



# Proudly Presents

How Opera Works featuring Carmen  
by  
Georges Bizet

Micaela, a peasant girl. . . . . Soprano  
Zuniga, Lieutenant of the Dragoons. . . . . Bass  
Don Jose, a corporal in the Dragoons . . . . . Tenor  
Carmen, a gypsy . . . . . Mezzo-soprano  
Mercedes, gypsy friend of Carmen . . . . . Mezzo-soprano  
Frasquita, gypsy friend of Carmen . . . . . Soprano  
Escamillo, a toreador . . . . . Baritone  
El Remendado, a smuggler . . . . . Tenor  
El Dancairo, a smuggler . . . . . Baritone

Setting: Seville, Spain  
circa 1830s

# Carmen

In 1865, Georges Bizet had a chance meeting on a train from Paris en route to the little village of Le Vesinet with a woman who may have been some of the inspiration for *Carmen*. Celeste Venard (nicknamed *La Mogador*) was quite a colorful character whose occupations included prostitution, dance hall escort, writer, stage director and equestrian to name a few.

She had purchased a home next to Bizet and the two became good friends. Celeste purchased a piano so Bizet could compose at her house. Their relationship ended abruptly due to the concern of Bizet's future in-laws about Celeste's reputation.

Whether Celeste is really the inspiration for Carmen or not, this fiery gypsy has captured audiences for over 125 years. It is one of the most produced and loved operas in the repertoire.

## Synopsis

The setting is Seville, Spain during the 1930s during General Franco's regime

### Act I – A square in Seville containing a cigarette factory and guard house

The soldiers watch the comings and goings of people in the square (*Sur la place, Chacun passe*). Micaela enters looking for a corporal by the name of Don Jose. Sergeant Morales tells her that Don Jose belongs to a different company but asks her to wait with them until Jose arrives. She declines the offer and runs away. A trumpet is heard signaling the changing of the guard who enters accompanied by local street urchins. Don Jose is with this relief guard. Jose meets with Lieutenant Zuniga, and tells him that the cigarette girls will be returning after lunch. He also tells Zuniga that he has no eyes for these girls, only for Micaela, a 17 year old orphan being raised by his mother. The cigarette factory bell rings and a crowd gathers to wait for the arrival of the girls (*La cloche a sonne*). Jose is not interested as the girls sing their seductive song. The crowd asks for Carmen (La Carmencita) who appears and comments on the fickleness of love (*L'amour est un oiseau rebelle – The Habanera*). Intrigued by Jose's lack of interest, Carmen throws a flower at him and goes into the cigarette factory. As Jose picks up the flower, Micaela returns bringing money and a message from his mother (*Parle-moi de ma mere*). In her letter, Jose's mother urges him to marry Micaela, who leaves as he is reading. Suddenly there is a shout from the factory and Zuniga sends in Jose to determine the cause. As the girls stream out of the factory, Jose appears with Carmen who has apparently stabbed another worker. When Zuniga questions her, Carmen only answers with nonsensical humming. Zuniga orders Jose to tie Carmen's hands. While Zuniga is finishing the paperwork, Carmen urges Jose to let her go because he is now in love with her (*Pres des ramparts de Seville*). He gives in to her and loosens the ropes. When he begins to lead her off to prison, she shoves him and runs off.

### Act II – Lillas Pastia's tavern

Carmen and her friends, Frasquita and Mercedes, sing of the joys of gypsy life (*Les tringles des sistres tintaient*). The tavern is full of soldiers, including Zuniga, who flirt with the girls. Carmen discovers from Zuniga that Jose has finished his prison sentence. Escamillo the matador enters the tavern with his entourage and sings of his victory in the bullring and in love (*Votre toast, je peux vous le rendre – The Toreador Song*). Escamillo makes advances

to Carmen who says she is not currently available. Lillas Pastia is closing so Escamillo leaves as does Zuniga who also wishes to share Carmen's company. She says she is waiting for Don Jose to arrive. The smugglers, Dancairo and Remendado, emerge from the shadows and urge the girls to join them on their latest smuggling adventure (*Nous avons en tete une affaire*). Carmen says she cannot join them as she is waiting for her lover. Don Jose's voice is heard in the distance. As the smugglers leave, they urge Carmen to bring Jose along with her. Jose enters the tavern and declares his love for Carmen who then does a seductive dance for him. During her dance, a trumpet is heard calling retreat and Jose says he must return to his regiment. Carmen is furious and is only quieted when he tells her of his prison life and how his only hope lay within the flower she gave him (*La fleur que tu m'avais jetee*). Carmen tells Jose that if he really loved her, he'd desert the army and go into the mountains with her. Zuniga bursts into the tavern and orders Jose back to the barracks. Jose refuses and the two begin to fight when the smugglers appear, drawn by the fight. Zuniga is disarmed and removed from the tavern. Jose realizes he must now join Carmen and her friends.

### **Act III – A mountain pass**

The gypsies appear and begin to set up camp. Jose is struggling with his deserter status but still loves Carmen. Carmen hints that she is growing tired of Jose. Frasquita and Mercedes spread out their cards and Carmen joins them to read their fortunes. Frasquita finds love, Mercedes finds wealth, but Carmen sees only death (*En vain pout eviter*). The smugglers leave for another mission leaving Jose to watch the camp. Michaela appears looking for Jose (*Je dis que rien ne m'epouvante*) but hides when he confronts an intruder. Escamillo has come looking for Carmen. He and Jose fight and when it appears that Escamillo may lose, the smugglers appear disrupting the fight. Escamillo invites the entire group to his next bullfight in Seville, with a special look toward Carmen. As Escamillo leaves, Micaela is discovered and begs Jose to return with her to see his dying mother. Carmen tells him he should go, and Jose declares they will meet again (*Dut-il m'en couter la vie*).

### **Act IV – A public square in Seville, outside the bullring**

The crowd has gathered to watch the procession of the matador and cheer Escamillo. Escamillo appears along with Carmen whom he embraces (*Si tu m'aimes, Carmen*). Carmen is warned by Frasquita and Mercedes that Jose has been seen in the crowd and is looking for her. As the bullfight begins, Carmen remains outside the ring only to be confronted by Jose. He pleads with her to return to him but she refuses. As she hears sounds from the bullring suggesting Escamillo's victory, Carmen throws the ring given to her by Jose. He stabs her as the crowd leaves the bullring.

# Composer Bio

Alexandre-Cesar-Leopold (Georges) Bizet was born to musician parents in Paris on October 25, 1838. His father was a singing teacher and his mother, a gifted pianist. In this artistic family, Georges flourished and displayed musical talent at a very early age. Considered a child prodigy, Georges entered the Paris Conservatory of Music at the age of 9. There he studied counterpoint with Charles Gounod and composition with Jacques Halevy and developed into a brilliant pianist. His talents as a composer were also evident in the many small songs, piano pieces and orchestral works he composed while at the Conservatory. Most notable of these early compositions was his Symphony in C which he completed in 1855. At 19, Georges won the Grand Prix de Rome and began a happy (and financially secure) three year stay in Rome.



In 1860, Georges returned to Paris but refused all offers of teaching and a career as a concert pianist. Instead, he dedicated himself to composition. Early into his return to Paris, Georges' mother died. Georges consoled himself with his parents' maid, with whom he had a son in 1862. The Opera-Comique was rehearsing his one-act *La guzla de l'emir* which was eventually withdrawn when the Theatre-Lyrique director invited Bizet to compose *Les pecheurs de perles* (*The Pearl Fishers*). Bizet finished the opera in four months and it was produced in September 1863, but received an indifferent reception. Although the staging was a bit stiff, none could deny Bizet's brilliant scoring especially in the famous duet, *Au fond du temple saint*.

In 1865, Georges had a chance meeting on a train from Paris en route to the little village of Le Vesinet with a woman who may have been some of the inspiration for *Carmen*. Celeste Venard (nicknamed *La Mogador*) was quite a colorful character whose occupations included prostitution, dance hall escort, writer, stage director and equestrian to name a few. Celeste had purchased a home near Bizet's and on that fateful train ride, the two discovered they would be neighbors. At Bizet's suggestion, Celeste bought a piano and gave him the key to her home so he could compose in peace. In Celeste's memoirs, she insists that the relationship was purely platonic and there is no evidence to suggest otherwise. Celeste was now singing for her living in a café and performed *Ay Chiquita* by a composer named Sebastian Yradier. Apparently Bizet liked Yradier's music as he borrowed a theme from Yradier's *El Arregillito* for the *Habanera*. Celeste and Georges' relationship ended fairly abruptly, perhaps because of the displeasure of his future in-laws, the Halevys.

In 1869, Georges married Genevieve Halevy (the daughter of Jacques Halevy). Their son, Jacques, was born in 1872. The marriage did not bring much happiness to Bizet. During this time, Bizet continued to compose with some of his works being met with modest success, including his incidental music for Alphonse Daudet's play *L'Arlesienne*. The Bizets were poor and Georges had health problems and began battling with depression. He also worked on a one-act opera *Djamileh* which was completed in 1872. That opera met with little success but Bizet was finally convinced he had found his true operatic path. *Djamileh* did have one success and that was its impression on director Camille du Locle, the co-director of the Opera-Comique. He commissioned Bizet and librettists Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halevy (his wife's cousin) to write *Carmen*.

The actual story of *Carmen* was taken from the 1846 Prosper Merimee novel of the same name. In Merimee's novel, Carmen is a rather brutal character without warmth or depth; a gypsy with a common-law husband (a rom) who Don Jose kills and eventually replaces. The novel is told



from Don Jose's perspective (he is the narrator) and the reader sees his decline from honorable soldier to deserter, smuggler, and murderer. Micaela and Escamillo are rarely mentioned in the novel but Bizet and his librettists fleshed out their characters to balance the overpowering Carmen and Don Jose. The somewhat comical Dancairo and Remendado are classic Opera-Comique characters.

Bizet and his librettists began work in 1873 though problems began from the outset with outrage from Adolph de Leuven, the Opera-Comiques' other director. The Opera-Comique was a family theater where marriages were arranged, business was conducted and de Leuven felt it was an inappropriate story with its blatant sexuality and frank depiction of gypsy life. Bizet's librettists also sided with de Leuven and felt that material (as originally written) was too strong and they feared public outrage. A battle followed with de Leuven and the librettists on one side and Bizet, du Locle and the principal singers Paul Lherie (Don Jose) and Celestine Galli-Marie (Carmen) on the other. Du Locle, being a practical man, did want the ending changed to accommodate the family atmosphere. Lherie and Galli-Marie threatened to quit so du Locle backed down. Bizet, unhappy with the librettists version of the Habanera, re-wrote the lyrics thirteen times before he was satisfied.

The original version (with spoken dialogue) premiered on March 3, 1875 and met with a lukewarm response from the audience. Though not a failure (it ran for 45 more performances), Bizet felt that no one understood his work. Other musicians, however, recognized Bizet's brilliance with praise from Saint-Saens, Tchaikovsky, Richard Strauss, Brahms, Gounod, Debussy, Grieg, Puccini, Frederick Nietzsche ("a perfect antidote to Wagnerian neurosis") and Richard Wagner ("At last. Some one with new ideas.")



Bizet died on June 3, 1875 three months after Carmen's premiere. Many have speculated that his premature death was due to his despondence over the perceived failure of *Carmen*. While this depression probably did not improve his already failing health, Bizet had long suffered from throat problems and the official medical cause of death was a failed heart due to "acute articular rheumatism".

It is unfortunate that Bizet didn't live long enough to see Tchaikovsky's prediction that *Carmen* would become "the most popular opera in the repertory" come true. *Carmen* has indeed fulfilled the prediction and more with its commercial success in Hollywood with the movie version *Carmen Jones* featuring Dorothy Dandridge and Harry Belafonte as well as becoming the score for *The Bad News Bears* and hundreds of commercials. The melodies in the *Habanera*, *Seguidilla* and the *Toreador Song* are pervasive, exotic and unforgettable and even 125 years after its premiere, *Carmen* still captivates audiences and is one of the most produced operas in the world.

# Where in the World?

Seville, Spain has been the inspiration and setting for several operas. Both Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* and Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* as well as Bizet's *Carmen* take place in this lovely Andalusian city.

Andalucia is a mountainous region in the far south of Spain, rich in minerals and an important



center for the production of olives, grapes, oranges and lemons. The regional capital is Seville, one of the largest cities in Spain, with traces around the city of the 500 years of Moorish occupation. Seville is the romantic heart of the country, the city of *Carmen* and *Don Juan*. Its cathedral is the largest Gothic building in the world and has a superb collection of art and stonework. Christopher Columbus and St Ferdinand are buried here. Also in Seville is the great Arab bell tower, Giralda,

and the Torre del Oro cathedral. Holy Week in Seville is one of the most interesting festivals in the country. Holy Week is followed closely by the April Fair, during which couples parade the fairground mounted on Andalusian horses, and dressed in traditional



flamenco costumes. Drinking, eating, song and dance continue for the whole week and the fairground is awash with color.

Andalusia opens out onto two seas, the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. This region is separated from the Central Plateau by the Sierra Morena mountain chain, which made communications with the rest of Spain difficult but accessibility from the coastline was easy. This region connects the Mediterranean and Atlantic, sits between Europe and Africa and has rich, fertile lands. Over the centuries, it has become a mixture of ethnic groups and cultures as well as an inspiration for writers, composers and artists.

With this melting pot of culture and location, the Andalusia region has been at the forefront of trade and inter-continental travelers as well as a crossing point for various conquerors. There are eight administrative regions within Andalusia with Seville as the capital (it is also the third largest city in Spain).





# Viva Espana!

## A Brief Look at Spanish History

One of the features of Spanish history is the waves of different peoples who spread all over the Peninsula. The first to appear were the Iberians, a Libyan people, who came from the south. Later came the Celts and from the merging of the two there arose a new race, the Celtiberians, who, divided into several tribes (Cantabrians, Asturians, Lusitanians). The next to arrive, attracted by mining wealth, were the Phoenicians, who founded a number of trading posts along the coast, the most important being that of Cadiz. After this came Greek settlers, who founded several towns, including Rosas, Ampurias and Sagunto. The Phoenicians, in their struggle against the Greeks, called on the Carthaginians, who took possession of most of Spain. It was at this time that Rome raised a border dispute in defense of the areas of Greek influence, and began the Second Punic War. After the Roman victory, Spain continued under Roman rule for the next six hundred years.

Rome left in Spain four powerful social elements: the Latin language, Roman law, the municipality and the Christian religion. After the fall of the Roman Empire, the Suevi, Vandals and Alans entered Spain, but they were defeated by the Visigoths who, by the end of the 6th century, has occupied virtually the whole of the Peninsula.

At the beginning of the 8th century the Arabs entered from the south. They conquered the country swiftly except for a small area in the North. The period of Muslim influence is divided into the Emirate (711 to 756), the Caliphate (756-1031) and the Reinos de Taifas (1031 to 1492).

In 1469, the marriage of Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon, prepared the way for the union of two kingdoms and marked the opening of a period of growing success for Spain. In 1492, they regained the Arab stronghold of Granada and sponsored the famous voyage to America under the command of Christopher Columbus. The Canary Islands became part of Spanish territory (1495) and Navarre was incorporated into the Kingdom. The next two centuries, the 16th and the 17th, witnessed the construction and highpoint of the Spanish Empire, which became the world's foremost power.

The War of Succession to the Spanish Crown (1701-1714) marked the end of the dynasty of the Hapsburgs and the coming of the Bourbons. The Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 formalized the British occupation of the Rock of Gibraltar,



giving rise to a colonial situation which continues today as the only dispute between Spain and the United Kingdom.

In 1808 Joseph Bonaparte was installed on the Spanish throne, although the resistance of the Spanish people resulted in the restoration of the Bourbons in Fernando VII. In 1873, Amadeo of Savoy ended his reign with his abdication, and the First Republic was born. However, in 1875 the monarch was restored and Alfonso XII was proclaimed King of Spain. He was succeeded in 1886 by his son Alfonso XIII, although his mother Queen Maria Cristina of Habsburg acted as regent until 1902, when he was crowned king.



Isabella of Castile



Christopher Columbus

In the elections of April 12th, 1931, it became clear that in all the large towns of Spain the candidates who supported the Monarchy had been defeated. The size of the Republican's vote in cities such as Madrid and Barcelona was enormous. In the country districts the Monarchy gained enough seats to secure for them a majority in the nation as a whole. But it was well known that in the country the 'caciques' were still powerful enough to prevent a fair

ing in the streets of Madrid. The king's most trusted friends advised him to leave the capital without delay, to prevent bloodshed. As a result, Alfonso XIII left Spain and the Second Republic was established in April 14th. During its five-year lifetime, the Second Republic was presented with all kinds of political, economic and social conflicts, which split opinions into two sides. Finally, on July 18th 1936, a military rising began which turned into a tragic civil war which did not end until three years later.

On October 1st, 1936, General Franco took over as Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. The Spanish State would continue as a dictatorship for the next forty years, with all other political parties being outlawed, except for the National Movement. Franco died in 1975, bringing to an end a period of Spanish history and opening the way to the restoration of the monarchy with the rise to the throne of the present King of Spain, Juan Carlos I de Borbon y Borbon.



King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia



King Juan Carlos I de Borbon y

## Other Spanish delights; Flamenco, Bullfighting and Zarzuela

In addition to its colorful history, Spain is also known for flamenco dancing, bullfighting and zarzuela (Spanish music theater). All three have a long, illustrious history and have contributed greatly to both Spanish and world culture.

## Flamenco; the music of gypsies

Until the 19th century, much of flamenco's history was passed down orally rather than written so the origins are not precise. The history of flamenco is a study of invasions and their effects on the music of the Iberian Peninsula, for flamenco was formed from the fusion of the folk music of southern Spain with the music that the gypsies created from that same musical environment. We often associate the flamenco with gypsies and while the gypsies were a powerful influence, many other cultures contributed to the style and music. The Greeks, Moors, Arabs, and Christians all contributed to flamenco to create the dance and music we are familiar with today.

Gypsies were expert metal workers and had a tradition of music and dance. While it is true that these gypsies, or gitanos, were very different from the people who had originally left India, they had preserved some of their language and their tendencies in the dance,



particularly the arm and hand movements and the footwork common to kathak dance of northern India. It is clear that the gypsies did not bring anything to Spain that resembled flamenco, for flamenco is found only in the southern region of Spain, primarily in Andalusia; nothing similar exists among the gypsies in other parts of the world. The gypsies loved Andalusia and absorbed, preserved and transformed the music of the region until it emerged as a unique art form- the cante and baile (dance) gitano. In Andalusia, the gypsies also found kindred spirits in the Jews and Moriscos (Moors). The bond of these people was increased when laws were passed that resulted in severe persecution of the gypsies. Between 1449 and 1783, at least eleven major sets of laws were passed that attempted to prevent the gypsies from living their traditional lifestyle; under threat of punishment that included death, gypsies were ordered to settle down and to abandon their wandering ways, their traditional dress, their occupations, and even their language. The Moriscos were also in the process of being expelled from Spain, so the two persecuted peoples found themselves with much in common. Jewish music must have also exerted some influence because there are similarities between some Hebrew chants and certain flamenco songs.



became one of the largest slave markets on the Iberian Peninsula. There are still black families living in Andalusia that date back to those times, and Black African music may have had

some effect on Andalusian music. More certain is the role played by the discovery of the Americas. Most ships sailed from the ports on Spain's southern coast, from towns like Huelva, Sanlúcar, Cadiz, and Malaga. Sailors came to these ports from all over Spain, bringing with them the music of their home regions. Andalusian music, flexible and open to outside influence, incorporated and transformed this music into new forms. Then when Spaniards returning to these same ports brought with them music from Latin America, it also became incorporated into the Andalusian tradition. This is another source of African influence, since Black culture played a large role in the formation of certain types of Latin music.

There was also the use of verbal encouragement of performers; at some point, the *Allah* of the Arabs became the *ole* of flamenco (usually pronounced "oh- LAY" at the bullfight, but "OH-lay" in flamenco circles).

## Olè Bullfighting in Seville

The history of the Real Maestranza de Caballería de Sevilla goes back to the time immediately following the city's conquest from the Moors in 1248 by King Ferdinand III, the Saint. The Knights attending the King in this campaign founded a Fraternity or Order of Chivalry dedicated to St. Hermenegild, for the purpose of practising the use of arms and equestrian pursuits in order to be prepared for action (not unlike the Musketeers in France and the Knights of the Round Table in England).



Bullfighting posters from Seville, Spain



The initial object of this order of chivalry was disappearing, so that a new institution was necessary in order to maintain its spirit. In 1670, Charles II founded the Real Cuerpo de Maestranza de Caballería de Sevilla (Royal Corps of the Order of Chivalry of Seville). Instructing noblemen in horsemanship by riding with short stirrups and bent knees was extremely useful in the formation of officers for the army and their preparation for war in the King's service. From the very first, the Real Maestranza de Caballería organized public events in the city's principal squares, such as bullfights and several types of tournaments on horseback, as well as riding schools for different occasions: visits from royalty, anniversaries and religious feasts. During the 18th and 19th centuries, the Real Maestranza bred mares and colts for its stud which became one of the best in Andalusia. This institution also pioneered equestrian sports in Seville.



The season traditionally begins on Easter Sunday, continuing for up to 16 to 18 days. There are also bullfights around the feast of Corpus Christi; on August 15 - feast of the Assumption as well as Virgen de los Reyes, patroness of Seville; the last week-end in September, feast of St. Michael and on October 12, the feast of Virgen del Pilar when the season officially comes to an end. Furthermore, there are novilladas (bullfights with young bulls) and picadors during all Sundays in May, June and September. In July and August there may well be some further novilladas with picadors sponsored by the Real Maestranza which has established several prizes for the best performances.

## Zarzuela The Spanish Opera

In 1657 at the Royal Palace of El Pardo, King Philip IV of Spain, Queen Mariana and their court attended the first performance of a new comedy by Pedro Calderón de la Barca, with music by Juan de Hidalgo. *El Laurel de Apolo* marked the birth of a new musical genre which was to become known as **La Zarzuela** - after one of the King's hunting lodges, situated in a remote countryside thick with *zarzas* or brambles.



The Palace of Zarzuela

La Zarzuela was often visited by clowns and actors from the city of Madrid, and perhaps the piece Calderón and Hidalgo provided, running the theatrical gamut from classical opera to low slapstick and popular song reminded the court of a typical *La Zarzuela* entertainment.

Calderón was the greatest playwright of the day and Hidalgo was the best Spanish composer. They ushered in a new and developed form of Baroque entertainment in which witty libretti were matched by music of high quality and extraordinary diversity. In 1786 Luigi Boccherini wrote a *zarzuela* for the palace of *La Puerta de la Vaga* in Madrid - *La Clementina* a masterpiece of Spanish lyric theatre, to a libretto by the poet Ramón de la Cruz. Clearly, the *zarzuela* was worthy of the highest talents in the land.

Barbieri, regarded as the founding father of the 19th century movement, wrote pieces which remind us of Rossini, Donizetti, Viennese operetta and even Gilbert and Sullivan (compare, for example, the troop of policemen in *El barbarillo de*



Barbieri

With Barbieri, as with his great contemporaries such as Bretón, Chapí, Chueca and Caballero, musical originality was not as high a priority as vitality, theatricality and sophisticated style. And these composers were at their best when they seem to be taking things

easiest. Their individual flavor comes across more strongly in the *zarzuelas* than in their more "serious" concert, church and operatic works. If there is a single reason for this, it lies in one fact - Madrid. The spirit, sights and sounds of the capital pervade nearly all the great *zarzuelas*, large or small, from this classic period and of many from the 20th century. Even the composers who came from outside the city or the country were influenced by its heady atmosphere, *madrileños* heart and soul just as much as the "natives" like Chueca or the great writer Perez de Galdós. Many of the very best *zarzuelas* take their life from their *madrileño* setting, including Bretón's classic *La verbena de la paloma* and Chapí's equally beloved *La Revoltosa*.

The first half of the 20th century saw the repertoire enriched by a huge quantity of work. Some of the most popular composers include Vives, Sorozábal, Torroba. If the 20th century sees a diversification of the range of the *zarzuela*,



tragic verismo shockers like *Las golondrinas* by Usandizaga, jostling with exotic operetta (Luna's *El niño judío*) and small-town musical (Guerrero's *Los Gavilanes*) the most enduring works of the 1920's and 30's - Vives' *Doña Francisquita* and Torroba's *Luisa Fernanda* - are firmly rooted in the *madrileño* tradition, with its *tonadillas*, *fandangos* and *habaneras*.

The quality of the libretti remains constant. *Doña Francisquita* for instance is based on an update of a Lope de Vega play, by the leading writing team of the day, Federico Romero and Guillermo Fernández Shaw. With the onset of the Spanish Civil War, the *zarzuela* was more or less played out and all but disappeared. Only Sorozábal kept the form alive into the 1950's, and his last productions, *Black*, *el payaso* and *Don Manolito*, seem to resemble the music theater team of Rogers and Hart. The legacy of nearly one hundred years and thousands of works remains incomparably rich.



The  
mosque of  
Cordoba  
(Cordova)  
Spain

## OPERA PROJECTS

### GRADES 4 THROUGH 12

#### SETS AND COSTUMES

Draw some sample sets and costumes for opera that you just saw. Then take a different story you are familiar with and draw sets, costumes and do a character analysis on the main characters. Also decide where characters might have a song (aria), what would the aria be about, how would it reflect the mood of the characters, etc.

#### KEEP A JOURNAL

See section on Journey Into the Music of Your Life

#### CREATE YOUR OWN OPERA COMPANY

Create an opera company within your class. Various jobs include the Managing Director, Public Relations, Marketing, Education & Outreach, Business Manager and Box Office. Also included in the production side of an opera are set & costume designers, make-up artists, lighting director and technicians, set crew, musical and dramatic directors, conductor, orchestra, chorus and principle singers. For more information on all these jobs, check out Arizona Opera Education's program "Opera Look-in".

#### UPDATE A STORY OR PLAY

The next step in creating the company would be a decision on what to produce. One of the simplest ways to create an opera is to take a novel or play and update it. For example, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* has been made into both an opera and a musical (*Romeo et Juliette* by Gounod and *West Side Story* by Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim). Another way to create cross-curricular learning would be to take a story or novel that is being studied in your English class and create an opera out of the story line (i.e. *Silas Marner*, *Hamlet*, *Huckleberry Finn*, etc.)

#### ROLE PLAY WITHIN YOUR NEW OPERA

Now that the company has been created and a story chosen, someone needs to change the story into a libretto. This works well with a small team of students and it's highly recommended to only try one scene rather than re-writing an entire novel or play. If you feel capable, certainly writing the scene as a real opera libretto (i.e. every word is sung rather than spoken) would be ideal. However, if this is overwhelming, writing one song that might summarize the high points of the scene would be sufficient.

Then you and your classmates can act out your scene with music (if possible) and include all the aspects of production mentioned in the "Create Your Own Opera Company" section.

This is a terrific semester long project that will give you the opportunity to participate in a performing arts environment and also gain an appreciation of what all goes into creating any live theatre productions.

## A JOURNEY INTO THE MUSIC OF YOUR LIFE

A journal (or diary) is a very useful tool which many artists use to keep track of their creative thoughts, ideas, inspirations, dreams and day-to-day reflections. As part of your process in learning about opera, begin creating a journal specifically relating to your thoughts and ideas. Below are some ideas to consider and perhaps discuss in class.

### Prelude

Name some places where you often find yourself singing. Why do you sing there? Are you singing alone or with other people? How do the people around you react to your singing?

Now, explore other types of music that you hear around you everyday. Shut your eyes for a minute or two and listen. What do you hear?

Try this. Turn on the television in your home, take some paper and a pen/pencil with you and sit in a completely different room so that you can hear, but not see the television. See if you can tell just by the music what show is coming on. Is it a drama? Science fiction? Mystery? Comedy? How can you tell? What sounds/instruments does the composer use to help identify the music with any characters in the program?

### Exposition

Since many operas are created from books, what are the differences between an opera and a book? What book do you think would create an interesting opera? Why? What would you have to do to transform a book into an opera?

### Development

Operas are also based on original stories. Where do you think you could find ideas for a new opera? Has anything ever happened to you that you think would make a good opera? Are there people in your life that would make good characters in an opera? What qualities do they have that make them funny? sad? angry?

### Recap

Now that you've thought about all the ideas raised above, it's time to put them all together. Go back through your journal and read your ideas. Does anything strike you as being a good idea for an opera? Start collecting images, colors, textures that inspire you, much as it would a set or costume designer. Create a collage of images using old magazines, newspapers, fabrics, old photographs, leaves, etc. that tells the story of your opera.

Write a script to go along with your collage. What's your opera about? Is it a happy story? sad? funny? Who are the characters? What do they look like? wear? think? Incorporate all your ideas into this original story for an opera.

# Visual Arts in Spain

## The works and the artists

Spain has provided the world with flamenco, bullfighting, a sense of exploration, Christopher Columbus, zarzuela and a host of painters including El Greco, Goya and Picasso .

### El Greco (1541-1614)

El Greco was a Greek-born artist whose emotional style expressed the passion of Counter-Reformation Spain. The intensity of El Greco's paintings -- resulting from their unnaturally long figures and strong contrasts of color and light -- has invited a kind of mythmaking about his life and art. Following his death, El Greco's work fell into obscurity and, after its rediscovery in the last century, was often misunderstood. El Greco has been called a prophet of modern art, a mystic, and even a man whose sight was distorted by astigmatism, all misconceptions that have clouded understanding of his distinctive but deliberate style.



### Francisco Jose de Goya y Lucientes (1746 - 1828)

From 1775 to 1792 Goya painted cartoons (designs) for the royal tapestry factory in Madrid. This was the most important period in his artistic development. As a tapestry designer, Goya did his first genre paintings, or scenes from everyday life. The experience helped him become a keen observer of human behaviour. He was also influenced by neoclassicism, and his study of the works of Velazquez in the royal collection resulted in a looser, more spontaneous painting technique. He became established as a portrait painter to the Spanish aristocracy and was elected to the Royal Academy of San Fernando in 1780, named painter to the king in 1786, and made a court painter in 1789. A serious illness in 1792 left Goya permanently deaf. Isolated from others by his deafness, he became increasingly occupied with the fantasies and inventions of his imagination and with critical and satirical observations of mankind. He evolved a bold, free new style close to caricature. His portraits became penetrating characterizations, revealing their subjects as Goya saw them. In his religious frescoes

he employed a broad, free style and an earthy realism unprecedented in religious art. During the Napoleonic invasion and the Spanish war of independence from 1808 to 1814, Goya expressed his horror of armed conflict in *The Disasters of War*, a series of starkly realistic etchings on the atrocities of war. They were not published until 1863, long after Goya's death.

Eventually, Goya went into voluntary exile in France. He settled in Bordeaux, continuing to work until his death there on April 16, 1828. Today many of his best paintings hang in Madrid's Prado art museum.



### Pablo Picasso (1881 - 1973)

The son of a drawing instructor, Picasso learned the secrets of this technique early on and, before long, had mastered it perfectly. When he was 10 years old, his family moved to La Coruña, where Picasso studied at the Fine Arts School. By the time he arrived in Barcelona (1895), Picasso already drew exceptionally well, was a good painter and his art and creativity found the definitive style they needed. In 1900, he went to Paris with his friend Casagemas, and became familiar with impressionist works. The eventual suicide of his friend Casagemas had a profound impact on the young Picasso. Under these circumstances, he began the works of his so-called "blue period", which he would fully develop upon his return to Barcelona in 1903-1904. Around 1913, Picasso began to include collages in his cubist works which allowed him to give his work new textures. Three years later, he participated in Serge Diaghilev's Russian Ballet, which opened in Barcelona in 1917 for an extended stay. This contact with the theater world, as well as a trip to Italy, brought him back to figurative painting with a new interest in characters from the Italian comedy. During the Spanish civil war (1936-1939), the artist took the side of the Spanish Republic, which appointed him director of the Prado Museum. His indignation at the brutal bombing of Guernica inspired the large mural (1937) he painted in honor of the city. During the 40s, he began to make ceramics, which later turned to an interest in sculpture from scraps, which he began making in the 50's. Pablo Picasso continued producing all types of works using all types of bases and techniques. His incessant creativity characterized him, making him one of the great geniuses of our time.



# LOOK INTO OPERA!

Everyone knows that the primary focus of opera music is on the singers and there are many singers that we're familiar with thanks to public television and radio stations. But did you ever wonder about all those people behind-the-scenes that you don't see? In this section, we'll take a look at not only singers and their voice types, but also all the people behind-the-scenes that help make opera happen. We'll also give you some information on opportunities that Arizona Opera has for you to see mainstage performances as well as a behind-the-scenes look at opera through the Opera Look-in program.

Let's begin with the singers. They're the ones you see on stage with the costumes, wigs and make-up. Here is a list of the vocal types as well as typical roles/operas in which you might see these types of singers.



## Female voices

There are several types of female voices starting with the highest and lightest voice which is the **coloratura soprano**. This voice sings very high and can sing very fast notes and trills. The coloratura is featured as Lucia in *Lucia di Lammermoor* and Marie in *The Daughter of the Regiment*. This voice is most often associated with the bel canto (beautiful singing) school of composition. The chief composers of this style were Gioacchino Rossini, Vincenzo Bellini, and Gaetano Donizetti. One of the most famous coloratura sopranos is Joan Sutherland.



Renee Fleming

Joan Sutherland

The next female voice is the **lyric soprano**. This voice is slightly lower than a coloratura with a deeper quality. This soprano is featured as Aida in *Aida*, Mimi in *La Boheme*, Minnie in *The Girl of the Golden West* and Elisabeth in *Don Carlo*. There are many famous women in this category including Maria Callas, Leontyne Price and Renee Fleming. Still lower is the **coloratura mezzo-soprano**. Like the soprano, the coloratura mezzo can sing very fast notes and trills, only lower than the soprano. This coloratura mezzo-soprano is featured as Cenerentola in *La Cenerentola* and Rosina in *The Barber of Seville*. One of the most famous coloratura mezzo-sopranos is Cecilia Bartoli.



Cecilia Bartoli

Even lower is the **mezzo-soprano** ("mezzo" means middle in Italian). The mezzo-soprano has a darker quality to her voice and sings lower female roles like Carmen in *Carmen* and is often portrayed as a friend or older woman like Marcellina in *The Marriage of Figaro* or Madame Larina in *Eugene Onegin*. One of the most famous mezzo sopranos is Denyce Graves. The lowest female voice is the **contralto**. This is a very deep rich voice that can sing very low notes. The best known role for the contralto is Ulrica in *The Masked Ball*. One of the most famous contraltos was Marion Anderson.



Denyce Graves

## Male voices



Jerry Hadley

There are also several types of male voice starting with the highest which is the **countertenor**. This voice type can sing very high and often sings in a "falsetto" voice. Many of Handel's operas such as *Orlando* or *Giulio Cesare* (Julius Caesar) feature this voice type. There are very few countertenors singing currently, so sometimes these roles are sung by women. The next male voice is the **tenor**. This is the voice type that is usually the hero in most operas and has a lot of high notes. Roles featuring the tenor include Don Jose in *Carmen*, Count Almaviva in *The Barber of Seville* and Tonio in *The Daughter of the Regiment*. Some of the most famous tenors include Luciano Pavarotti, Placido Domingo, Jose Carreras, Jerry Hadley, Richard Leech and Jose Cura.



Thomas Hampson

Even lower is the **baritone** which has a deeper, richer quality than the tenor. The baritone can be a lead voice as in *Don Giovanni* or *Boris Godunov* but more often is a friend or authority figure as Rodrigue in *Don Carlo* or Figaro in *The Barber of Seville*. Some of the most famous baritones include Thomas Hampson and Bryn Terfel. The **bass-baritone** is in between the baritone and the bass with a deep, dark quality. *Boris Godunov* can be sung by a bass-baritone. One of the most famous bass-baritones is Samuel Ramey. The lowest male voice is the **bass** (or basso). This is very



Bryn Terfel

deep, rich and low. The bass is often an authority figure or even sometimes the villain. Bass roles include Mefistofele (the devil) in *Mefistofele*, Don Basilio in *The Barber of Seville*, Rigoletto in *Rigoletto* and The Commendatore in *Don Giovanni*. One of the most famous basses is James Morris.



Samuel Ramey



Riccardo Muti

### The Orchestra

Down in the "pit", sits the **orchestra** and the **conductor**. The orchestra can range from 12 - 120 musicians depending on the opera. Early operas were often written for smaller orchestras - we call that a chamber orchestra. Grand opera (a term for 19th and some 20th century operas) usually have a large orchestra which include lots of strings, woodwinds, brass, percussion and sometimes pianos, harpsichords and/or celestes. The conductor is in charge once the performance begins. He/she keeps the orchestra and the singers together and can determine speed, loudness/softness and starting/stopping the piece. Famous opera conductors include James Levine and Riccardo Muti.

### The Chorus

The chorus is a group of people singing on stage who are not the principals but just as important. The chorus actually dates back to ancient Greece when there would be a "Greek chorus" on stage to re-state plot points or repeat something one of the main characters said during the play. The chorus is rehearsed by a chorus master and members of the chorus can be professional singers, but most have other jobs that they do when they're not singing in an opera production. The chorus can number from as few as 12 to as many as 120 depending on the opera. There are also people on stage who do not sing but play small roles sometimes as waiters/waitresses, spear holders, party guests, etc. These people are called **supernumeraries** or "supers".

### The Stage Director

The Stage Director works with the cast during the rehearsal period and tells people where to stand, how to move, how to use props, what the look of the show should be, what motivates various characters, etc. The stage director and the conductor work closely together to make sure that the cast is comfortable with both the music and the dramatic elements of the work. Famous stage directors include Francesca Zambello, Franco Zeffirelli, and Robert Wilson.



Francesca Zambello

## Carmen Activities and Production

Carmen's composer comes from France and the setting is Seville, Spain. See if you can locate these places on a map. The time period of Carmen is in the 1830s. See if you can find out information on Spain in the 19th century.

### Write your own review

Music critics do not always have a degree in music, but they know what they like and what they don't. Use the space below to write your own review of the opera you've just seen. Be specific about your likes and dislikes (i.e. singing styles, costumes, scenery, etc.).

### What to look for in *Carmen*

Some famous arias and duets in Carmen include:

*The Habanera* - Carmen's aria about love being free as a bird

*Seguidilla* - Carmen's aria telling Don Jose to meet her at her friend Lillas Pastia's tavern

*The Toreador Song* - Escamillo's aria about his job

*The Flower Song* - Don Jose tells Carmen how the flower she gave him helped him through his prison term

*En vain pour eviter* - Carmen sees her fate and Don Jose's as she uses cards to see her fortune

### Learn some French

Here are some words to listen for:

<b>L'amour</b> (LAH-more)	Love
<b>Bon soir</b> (bawn swah)	Good night
<b>Bon jour</b> (bawn joor)	Good day
<b>En garde</b> (on guard)	Be prepared
<b>Mes amis</b> (mayz amee)	My friends
<b>La fleur</b> (lah flehr)	Flower
<b>La morte</b> (lah mort)	Death
<b>C'est moi</b> (seh mwah)	It is I
<b>Ma mere</b> (ma mair)	My mother
<b>Ma pere</b> (ma pear)	My father
<b>L'oiseau</b> (lwah-zoh)	Bird
<b>Pres des ramparts</b> (pray day rampart)	Near the walls
Oui (we)	Yes
<b>Vivat</b> (vee-VAH)	Hurray
<b>Un</b> (awn)	One
<b>Deux</b> (deh)	Two
<b>Trois</b> (twah)	Three

### Where did they come from?

Opera singers come from all over the world. See if you can figure out which singer comes from which country (answers at the bottom)

<b>Singers</b>	<b>Countries</b>
a)Placido Domingo	1)United States
b)Riccardo Muti	2)Spain
c)Jose Carreras	3)Italy
d)Jerry Hadley	4)Australia
e)Jussi Bjorling	5)Sweden
f)Jon Vickers	6)Canada
g)Denyce Graves	7)Norway
h)Kiri te Kanawa	8)Wales
i)Kirsten Flagstad	9) New Zealand
j)Joan Sutherland	
k)Charlotte Church	

a)2; b)3; c)2; d)1; e)5; f)6; g)1; h)9; i)7; j)4; k)8