA CLASS

A FREE CLASSROOM WORKSHOP LED BY A PROFESSIONALLY TRAINED OPERA SINGER

Bring an opera singer to your classroom! Students will participate in hands-on learning activities which explore storytelling through music and experience the power of live operatic singing.

Opera Class connects to all four essential learning areas of the K-8 Manitoba Music curriculum framework.

Recommended for Grades K-6

Free of Charge

Length: 45 minutes

Maximum # of students per workshop: 30



TO BOOK:

SCOTT MILLER, EDUCATION & OUTREACH COORDINATOR | 204-942-7470 | SMILLER@MBOPERA.CA

OPERA IN A TRUNK

Opera Trunks are a simple, fun, and informative way to introduce your students to the world of opera.

Each trunk is filled with costumes, props, activities, books, DVDs, CDs, and a study guide that will bring opera to life for your students.

Free of Charge | Can be borrowed for three weeks at a time

Recommended for grades K-6



OPERA TRUNKS

Hansel and Gretel

Humperdinck

Based on the classic Brothers Grimm fairy tale, Humperdinck's musical retelling of the story of two mischievous children who discover a delicious gingerbread house hiding a wicked secret combines fantasy, adventure, catchy folk-type songs, and beautiful music.



The Daughter of the Regiment Donizetti

A feisty orphaned tomboy raised by French soldiers must convince her "fathers" to let her marry

a peasant. A comedy with a happy ending, featuring vocal acrobatics such as the show-stopping "Ah, mes amis (Ah, my friends)."

Carmen

Bizet

Music that pulsates with the spirit of Spain, including many opera favourites such as the famous "Habanera," and the rousing Toreador Song.

The Magic Flute

Mozart

A fanciful fairytale about a prince out to win his princess with the help of a merry bird catcher.

Aida

Verdi

The grandest of grand operas, *Aida* is an epic love story about an Ethiopian princess who longs to be with Radames, leader of the Egyptian army that conquered her homeland.

La Bohème

Puccini

One of the most romantic operas of all time, a coming-of-age story about love and loss in the Latin Quarter of Paris in the 1830s.

TO BOOK:

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ABOUT MANITOBA OPERA

Manitoba Opera was founded in 1969 by a group of individuals dedicated to presenting the great works of opera to Manitoba audiences. Manitoba Opera is the province's only full-time professional opera company. The company attracts internationally renowned artists, highlights the best local talent, and is supported by the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra.

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 most work in jobs that aren't music related.

STAFF

Tadeusz Biernacki

Chorus Master & Assistant Music Director

Michael Blais

Director of Administration

Bethany Bunko

Patron Services &
Communications Coordinator

Larry Desrochers

General Director & CEO

Tania Douglas

Director of Development

Jayne Hammond

Grants & Corporate Giving Manager

Sheldon Johnson

Director of Production

Elizabeth Miller

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Tyrone Paterson

Music Advisor & Principal Conductor

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WORKS CONSULTED

This study guide was compiled accumulatively and includes information from the following sources accessed since 2000:

BehindTheNames.com	Opera Columbus Study Guide
Bellevue University	Opera News
The Billboard Illustrated Encyclopedia of Opera	Operas Every Child Should Know
britannica.com	Opera Lyra Ottawa Study Guide
The Canadian Opera Company	Opera Today
cia.gov	Orchestra London Study Guide
ClassicalMusic.about.com	Pacific Opera
Dmitry Murashev's Opera Site libretti & information	San Diego Opera Study Guide
Encyclopedia of Manitoba	San Francisco Opera Guild Study Guide
Encyclopedia of the Opera by David Ewen	schubincave.com
Fort Worth Opera Study Guide	A Season of Opera
GradeSaver.com	Skeletons from the Opera Closet
La Scena	TheBiography.us
Lyric Opera of Kansas City	TheGuardian.com
Manitoba Archives	timelines.com
Metropolitan Opera	Tulsa Opera Study Guide
musicwithease.com	University of Chicago Press
Music.MSN.com	University of Manitoba
New York City Opera	University of Texas
The New York Times	University of Waterloo
Opera America Learning Centre	Rimrock Study Guide
Operabase	Virginia Opera Study Guide
operabuffa.com	Wikipedia
	The World's Great Operas

