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## 2023/24 STUDY GUIDE

# CARMEN

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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 *Up* (2009).



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

# THE PRODUCTION

## PRODUCTION INFORMATION

April 13, 17, 19, 2024

**Dress Rehearsal / Student Night:** April 11, 2024

**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 one 20-minute intermission

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

Sung in French with spoken French dialogue; projected English translations

### PRINCIPAL CAST

<b>Carmen</b>	Mezzo-soprano	GINGER COSTA-JACKSON
<b>Don José</b>	Tenor	DAVID POMEROY
<b>Escamillo</b>	Baritone	DANIEL OKULITCH
<b>Micaëla</b>	Soprano	LARA CIEKIEWICZ
<b>Frasquita</b>	Soprano	LARA SECORD-HAID
<b>Mercédès</b>	Mezzo-soprano	BARBARA KING
<b>Moralès/Dancairo</b>	Bass-baritone	JONATHON KIRBY
<b>Remendado</b>	Tenor	JACQUES ARSENAULT
<b>Zuniga</b>	Bass	GILES TOMKINS

### ALSO APPEARING

<b>Lillas Pastia</b>	Spoken	TBD
<b>A Guide</b>	Spoken	TBD

**MANITOBA OPERA CHORUS**

**MANITOBA OPERA CHILDREN'S CHORUS**

**WINNIPEG SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

## PRODUCTION INFORMATION (CONTINUED)

### PRODUCTION CREW

<b>Conductor</b>	TYRONE PATERSON
<b>Director</b>	BRIAN DEEDRICK
<b>Choreographer</b>	BRENDA GORLICK
<b>Fight Choreographer</b>	JACQUELINE LOEWEN
<b>Stage Manager</b>	CHRIS PORTER
<b>Assistant Stage Manager #1</b>	KATHRYN BALL
<b>Assistant Stage Manager #2</b>	HEATHER LEE BRERETON
<b>Apprentice Stage Manager</b>	TIA MORAN
<b>Lighting Designer</b>	HUGH CONACHER
<b>Chorus Master</b>	TADEUSZ BIERNACKI
<b>Rehearsal Pianist</b>	CARY DENBY
<b>Wardrobe Supervisor</b>	ALENA ZHARSKA
<b>Make-up</b>	CHRIS HADLEY
<b>Hair</b>	JILL BUHR
<b>Set Design</b>	EDMONTON OPERA
<b>Costume Design</b>	MALABAR
<b>Projected Titles</b>	SHELDON JOHNSON

## INTRODUCTION & SYNOPSIS

### INTRODUCING CARMEN

*Carmen*, the opera which has ensured Bizet's lasting fame, 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 unscrupulous characters 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 scale.

Originally conforming to the Opéra-Comique norm of a mix of spoken dialogue and operatic numbers, it was for a long time after the composer's death presented in an adaptation by Bizet's contemporary Ernest Guiraud who composed recitatives to replace the dialogue. Modern productions prefer its original version, retaining the dialogue.

### SYNOPSIS

**Setting:** In and near Seville, mid 1930s.

#### 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 re-enter 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.



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



## 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 ("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 Dancaire 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
- MERCÉDÈS** A friend of Carmen
- DANCAÏRE** A smuggler
- REMENDADO** A smuggler
- MORALÈS** A corporoal of the dragoons
- LILLAS PASTIA** An innkeeper



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

## THE PRINCIPAL ARTISTS



### GINGER COSTA-JACKSON CARMEN

“Her voice, sultry looks, and sensuous flamenco dancing are perfect for the role. She even manages castanets in perfect rhythm without missing a step.” - *Broadway World*

Ginger Costa-Jackson is one of the most exciting and versatile artists of her generation. She has regularly performed at the world's leading opera houses including the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Opéra National de Paris, De Munt / La Monnaie, and the Gran Teatre del Liceu. She is in high demand to sing the title role in *Carmen*, appearing last season with MasterVoices in New York, Opéra Royal de Wallonie-Liège, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, and the English National Opera.

Ms. Costa-Jackson makes her Manitoba Opera debut in the title role of *Carmen*.



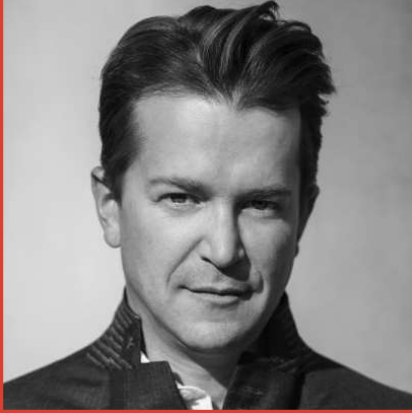
### DAVID POMEROY DON JOSÉ

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 enjoys a career that places 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. He has performed with Manitoba Opera in recent seasons as Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* (2017) and as Florestan in *Fidelio* (2014).

Mr. Pomeroy's most recent role with Manitoba Opera was Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* (2018), and he was a featured artist in both the Gala Concert (2022) and the 50th Season Anniversary Concert (2023).

### THE PRINCIPAL ARTISTS



#### **DANIEL OKULITCH** ESCAMILLO

“Flat-out brilliant.” - *Opera News*

Daniel Okulitch is a leading interpreter of Mozart roles, most notably Don Giovanni, Almaviva, and Figaro, which he has performed at New York City Opera, Teatro Colón, Los Angeles Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Palm Beach Opera, Moscow

Philharmonic, Opera Warsaw, Vancouver Opera, Dallas Opera, New Orleans Opera, Portland Opera, Michigan Opera Theater, Hawaii Opera, Manitoba Opera, and Lyric Opera Kansas City.

Mr. Okulitch most recently appeared with Manitoba Opera in the title role in its 2018 production of *Don Giovanni*.



#### **LARA CIEKIEWICZ** MICAËLA

Hailed for her “tour-de-force performance” (*Winnipeg Free Press*) in the title role of Manitoba Opera’s *Susannah*, Lara has established herself as a dynamic, intelligent, and moving singing-actress. Her facility for fully transforming into a character, regardless of genre, has earned her the reputation of being an artistic chameleon.

This season saw Lara rejoin Opera on the Avalon for their world première of Kaminsky and Moore’s *February* in the role of Bartender. She made role and house debuts as Mother Abbess in *The Sound of Music* for both the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, and The Citadel Theatre.

Ms. Ciekiewicz’s most recent role with Manitoba Opera was Elle in *La voix humaine* (2021), and she was a featured artist in the company’s 50th Season Anniversary Concert (2023).

### 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 enjoys 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 Company of Winnipeg), and Miss Jessel in *The Turn of the Screw* (Opera on the Avalon).



#### **BARBARA KING** MERCÉDÈS

Canadian mezzo-soprano Barbara King is no stranger to the stage, having won the Québec Provincial Gymnastics Championship on Floor and dazzling audiences with her “exquisite vocal command of a three octave range” and the presence of a “warm, agile mezzo-soprano voice” (*Opera by Request*). In addition, Barbara founded Divas Opera

with soprano Kathleen Morrison and the Calgary Concert Opera Company (CCOC) with her husband, Chris Gieck.

Ms. King last performed with Manitoba Opera as Flora in its 2018 production of *La Traviata*.

### THE PRINCIPAL ARTISTS



#### **JOHNATHON KIRBY** MORALÈS/DANCAÏRE

From Newmarket, Ontario, Mr. Kirby made his professional opera debut with Opera Nova Scotia in their Canadian premier of Mozart's *Zaïde*. 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*, and most recently appeared as Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* (2023).



#### **JACQUES ARSENAULT** REMENDADO

Acadian tenor Jacques Arsenault began his musical career studying accordion while growing up on Prince Edward Island, before discovering his vocal talents. Since receiving his Master of Music from the University of Alberta, He has performed throughout Canada in a wide range of repertoire from classical and contemporary opera to musical theatre. In 2015,

Mr. Arsenault made his operatic debut in Edmonton Opera's *The Merry Widow*.

In 2023, Mr. Arsenault sang Don Curzio in *Le nozze di Figaro* and Third Jew in *Salome* with the Canadian Opera Company and joined the band as accordionist and keyboardist in the klezmer/folk, music theatre hybrid *Old Stock: A Refugee Love Story* on tour to Saskatoon, New Brunswick, Winnipeg, Vancouver and Victoria.

Mr. Arsenault makes his Manitoba Opera debut as Remendado.

### 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).

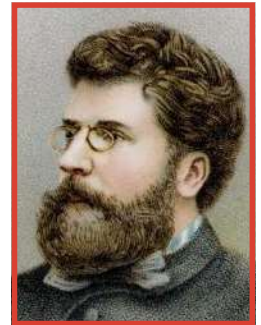
In 1857 Bizet won the Prix de Rome scholarship for study in Italy; his first opera dates from the same year, the one-act *Le Docteur Miracle*. Besides composing, he often worked as a rehearsal pianist and orchestrator, which gave him an uncommon familiarity with the works of the Parisian theater. Today 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.

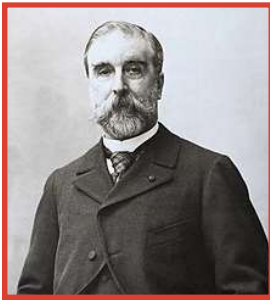
*Carmen* was drawn from a popular short novel of the same title by Prosper Mérimée (1845), inspired in turn by the writing of George Henry Borrow, an Englishman who had lived among the Roma in Spain. Bizet's libretto was the work of Ludovic Halévy (a cousin of his wife's) and Henri Meilhac. Since the 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. After Bizet's death, his friend Ernest Guiraud composed recitatives to replace the dialogue. 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. Women 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 composer Jacques 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.

Ludovic Halévy died in Paris on May 7, 1908.

### 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

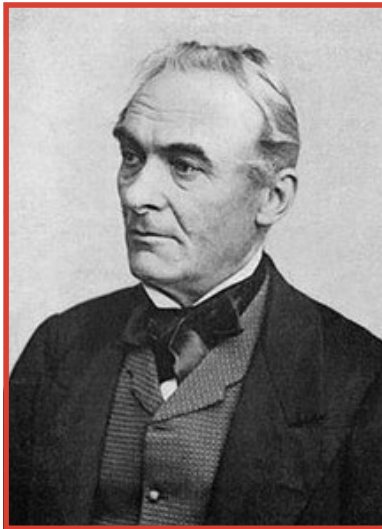
**Prosper Mérimée** (1803–1870) was a French dramatist, historian, archaeologist, and writer. He is perhaps best known for his novella *Carmen*, which became the basis of Bizet's opera *Carmen*.

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, and the unusual, particularly 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)

Elīna 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.”

- Elīna Garanča, 2018



Elīna 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

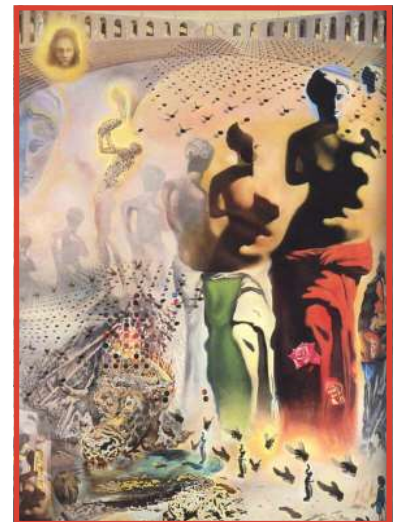
Suddenly everyone falls silent;  
ah - what's happening?  
No more shouts, this is the moment!  
The bull comes bounding  
out of the toril!  
He charges, comes in, strikes!  
A horse rolls over, dragging down a picador!  
“Ah! Bravo bull!” roars the crowd;  
the bull turns, comes back,  
comes back 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 Roma woman, 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 the leader of a band of smugglers and bandits, of whom Don José was a member.

When Bizet was commissioned by the Opéra-Comique theatre 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.

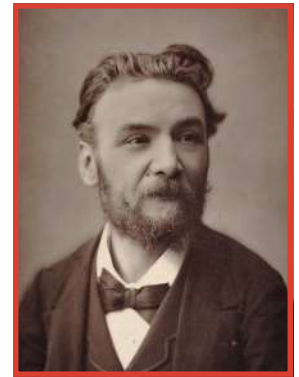
Some of these changes were a result of the

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, members of an ethnic group of people known for their music, fortunetelling, and nomadic lifestyle. Many misconceptions of Roma exist, arising from ignorance and misunderstanding. Some of Carmen's characteristics are based on negative stereotypes, but other things are true.

### NOT "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.

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.



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

## 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

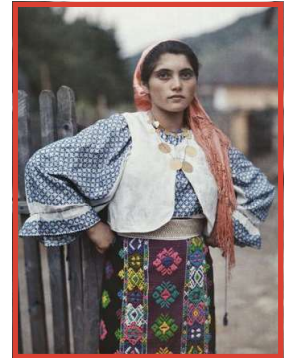
music, flamenco, and jazz. The Gipsy Kings are perhaps the most famous Roma musical performers. Other musical and non-musical performers claim that they were descended from Roma, among them Yul Brynner, Rita Hayworth, and Bob Hoskins. Carmen's skill at singing and dancing is quite true to her character.

### 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.

### 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 14, 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 Roma 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 Juno Award-winning 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 ROMA PERSECUTION IN EUROPE

**1300**

Roma 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 Roma to find a trade and master and to cease traveling. 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 17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

Spanish legislation becomes harsher, forbidding Roma from dealing in horses. The local populace is given permission to form armed groups to pursue Roma.

**1745**

Roma 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 Roma children are used as guinea-pigs to test Zyklon-B gas crystals.

**1933-45**

Up to 1,500,000 Roma are killed in Europe by the Nazi regime.



## CARMEN IN THE 20<sup>TH</sup> 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. 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



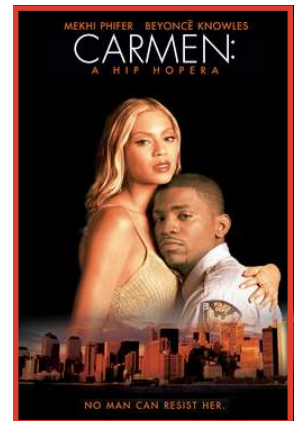
Otto Preminger's film *Carmen Jones* is often considered a landmark - both positively and negatively - in the history of black representations in the cinema. Dorothy Dandridge stars as Carmen Jones, tempestuous employee of a parachute factory. Harry Belafonte plays Joe (originally José), a young military 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. Read what reviewers had to say about productions by Seattle Opera (2019) and the Canadian Opera Company (2022).

"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' José 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

"When it premiered in 1875, *Carmen* signified a changing tide toward female sexuality unburdened from the fetters of the male gaze. Now, in this [Canadian Opera Company] production, we glimpse a new meaning in how this opera inverts the sexist trope of semper femina - "woman is a fickle thing" - by emphasizing its male characters as the fickle featherweights whose desires vacillate with the weather." - *The Globe and Mail*, October 2022.



Zanda Šv de (*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 Community Engagement 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: STREAM-  
ING

#### **Bizet: Carmen**

hoopla digital.  
[United States] : War-  
ner Classics : Made  
available through hoop-  
la, 2003.  
Call Number: STREAM-  
ING

#### **Bizet: Carmen**

hoopla digital.  
[United States] : War-

ner Classics : Made  
available through hoop-  
la, 2000.  
Call Number: STREAM-  
ING

#### **Bizet: Carmen**

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

#### **Bizet: Carmen**

Rattle, Sir Simon.  
[United States] : War-  
ner Classics : Made  
available through hoop-  
la 2012.  
Call Number: STREAM-  
ING

## MANITOBA OPERA

#### **Bizet: Carmen**

Karajan, Herbert von.  
[United States] : Uni-  
versal Classics & Jazz :  
Made available through  
hoopla, 1983  
Call Number: STREAM-  
ING

### 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  
Haitink

#### **Carmen**

Royal Opera House  
[2007]  
Conducted by Antonio  
Pappano

**If you need recommendations for additional resources, please contact:**

Scott Miller, Education & Community Engagement Coordinator - smiller@mbopera.

## 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: \$15

#### 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 3-6**

**Free of Charge**

**Length:** 45 minutes

**Maximum # of students per workshop:** 30



Mezzo soprano Laurelle Czaplinski presents Opera Class at Waldheim School, 2018.

## TO BOOK:

**SCOTT MILLER, EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR | 204-942-7470 | [SMILLER@MBOPERA.CA](mailto: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:

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

## 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**

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#### **Ashley Boychuk**

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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



