

# CARMEN



*TSO*

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Cover image: Elena Maximova as Carmen © ROH. Photographer Catherine Ashmore

# CARMEN

**Saturday**  
**12 August 7.30pm**  
Federation Concert Hall  
Hobart

**Marko Letonja** Conductor  
**Elena Schwarz** Assistant Conductor  
**June Tyzack** Chorusmaster  
**Elizabeth Hill** Staging  
**Ingrid Rahlén** Stage Manager  
**Phoebe Briggs** Music Preparation  
**Elena Maximova** Carmen  
**Marcelo Puente** Don José

**Teddy Tahu Rhodes** Escamillo  
**Emma Pearson** Micaëla  
**Shane Lawrencev** Zuniga  
**Samuel Dundas** Moralès/Le Dancaire  
**Kathryn Radcliffe** Frasquita  
**Sally-Anne Russell** Mercédès  
**Jonathan Abernethy** Le Remendado  
TSO Chorus

Opéra comique in Four Acts by Georges Bizet to a libretto by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy, after Prosper Mérimée's novel. First performed at the Opéra-Comique, Paris, 3 March 1875.

## Act I

*A public square in Seville; a tobacco factory on the right faces a guardroom on the left with a covered gallery in front.*

Duration 47 mins

## Act II

*Lillas Pastia's tavern.*

Duration 36 mins

INTERVAL

Duration 20 mins

## Act III

*A rocky place near Seville at night.*

Duration 36 mins

## Act IV

*Outside the bullring in Seville.*

Duration 21 mins

Performed in French with surtitles.

This concert will end at approximately 10.30pm.

Presented in  
association with



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## Marko Letonja

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Marko Letonja is Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra and Music Director of the Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg. Born in Slovenia, he studied at the Academy of Music in Ljubljana and the Vienna Academy of Music. He was Music Director of the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra from 1991 to 2003 and Music Director and Chief Conductor of both the Symphony Orchestra and the Opera in Basel from 2003 to 2006. He was Principal Guest Conductor of Orchestra Victoria in 2008 and made his debut with the TSO the following year. He took up the post of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra at the start of 2012. He has worked with many orchestras in Europe including the Munich Philharmonic, Vienna Symphony, Berlin Radio Orchestra, Mozarteum Orchestra and the Orchestra Filarmonica della Scala, Milan. He has also worked in many renowned opera houses such as the Vienna State Opera, Berlin State Opera, La Scala Milan, Semper Oper Dresden, and the Grand Théâtre de Genève. Additionally, he has conducted at the Arena di Verona. Recent and future engagements include the Mozarteum Orchestra Salzburg, Berlin Radio Orchestra, Bavarian State Opera in Munich and Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* for the Royal Swedish Opera with Nina Stemme as Brünnhilde.



## Elena Schwarz

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Australian and Swiss conductor Elena Schwarz studied at the Geneva University of Music in the class of Laurent Gay, subsequently specialising in contemporary performance with Arturo Tamayo at the Conservatorio della Svizzera Italiana. She has benefited from the advice of Bernard Haitink, Neeme Järvi, Peter Eötvös and Matthias Pintscher. A member of Symphony Services International's Conductor Development Program since 2013, she has participated in conducting courses with Christopher Seaman, Asher Fisch, Johannes Fritzsch and Giordano Bellincampi, and with the Tasmanian and West Australian Symphony Orchestras and the Auckland Philharmonia. Elena Schwarz won first prize at the Princess Astrid Competition with the Trondheim Symphony Orchestra (Norway) and second prize at the 2015 Jorma Panula competition in Vaasa, Finland. In 2016 she was selected as one of three young conductors supported by Adami, the French Performers' Association. Recent engagements include the Martha Argerich Festival in Lugano, where she conducted Alban Berg's Chamber Concerto with soloists Renaud Capuçon and Nicholas Angelich, and a portrait concert of Olga Neuwirth's music with the Lucerne Festival Academy. In 2017, in addition to the joint assistantship between the Tasmanian and West Australian Symphony Orchestras, Elena Schwarz will assist Mikko Franck at the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France in Paris.



## June Tyzack

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June Tyzack is a graduate of the Tasmanian and Sydney Conservatoriums and London's Trinity College of Music. Her career with singers has included the Tasmanian Opera Company, Opera Australia, the Opera Studio of the Sydney Conservatorium, Belvoir Street Theatre, Sydney Philharmonia Massed Choirs and Pacific Opera. She became Chorusmaster of the TSO Chorus in 2001. Under her direction, the TSO Chorus has given performances in Hobart and regional Tasmania, and performed with Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, Adelaide Festival Chorus, West Australian Symphony Orchestra (WASO) Chorus and in Hong Kong with the WASO Chorus and Hong Kong Philharmonic. As chorusmaster of the Australian International Symphony Orchestra Institute she has prepared Mahler's Second and Third Symphonies and Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*, and in 2009 was chorusmaster and conductor for the Australian Interservice Choral Festival. In 2014 she was assistant to the conductor for the production of Handel's *Orlando* for Hobart Baroque. In recent seasons she has devised cutting-edge TSO Chorus programs for a number of festivals, including a program in the Speigeltent for Ten Days on the Island, Mona Foma, Dark Mofo, Synaesthesia and Synaesthesia+. Last year she was Director for Bach's *St Matthew Passion* during the Festival of Voices, including overseeing the English translation and design of surtitles for the performance.



## Elena Maximova

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Elena Maximova studied singing at Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory. She went on to join the Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Music Theatre, where her roles included Rosina (*The Barber of Seville*), Isabella (*The Italian Girl in Algiers*), Carmen, Olga, Siébel (*Faust*), Nicklausse (*The Tales of Hoffmann*), Charlotte (*Werther*), Paulina (*The Queen of Spades*), Suzuki (*Madama Butterfly*) and Prince Orlofsky (*Die Fledermaus*). She made her debut at the Bavarian State Opera in 2005 as Maddalena in *Rigoletto* and has returned there to sing Federica (*Luisa Miller*), Carmen, Olga and Suzuki. For Vienna State Opera her roles include Carmen, Maddalena, Eboli (*Don Carlos*), Rosina and Marfa (*Khovanshchina*). Engagements elsewhere include Carmen for La Scala, Milan, Berlin State Opera, Semperoper Dresden, Finnish National Opera and in Palermo, Eboli for Finnish National Opera, Leonora (*Donizetti's La Favorite*) and Marguerite (*La Damnation de Faust*) for St Gallen Festival, Preziosilla (*The Force of Destiny*) in Florence, Giulietta (*Tales of Hoffmann*) and Olga for the Metropolitan Opera, Charlotte in Tokyo and Paulina for Rome Opera. She made her Royal Opera debut in 2013 as Olga (*Eugene Onegin*) and has since returned to sing Carmen. Elena Maximova performs regularly in concert with Russian orchestras including the Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra, National Philharmonic of Russia, Hermitage Chamber Orchestra and the St Petersburg Philharmonic.



## Marcelo Puente

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Argentine tenor Marcelo Puente is rapidly gaining recognition as an important “lirico-spinto” tenor at such theatres as the Deutsche Oper Berlin, Stuttgart State Opera, Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, Teatro de la Zarzuela in Madrid, State Opera Prague, and several others. Recent engagements have included Pinkerton in *Madam Butterfly* at Hamburg State Opera, Royal Opera House Covent Garden, New National Theatre Tokyo and at Brussels’ La Monnaie; Cavaradossi in *Tosca* at Deutsche Oper am Rhein, Düsseldorf, and Don José in *Carmen* at Michigan Opera Theatre, Detroit. Other roles include Rodolfo in *La bohème* with Stuttgart State Opera, and the title role in a new production of Verdi’s *Don Carlos* at the State Opera Prague. Marcelo Puente starred as Riccardo in *A Masked Ball* at the Teatro Colón in his native Argentina and Rodolfo in *La bohème* in Montevideo, Uruguay. He has also performed in *La bohème* at theatres in Lucca, Pisa, Ravenna and Livorno; Macduff in *Macbeth* with Opera de Lima, and Cassio in *Otello* at the Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia in Valencia. Marcelo Puente studied at the Córdoba Conservatory and Teatro Colón, Buenos Aires, with Renato Sassola. Other roles in his developing repertoire include Turridu in *Cavalleria rusticana*, Maurizio in *Adriana Lecouvreur* and Calaf in *Turandot*.



## Teddy Tahu Rhodes

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With an international career on the opera stage and concert platform, Teddy Tahu Rhodes has performed with the San Francisco Opera, Washington National Opera, Metropolitan Opera (New York), Bavarian State Opera, at the Théâtre du Châtelet (Paris), and at Welsh National Opera and Scottish Opera, among others. He had notable success as Stanley in Previn’s *Streetcar Named Desire* in Sydney, Vienna and Chicago, and in Jake Heggie’s *Dead Man Walking*. Recent roles have included Don Giovanni, Escamillo in *Carmen*, Scarpia in *Tosca*, Emile De Becque (*South Pacific*) and the King in *The King and I*. 2015/16 saw his role debuts as Sweeney Todd for Victorian and New Zealand Operas, and Méphistophélès (*Faust*). His awards include an ARIA, two Helpmann Awards, a Limelight Award, Green Room Award and a MO Award. Recordings include Fauré’s Requiem and *Le naissance de Vénus*, Handel’s *Messiah*, *Musical Renegades* (on CD/DVD), *From Broadway to La Scala* (based on the concert tour), and solo discs including *Mozart Arias* (with the TSO), *Teddy Tahu Rhodes Sings Mahler Songs* (also with the TSO), *The Voice*, *The Bach Arias*, and *You’ll Never Walk Alone* (with David Hobson). In 2017 he returns to the West Australian Opera, Auckland Philharmonia, Queensland Pops Orchestra and gives a series of Christmas concerts in Tasmania.



## Emma Pearson

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Principal artist at the Hessian State Theatre, Wiesbaden, from 2005-2014, Emma’s repertoire included the title roles in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Lulu* and *La Calisto*, as well as Queen of the Night (*The Magic Flute*), Zerbinetta (*Ariadne auf Naxos*), Jenny (*The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*), Nanetta (*Falstaff*), Woglinde, Gerhilde and Woodbird (Wagner’s *Ring* cycle), Sophie (*Der Rosenkavalier*), and Norina (*Don Pasquale*). On departing she was the youngest singer to be awarded the honorary title of “Kammersängerin”. Recent engagements have included Beethoven’s *Missa solemnis* (Bratislava) under Bertrand de Billy, Micaëla (*Carmen*) for NBR New Zealand Opera, Violetta (*La traviata*) for Opera Queensland; Gilda (*Rigoletto*) for NBR New Zealand Opera, Theater St Gallen and Saarland State Theatre, Saarbrücken; Clorinda (*La cenerentola*) for Semperoper Dresden; Sophie for Opera Australia, Minneapolis and Valencia; Hilda Mack in Henze’s *Elegy for Young Lovers* in Wiesbaden; Nanetta (*Falstaff*) in the Nationaltheater Mannheim and Susanna (*The Marriage of Figaro*) for West Australian Opera. Upcoming engagements will include recitals at Ukaria Cultural Centre, Adelaide, performing music by Piazzolla, Purcell, Rameau and Golijov, and singing the title role in *Lucia di Lammermoor* for West Australian Opera. Emma has been a finalist in many international and Australian awards including the Australian Singing Competition’s Marianne Mathy Scholarship.



## Shane Lawrencev

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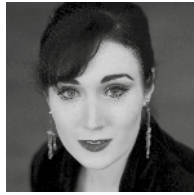
In 2016, Shane Lawrencev sang Escamillo (*Carmen*) and Schaunard (*La bohème*) for Opera Australia and appeared as Hunding (*Die Walküre*) for the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra. In 2017, he sings Scarpia (*Tosca*), Escamillo and Schaunard for Opera Australia and is soloist with the Melbourne and West Australian Symphony Orchestras. After studies in Melbourne and London, he joined Opera Australia as a principal artist. His roles have included the title roles in *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, Scarpia, Escamillo, Schaunard and principal bass roles in *Bliss*, *The Girl of the Golden West*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Aida*, *Così fan tutte*, *Il trovatore*, *The Pearlfishers* and others. Concert appearances have included *Judas Maccabaeus*, *Messiah*, *La Resurrezione*, *Elijah*, Mozart’s Requiem, Mass in C Minor, *Coronation Mass* and *Missa Brevis*; Bach’s *B-Minor Mass*, *St John Passion*, *Christmas Oratorio* and *St Matthew Passion*. In 2014, Shane Lawrencev reprised the roles of Schaunard and Escamillo and starred in two of Opera Australia’s new productions as Prince Selim in *Il turco in Italia* and Leporello in *Don Giovanni*. The following year, he sang Scarpia, Leporello, Schaunard and The Count (in a new production of *The Marriage of Figaro*); he also took the role of Brander in the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra’s performances of *Le damnation de Faust*.



## Samuel Dundas

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Samuel Dundas is a graduate of the Melba Conservatorium of Music, Melbourne. He has performed with the Adelaide, Melbourne, Tasmanian and West Australian Symphony Orchestras, the Australian Youth Orchestra, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs and the Auckland Philharmonia in repertoire including *Carmina burana*, Fauré's *Requiem*, Brahms' *German Requiem*, and Vaughan Williams' *Serenade to Music*. Samuel made his opera debut with Opera Queensland, before joining Victorian Opera's Artist Development program and Opera Australia's Moffatt Oxenbould Young Artist program. He subsequently became a principal artist with Opera Australia where his repertoire includes the title role in *Don Giovanni*, Papageno (*The Magic Flute*), Silvio (*Pagliacci*), Marquis (*La traviata*), Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*), Belcore (*The Elixir of Love*), Dr Malatesta (*Don Pasquale*), Marcello (*La bohème*), Prosdócimo (*Il turco in Italia*), Pish Tush (*The Mikado*), Sid (*Albert Herring*) and Starveling (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*). He has also recently sung Harasta (*The Cunning Little Vixen*) for Victorian Opera, Papageno for New Zealand Opera, Count Almaviva (*The Marriage of Figaro*) and Valentin (*Faust*) for West Australian Opera, and Marcello (*La bohème*) in Hanoi, Vietnam. Upcoming engagements include the role of Enrico in *Lucia di Lammermoor* for West Australian Opera. Samuel was the recipient of the 2013 Lady Fairfax New York Scholarship and the inaugural Dame Heather Begg Award in 2014.



## Kathryn Radcliffe

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Melbourne-based soprano Kathryn Radcliffe has enjoyed success as a soloist with Opera Australia and the Vienna State Opera. Winner of the 2014 *Herald-Sun Aria*, she appeared the following year as Pamina in Opera Australia's touring production of *The Magic Flute* and won the Opera Foundation Vienna Award. In 2016 Kathryn worked for several months at the Vienna State Opera – covering a range of roles such as Pamina, Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*, Ortlinde in *Die Walküre*, Pousette in *Manon*, Echo in *Ariadne auf Naxos* and The High Priestess in *Aida*. She made her Vienna debut in a small role in *The Cunning Little Vixen*. Kathryn returned home to win one of Australia's most lucrative competitions – the Opera & Arts Support Group Scholarship. In 2017 she makes her debut with Victorian Opera and well as the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. Other roles Kathryn Radcliffe has performed include The Governess in *The Turn of the Screw* (Hawaii Performing Arts Festival); Ernesta in *LOL Opera* by Nina Sofo (Australian première 2010) and Daisy in *Contact* by Angus Grant (world première 2011). For OzOpera, she has sung Mother/Witch/Sandman in *Hansel and Gretel* and The Queen of the Night/Pamina in *The Magic Flute*.



## Sally-Anne Russell

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Sally-Anne Russell has performed in concerts and operatic performances in over 15 countries and can be heard on the ABC Classics, Chandos, Naxos and Decca labels. Recording highlights include the ARIA people's choice award for Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*, her solo disc *Enchanting* and Opera Australia's 50th Birthday DVD. With over 70 operatic roles in her repertoire, she has sung with all the Australian opera companies, symphony orchestras, Australian Chamber Orchestra, Musica Viva, Australian String Quartet, and major festivals and choral organisations. International highlights include Bruckner's *Te Deum* at Vienna's Musikverein, *Xerxes* (Oper der Stadt Köln), Washington Opera (DC), Carmel Bach Festival in California, Spoleto Festival Italy and in NZ, Canada, UK, Japan and Singapore. Recent performances include a national tour of *Voyage to the Moon* (Musica Viva and Victorian Opera), Mozart's *Litaniae* (Sydney Symphony Orchestra), *St John Passion* (West Australian Symphony Orchestra), *Nixon in China* (New Zealand Festival), Handel's *Messiah* (Melbourne and New Zealand Symphony Orchestras), Mozart arias and Requiem (TSO), and *Voices in The Forest* with Sumi Jo (Canberra). 2017 performances include Bach's *St Matthew Passion* with Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, *Belshazzar* in Adelaide, and Beethoven's Symphony No 9 with Christchurch Symphony Orchestra. She has also recently been invited to join the Kathaumixw Festival Artistic Council in British Columbia, Canada.



## Jonathan Abernethy

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New Zealand tenor Jonathan Abernethy is an HSBC Laureate with the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence and winner of the Australian Opera Awards. Later this year Jonathan will travel to Zurich to become a member of the International Opera Studio in Zurich Opera's 2017-18 season. In 2015 he was invited into the Aix-en-Provence Mozart Residency, the Solti Accademia in Tuscany and Ravinia's Steans Music Institute in Chicago, working with distinguished artists including Sir Richard Bonyngé, James Conlon and Leo Nucci. An Opera Australia Young Artist since 2012, his roles have included Tamino (*The Magic Flute*), Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Fenton (*Falstaff*) for which he received a Green Room nomination, Ruiz (*Il trovatore*), Normanno (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Count Lerma (*Don Carlos*), Remendado (*Carmen*), Nadir (*The Pearlfishers*) and Ferrando (*Così fan tutte*). In 2016 Jonathan made his debut with West Australian Opera as Nadir. Concert highlights include *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Great Opera Hits* at the Sydney Opera House, Handel's *Messiah* and Mozart's Requiem with Sydney Philharmonia, TSO's *G & S Spectacular* and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (Dunedin). 2017 engagements include debuting with NZ Opera in *The Mikado*, *St Matthew Passion* with Sydney Philharmonia, a recital for Opera Australia and returning to Aix-en-Provence. Jonathan continues to have mentoring and support from the Kiri te Kanawa Foundation.



## TSO Chorus

Celebrating 25 years with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, the TSO Chorus marks the anniversary in 2017 in the same fashion as it began – as an opera chorus, adding Bizet's *Carmen* to a repertoire list that now embraces masses, requiems and symphonies for chorus and orchestra, as well as a diverse array of sacred and secular *a cappella* works. In addition to concerts with the TSO, TSO Chorus highlights across 25 years include performances with the Sydney Symphony, West Australian Symphony Orchestra, Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Victoria, Australian International Symphony Orchestra and the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra. With a reputation for innovative performances under the direction of Chorusmaster June Tyzack, the TSO Chorus has featured in 10 Days on the Island with a performance in the Spiegeltent, collaborated with the Festival of Voices, developed a distinctive presence at Mona (Mofo and Synaesthesia) and in 2016 was the opening act of Dark Mofo on Hobart's waterfront. The sincerity of the 80-voiced chorus delivering a universal message of hope for all mankind in Beethoven's *Ode to Joy* will set the tone for milestone festivities throughout 2017. The TSO Chorus welcomes new members. Interested choristers should contact the Chorus Coordinator on 03 6232 4421 or visit the website for more information, [tsorchorus.com.au](http://tsorchorus.com.au).



## Synopsis

### Act I

*A public square in Seville; a tobacco factory on the right faces a guardroom on the left with a covered gallery in front.*

It's a quiet day in Seville. Soldiers loll about the town square and notice the arrival of shy country girl Micaëla, who is looking for Don José, a corporal. José is not there but Moralès, a sergeant, suggests that Micaëla wait for him. She ignores his advice and leaves. The changing of the guard takes place. José arrives and Moralès tells him that a girl was asking after him. José explains to Zuniga, a lieutenant, that Micaëla, an orphan, has been brought up by his widowed mother. The women workers from the tobacco factory spill out into the square on their afternoon break. Among them is Carmen (La Carmencita), who arrives with a flower in her mouth. She sings her famous "Habanera". After the song, she brazenly approaches José and throws the flower at his feet. Intrigued, he picks it up but hides it when Micaëla returns. Micaëla brings three things from his mother: a letter, some money and a kiss. José sends a kiss in return. In the letter, José's mother entreats her son to marry Micaëla. A commotion is heard in the factory; José rushes in and brings out the alleged perpetrator, Carmen. Zuniga bids José to escort Carmen to prison but Carmen flirts with José – she knows that he has kept the flower – and sings her "Seguidilla". She sings of the tavern owned by her friend, Lillas Pastia, and the sexual pleasures that she enjoys there. José is tempted. As Carmen is being led to prison, she whispers to José to fall when she pushes him. He does so and Carmen escapes in the melee that follows.

### Act II

*Lillas Pastia's tavern.*

It's a lively night in the tavern. Carmen, along with her friends Frasquita and Mercédès, and the soldiers Zuniga and



Moralès, are making merry. Into the bustling pub comes the renowned bullfighter, Escamillo. He launches into the "Toreador Song", one of the best known numbers in the opera. Escamillo flirts with Carmen but she rejects him. The smugglers Le Dancaïre and Le Remendado try to interest Carmen in one of their illegal schemes but she declines, saying that she is in love. Right at that moment the voice of Don José is heard. He has served a short prison sentence for allowing Carmen to escape and now seeks her out. Carmen orders food and drink, and sings and dances for José. Upon hearing the bugle call, José tells Carmen that he has to return to barracks, which irritates her and leads her to question his love. José responds by showing her the crumpled flower which he has kept as a memento. This is the cue for his emotional "Flower Song". Carmen urges José to join her and the smugglers but he refuses and bids her farewell. Right at that point

Zuniga bursts in and orders José to leave, but he refuses. In a crucial development, Zuniga is disarmed by the smugglers, which immediately places José in a compromising position. He's now left with little choice but to join Carmen and the criminal gang.

### Act III

*A rocky place near Seville at night.*

The entr'acte conjures up an idyllic world but we soon learn from the exchange between Carmen and José that their relationship is somewhat rocky. Indeed, Carmen admits that her love for José is waning and advises him to return to his mother. Frasquita and Mercédès consult the cards to see what the future holds. Carmen joins them but is disturbed by what the deck foretells for both her and José: death. The smugglers decide to set out for Seville to carry out a job, leaving José behind to guard the camp. Micaëla arrives at the hideout looking for José. She calls out to him but, mistaking her for an intruder, José fires a shot which misses her but almost hits Escamillo, who has arrived at the camp looking for Carmen. Madly jealous, José pulls a knife and lunges at Escamillo. The



scuffle that follows is very nearly fatal for both men. The smugglers return and Carmen breaks up the fight, saving Escamillo's life. The latter invites everyone to his next bullfight in Seville. Micaëla, who ducked for cover during the brawl, is brought out from her

hiding place. She pleads with José to return to his mother, a suggestion that Carmen supports. Consumed by jealousy, José declares that he will stay with Carmen even if it results in his death. But upon learning from Micaëla that his mother is in extremis, José changes his mind and rushes off, warning Carmen that he will meet her again.

### Act IV

*Outside the bullring in Seville.*

Excitement is mounting on the streets of Seville as crowds arrive for the bullfight. A warrant has been issued for José's arrest but he has managed to evade capture. Frasquita has fears for Carmen's safety. The toreador Escamillo arrives and is feted by the crowd. He and Carmen declare their love and Escamillo proceeds to enter the bullring. Frasquita warns Carmen that José is milling about but Carmen claims to be unafraid of him and even waits outside the bullring while everyone else goes inside. She and José come face to face. José pleads with Carmen to return to him but she insists that the relationship is over. Cries of victory are heard coming from the bullring. Carmen walks towards the entrance but José blocks her way. She rebuffs him once more and thrusts to the ground a ring that he gave her as a gift. Enraged, José stabs her. The "Toreador Song" rings out and Escamillo and his followers pour out of the bullring. Horrified, they see José standing over Carmen's lifeless body.

Robert Gibson © 2017

## Love and Death in *Carmen*

For a work that is well over a century old and firmly entrenched in the operatic repertoire, it is well to remember that *Carmen* was at one time startlingly confrontational. Among the opera's many surprising qualities is the unconventionality of the title character. The Gypsy woman Carmen is a rebel and a free spirit. As a member of an itinerant community, she is an outsider and is happy to remain so. Not for her is a settled existence with a husband, children and middle-class comforts. Her outlook on life is altogether more fluid. This is something that Carmen makes perfectly clear from the moment she first appears and sings her famous "Habanera". Love, as she explains in the "Habanera"'s erotically sinuous descending melody, is flighty, thrilling and dangerous (forget sentimental notions of it being patient and kind). To love Carmen, we are to understand, is to share in these highly charged pleasures.

Micaëla's rectitude stands in stark contrast to Carmen's impropriety (and her chaste kisses stand in stark contrast to Carmen's overtly sexual come-ons). Micaëla was written into the plot at the insistence of the management of the Opéra-Comique, the theatre that commissioned the opera. (She does not exist in Prosper Mérimée's *Carmen*, the 1840s novella on which the opera is based.) Her wholesomeness was intended to act as a counterweight to Carmen's brazenness. She's clearly the good girl whom Don José should marry, a fact that he himself recognises.

Given what appear to be clear moral messages embedded in *Carmen* – among them the point that falling in with a bad crowd will lead to misery and ruin – we might think that bourgeois, nineteenth-century opera audiences would have taken comfort from the black and white morality tale that *Carmen* depicts. Basically, we witness the decline and fall of José, a good but weak man who allows himself to be led

astray by a woman of dubious character and reputation.

But, in fact, *Carmen* isn't a black and white morality tale at all, a truth that must have been recognised by the respectable patrons of the Opéra-Comique. It is Carmen who holds our attention, not José. Both musically and dramatically she is the focus of the drama. And while she might not be the most sympathetic of protagonists – she's manipulative and emotionally cold – she's tremendously magnetic. She is also resolutely her own woman and will live her life as she chooses, whatever the consequences. As it turns out, those consequences are shocking. She is cut down in the opera's confrontational and scandalous closing scene (a scene that was far too strong for the likes of the family-oriented Opéra-Comique) simply because she refuses to bend to the will of her jealous former lover, José. It is José, not Carmen, who is the diminished figure at the end of the opera.

While not entirely successful in its opening season in Paris in March 1875, *Carmen* started to win over audiences with a run of performances in Vienna later that year. Among its many admirers were Brahms, Nietzsche and Mahler. Within a few years *Carmen* had been staged at opposite ends of Europe – Brussels in 1876 and St Petersburg in 1878. It made its way to Australia in 1879 with performances in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide. In fact, audiences in Paris had to wait until 1883 for a return season at the Opéra-Comique, by which time *Carmen* was literally a worldwide hit. The tragedy is that Bizet, who struggled throughout his career, died three months after *Carmen* was first unveiled. The creator of one of the most successful operas of all time went to his grave thinking that, yet again, lasting success had eluded him.

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The Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, and through Arts Tasmania by the Minister for the Arts, and the Tasmanian Icon Program.

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# TASMANIAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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and Artistic Director

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Assistant Conductor

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Concertmaster

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Concertmaster

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Cor Anglais

CLARINET  
**Andrew Seymour\***  
**Chris Waller**  
Bass Clarinet

BASSOON  
**Tahnee van Herk\***  
**John Panckridge**  
Contrabassoon

HORN  
**Geoff Lierse#**  
Principal First  
**Greg Stephens#**  
Principal Second

**Roger Jackson**  
**Wendy Page\***

TRUMPET  
**Yoram Levy\***  
**Mark Bain**

TROMBONE  
**Jonathon Ramsay\***  
**David Robins**

BASS TROMBONE  
**Matthew McGeachin#**

TUBA  
**Tim Jones\***

TIMPANI  
**Matthew Goddard\***

PERCUSSION  
**Gary Wain\***  
**Steve Marskell**  
**Tracey Patten**

HARP  
**Owen Torr#**

\*principal player  
#guest principal

# TSO CHORUS

**June Tyzack**  
Chorusmaster

**Andrew Bainbridge**  
Assistant  
Chorusmaster/  
Répétiteur

**Jennifer Marten-Smith**  
Répétiteur

**Maria Stephens,**  
**Elizabeth Eden**  
Language Coach

SOPRANOS  
**Rosina Beaumont**  
**Anne Blythe-Cooper**  
**Alice Bowman-Shaw**  
**Carmelita Coen**

**Michaela Darlington**  
**Hannah Denman\***  
**Madeleine Dragar\***  
**Madeleine Dyer**  
**Felicity Gifford**

**Debra Jensen**  
**Felicity Kohut**  
**Bernadette Large**  
**Loretta Lohberger**  
**Heather McCallum**  
**Stephanie McDonald**  
**Shaunagh O'Neill**  
**Julianne Panckridge**

**Meg Scanlan**  
**Christina Schallenberg**  
**Carolyn Seelen**  
**Joy Tattam**

ALTO  
**Carmen Ait Maamar**  
**Claire Blichfeldt**  
**Sally Brown**  
**Beth Coombe**  
**Sally Crosby**  
**Elizabeth Eden**

**Ann Godber**  
**Helena Griggs**  
**Sue Harradence**

**Kirsten Jones**  
**Leigh Lazarus**  
**Josephine Legosz**  
**Mary McArthur**  
**Caroline Miller**  
**Louise Rigozzi**  
**Sally Vance**  
**Gillian von Bertouch**  
**Beth Warren**

TENOR  
**Hilary Fawcett**  
**Peter Fawcett**  
**Bill Field**  
**Michael Gregor**  
**Tony Marshall**  
**Simon Milton**  
**David Pitt**  
**James Powell-Davies**  
**Alexander Rodrigues**  
**Peter Tattam**  
**Andrew Tulloch**

BASS  
**John Ballard**  
**Timothy Begbie**  
**Chris Carolan**  
**Jack Delaney\***  
**Greg Foot**  
**Peter Hepburn**  
**Sam Hindell**  
**Duncan How**  
**Reg Marron**  
**Tony Parker**  
**Christopher Parr**  
**Paul Radford**  
**Philip Sabine**  
**Dick Shoobridge**  
**Anthony Sprent**  
\*TSOC Student Program

Surtitles courtesy Opera Australia.

Reimagined by June Tyzack.

Surtitles operated by Marie Keane.



Victorian  
Opera



Tom Waits & William S. Burroughs

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