

CARMEN

Georges Bizet

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CARMEN

Opera in four acts by Georges Bizet
Libretto by Henri Meilhac & Ludovic Halévy
Novella written by Prosper Mérimée
Sung in French with projected English subtitles

September 26 & 28, 2024

Tennessee Performing Arts Center, Andrew Jackson Hall

Directed by John Hoomes

Conducted by Dean Williamson

Featuring the Nashville Opera Orchestra & Chorus

CAST

Carmen.....MARINA COSTA JACKSON
Don José.....ZACH BORICHEVSKY
Micaëla.....KATHRYN LEWEK
Escamillo.....RICHARD OLLARSABA
Zuniga.....BERNARDO MEDEIROS
Frasquita.....DEE DONASCO
Mercedes.....SARA CRIGGER
Remendado.....GREGORY SLISKOVICH
Morales/Dancaire.....RYAN BEDE

Tickets & Information

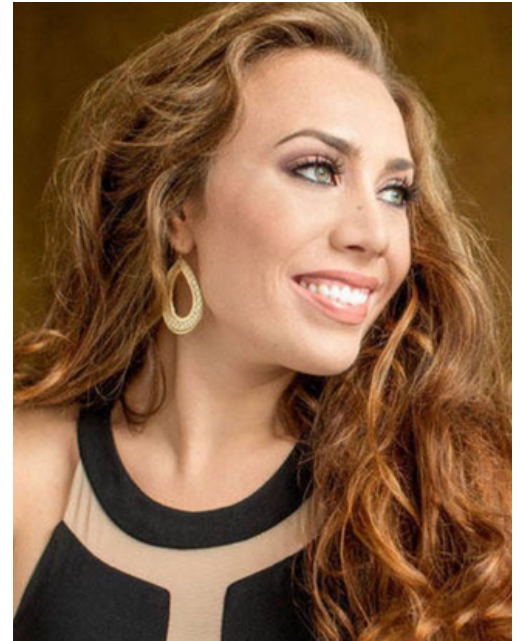
Contact Nashville Opera at 615.832.5242

or visit NashvilleOpera.org

SYNOPSIS ~ ACT I

In a town square marketplace, crowds stroll about, shopping and people watching. Micaëla comes in nervously with a letter for José from his mother. José arrives with Zuniga, his boss. Micaëla gives him the letter with some money she sent. Soon the girls from the factory come out for their break. The leader of the female workers is Carmen, a beautiful and free-spirited girl. When José ignores Carmen's dancing, she throws a flower at him.

After everyone has gone, José picks up and hides the flower in his coat. Soon shouting is heard from the factory. The girls run out in terror, yelling that Carmen is fighting one of the other girls. Carmen is arrested. José is assigned to guard Carmen as she waits to be taken to prison. Carmen seduces José, but he allows her to escape. José is taken to prison in her place.



MARINA COSTA JACKSON as CARMEN

ACT II

Two months later, Carmen and her friends, Frasquita and Mercédès, are at a bar near the desert. They are singing and dancing to entertain the men. The famous motorcross racer Escamillo arrives and crashes the party. He is enchanted by Carmen's beauty. Carmen tells him she is not available, and she is waiting for José who is, on that day, being released from prison.

After the crowd leaves, the three girls are joined by two outlaws – Dancaïro and Remendado. They try to persuade the girls to join them in their latest smuggling venture. Carmen refuses, saying that she has fallen in love with José, but she promises to ask her new lover to desert his post and come with them. José arrives, and Carmen dances for him. Zuniga, José's boss, returns, and fights with José over Carmen. All the smugglers rush in and stop the fight. José has no choice now but to become a smuggler and go with them.



ZACH BORICHEVSKY as DON JOSÉ

ACT III

Some weeks later, the smugglers have camped for the night in a mountain pass near the desert. Carmen has grown weary of José and his jealousy. Frasquita and Mercédès tell their fortunes with cards, but Carmen's fortune is tragic. The cards predict death.

At daybreak the smugglers move out with some of their contraband. Micaëla sneaks into the camp and hides. She has traveled to tell José that his mother is dying and wants him to home. Escamillo comes to the camp to find Carmen. José and Escamillo fight over Carmen. Carmen breaks up their fight. Escamillo seizes the opportunity to invite everyone to his next race. He then bids



KATHRYN LEWEK as MICAELA

Carmen goodbye for now. Micaëla is discovered and dragged into the open. She tells José about his mother, and, after a heated exchange with Carmen, José decides to return home with Micaëla. In the distance, Escamillo is heard singing a reprise of his song.

ACT IV

The day of the big race has arrived, and everyone is outside the sporting arena. The crowd waits in anticipation for the arrival of Escamillo, who enters to great cheers. Carmen is now with him. Carmen's friends warn that José is stalking her and lurking nearby in the crowd. After Escamillo and the throng enter the area, Carmen remains outside to confront José. Fully aware of what fate may bring, Carmen begins a final confrontation with her ex-lover.

MOMENTS TO LISTEN FOR

"L'amour est un oiseau rebelle" - The Habanera

The Habanera is Carmen's most famous aria. She describes her love was unpredictable, wild, and dangerous. She warns her suitors, "If you love me, you're playing with fire!"

"Près des ramparts de Séville" - The Seguidilla

Carmen performs the Seguidilla as an attempt to seduce Don José and set her free. She tells Don José about the bar her friend (Lillas Pastia) owns, and tempts him with dancing, tequila, and more...

"Toreador, l'amour t'attend!" - Toreador Song

The Toreador March is another famous aria from the opera. It introduces Escamillo, who brags of his glory in the ring and his victory in love to his adorning fans.

"Je dis que rien ne m'épouvante" - Micaëla's Aria

Micaela has discovered José's whereabouts and desires to bring him home, but she is terrified that he is no longer the man she loves. She asks the Lord to give her strength to face him and Carmen.

FUN FACT!

Carmen first premiered in Paris in 1875. It was received harshly by audiences and was considered a fiasco!



RICHARD OLLARSABA as ESCAMILLO

GEORGES BIZET, composer

1838-1875

Georges Bizet was a French composer of operatic and instrumental works. He inherited his musical inclinations from his parents. His father was a voice teacher and his mother had been a well-known pianist. Bizet was recognized as a prodigy for his virtuosic capabilities on the piano at nine years old. He was accepted into the Paris Conservatoire at the same age and studied under well-known composers Charles Gounod and Jacques Fromental Halvey.

Bizet wrote thirty operas but only a few of them were completed and performed. The Pearl Fishers and Carmen are considered the composer's best works. CARMEN first premiered in 1875 at the National Theater of the Opera Comique and was negatively received by audiences and critics for its scandalous themes of murder and betrayal. Bizet considered the work a failure and died shortly after. Carmen became popular after the composer's death and is now considered by many a beloved classic.



HENRI MEILHAC, librettist

1830-1897

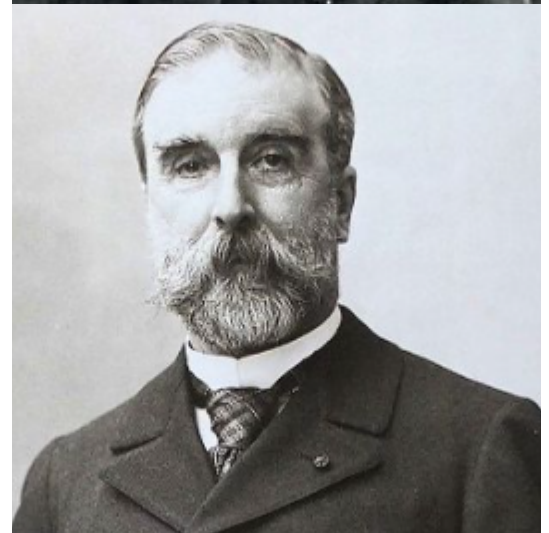
Henri Meilhac was a French writer who wrote librettos and articles for French newspapers. Meilhac wrote librettos for many composers, such as Offenbach and Herve. His most well-known librettos are Massenet's Manon and Bizet's Carmen, which he co-wrote with Ludovic Halvey. The writers met in 1861 and worked together for twenty years. They wrote librettos for Offenbach's La Belle Helene, Barbe Bleue, La Grande Duchesse de Gerolstein, La Perichole, and Bizet's Carmen.



LUDOVIC HALVEY, librettist

1834-1908

Ludovic Halvey was a French writer known for his librettos and satirical writings on Parisian society. His father, Leon Halvey, was also a well-known writer and his uncle, Jacques Fromental, was an operatic composer who had many notable students, including Georges Bizet. Ludovic is mostly recognized for his work and collaboration with librettist and French writer Henri Meilhac. Their writing partnership produced some of the most famous and beloved operas in classical repertoire. Independently, Halvey wrote thirty-four plays, twenty-seven librettos, and a few novels [that have been lost].



ON OPERATIC VOICES

Every voice is unique, and no singer gets to choose the category in which they sing but must work with the vocal attributes with which they were born. Composers usually assign a voice type to a character based on his/her personality or age. Read these descriptions for examples.

SOPRANO

This is the highest female voice and has a range similar to a violin. In opera, the soprano most often plays the young girl or the heroine (sometimes called the prima donna), since a high bright voice traditionally suggests femininity, virtue, and innocence. The normal range of a soprano is from middle C through two octaves above middle C, sometimes with extra top notes. Most women are sopranos. In *CARMEN*, Micaela and Frasquita are played by sopranos.



SARA CRIGGER as MERCEDES

MEZZO-SOPRANO

Also called a mezzo, this is the middle female voice with a range similar to an oboe. A mezzo's sound is often darker and warmer than a soprano's. In opera, composers generally use a mezzo to portray older women, villainesses, seductive heroines, and sometimes even young boys. The mezzo-soprano's normal range is from the A below middle C to the A two octaves above it. In *CARMEN*, the leading lady is played by a mezzo-soprano, and Mercedes as well.

CONTRALTO

This is the lowest female voice and has a voice similar in range to a clarinet. Contraltos usually sing the roles of older females or special character parts such as witches and old gypsies. The range is two octaves from F below middle C to the top line of the treble clef. A true contralto is very rare - some believe they don't exist at all!

COUNTERTENOR

This is the highest male voice, which was mainly used in very early opera and oratorio. The voice of a countertenor sounds very much like a mezzo-soprano's voice, and they often sing the same repertoire. Like the contralto, true countertenors are very rare.



BERNARDO MEDEIROS as ZUNIGA



GREG SLISKOVIICH as REMENDADO

TENOR

This is usually the highest male voice in an opera. It is similar to a trumpet in range, tone, color, and acoustical ring. The tenor typically plays the hero or the love interest. His voice ranges from the C below middle C to the above. In CARMEN, Don José and Remendado are played by tenors.

BARITONE

This is the middle male voice and is close to a French horn in range and tone color. The baritone usually plays villainous roles or father-figures. The range is from the G an octave and a half below middle C to the G above. In CARMEN, Escamillo, Dancaire, and Morales are played by baritones.

BASS-BARITONE/BASS

This is the lowest male voice and is similar to a trombone or bassoon in range and color. Low voices usually suggest age and wisdom in serious opera. The range spans from roughly the F above middle C to the F an octave and a fifth below. In CARMEN, Zuniga is played by a bass-baritone.

THE SOUND ANATOMY OF OPERA

There are many different kinds of songs in opera. Performers may sing alone, in couples (duets), trios, or larger groups, and there are also moments when no one sings at all - each composer develops their own preferred combination of these options.

OVERTURE

An opera usually begins with an orchestral piece of music called the overture, which functions as an introduction to the opera. Lasting anywhere from five to twenty-five minutes, these opera overtures usually contain important themes from the rest of the production. Before 1800, houselights were not dimmed while the overture played, and audience members continued to talk, drink, and even play cards! This ceased in the 1900's as the overture became a more integral part of an operatic performance. At the end of the overture, the curtain rises, and the story of the opera unfolds through a series of scenes.



Nashville Opera's 2017 Production of CARMEN



Nashville Opera Music Director, Dean Williamson

ARIA

An aria is a solo moment for an opera singer and is usually accompanied by the orchestra. Italian for “air” or song, an aria stops the plot momentarily, giving each character the opportunity to express their innermost thoughts and feelings. These pieces also provide an opportunity for the singer to demonstrate their vocal and artistic skill. Arias balance memorable melodies that perfectly suit the human voice while still reflecting the drama of the text.

RECITATIVES

Recitatives, a type of singing unique to opera, help propel the action forward. They can be accompanied either by a full orchestra, or, as

is often the case with opera written before 1800, by harpsichord or keyboard instrument. Often introducing an aria, the text is delivered quickly and encompasses a very limited melodic range. It has no recognizable melody, and the rhythms follow those of the spoken word.

ENSEMBLE

Ensemble singing deals with two or more voices of different ranges performing together. These include duets, trios, quartets, quintets, and sometimes sextets. The composer blends the voices depending on the dramatic requirements of the plot. For instance, a love duet may begin with each performer singing different music at different times, then gradually unifying into harmony. Conversely, the music of a duet may depict conflict.

FUN FACT!

Bizet heavily stressed over perfecting Carmen’s “Habanera.” He wrote the libretto himself and reworked the melody thirteen times.

CHORUS

Most operas include music sung by a large group of singers (sometimes more than 40) called a chorus. The chorus often appears in a crowd scene and can provide a stunning contrast to solo or ensemble singing. In one opera by Benjamin Britten, the chorus is played by a single male and a single female, as in the tradition of ancient Greek theatre.

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC

The orchestra accompanies the singing and introduces the opera with the overture. Musical and emotional themes often appear in orchestral introductions and conclusions to arias, recitatives, and choruses.

OPERA ETIQUETTE

ALWAYS BE EARLY!

Please arrive early to ensure you can find your seat before the performance begins and before the orchestra tunes. If you are late, you may miss the overture or even the first act!

OPERA IS FOR ALL AGES TO ENJOY!

Opera is full of emotion, passion, human conflict, and discovery. Nashville Opera usually presents operas in their original language and projects supertitles above the stage so the audience can understand every word.

WHAT TO WEAR

Many people think of a night at the opera as a glamorous event and an excuse to bring out the fancy attire. But, it is also acceptable to dress comfortably. A light sweater, jacket, or wrap is suggested because the theater is air-conditioned.

USE THE RESTROOM

Once in the theater it is courteous to remain seated and involved in the production until intermission. Please do not leave the theater unless there is an emergency.

PLEASE BE COURTEOUS...

to everyone in the audience and on stage. Opera is a live performance, so any talking, cell-phone use (including texting) or other noise/light disruption takes away from everyone's experience at the opera. Wait until intermission to talk to your neighbor or use electronic devices that may distract others.

APPLAUSE WELCOME!

There are several opportunities for applause during a performance. Applause should take place when the conductor takes the podium at the very beginning of the performance and following intermission. It is also acceptable to applaud after an overture or aria during the performance. You may show your appreciation to the performers by shouting "Bravo!" for a male performer, "Brava" for a female performer, or "Bravi" for an ensemble. At the conclusion of the performance, the singers will take their "curtain call." It is appropriate to continue applauding until all singers have stepped forward to accept their applause.

NO PHOTOS OR RECORDINGS PERMITTED

For the safety of the actors, no still photography or video recording are permitted during the performance.

