

Fondazione
ARENA DI VERONA

**This is the program booklet
in easy language
for the opera Carmen by
Georges Bizet**



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Title.

The title of this opera is Carmen.

Opera is a way to tell a story
with music, characters, lyrics
and sometimes with dance.

Carmen is a comedy.

Composer.

The composer of Carmen is Georges Bizet.

A composer writes the music for an opera.

Libretto.

Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy
wrote the lyrics of Carmen.

The lyrics of an opera are called librettos
and the writer is called a librettist.

Characters

The characters in an opera sing songs.
Some of the songs are for voices in a high pitch.
They are called sopranos, mezzo-sopranos and altos.
Some are in low pitch for tenors, baritones and bass.

The characters in the opera Carmen are:

- **Carmen.**
She is a young gypsy woman
who works at the cigar factory.
She is the main character in this opera.
Carmen is a mezzo-soprano.
- **Don José.**
He is a military officer
who falls in love with Carmen.
Don José is a tenor.
- **Micaëla.**
She is a farm girl
and she is in love with Don José.
Micaëla is a soprano.
- **Escamillo.**
He is a bullfighter
and he is in love with Carmen.
Escamillo is a baritone.
- **Frasquita.**
She is a gypsy woman
and Carmen's friend.
Frasquita is a soprano.
- **Mercédès.**

She is a gypsy woman
and Carmen's friend.
Mercédès is a mezzo-soprano.

- **Dancairo.**
He is a cigar smuggler.
Dancairo is a tenor.
- **Remendado.**
He is a cigar smuggler.
Remendado is a tenor.
- **Zuniga.**
He is a military officer and Don José's boss.
Zuniga is a bass.
- **Moralès.**
He is a military officer.
Moralès is a baritone.
- **Lillas Pastia.**
He is the owner of a tavern
which is a restaurant and hotel.
Lillas Pastia is a baritone.

Other characters in an opera or a play
are called extras.

Extras are often in the background
and do not have names.

Some of the extras in Carmen are:

- **A Guide.**
- **Military officers.**
- **Soldiers.**
- **Poor children who live on the street.**

- Women who work in the cigar factory.
- Romani people.
- Cigar smugglers.

Some of the characters in Carmen are gypsies.
Today we do not use the word gypsy.
The name we use today
for this group of people is Romani.

Photos from Carmen

Here you will find some photos of the characters and scenes from Carmen.



In this photo you can see **Escamillo** and **Carmen**.



In this photo you can see **Micaëla** and **Don José**.



In this photo you can see many of the characters in Carmen. The characters are in a square in the town of Seville in Spain.



In this photo you can see **Carmen** and **Don José**. They are in **Lillas Pastia's** tavern.



In this photo you can see **Don José** and **Carmen** when they are in the mountains.



In this photo you can see many of the characters. Some of them are dancing. The characters are in the square in front of the bullfighting arena in Seville.

The story of Carmen

The opera Carmen takes place in the town of Seville in Spain.

This opera has four acts.

An act is a part of an opera or a play, like the chapter of a book.

Act 1

The scene is a square in Seville.

In the square there are some barracks and the cigar factory.

Barracks are buildings for soldiers.

Micaëla is looking for Don José.

He is her boyfriend.

Don José is a military officer.

Micaëla cannot find Don José and she walks away.

Some children in the square are making fun of the soldiers and imitate them.

Don José arrives in the square and he rings a bell.

The square is quickly full of men and workers from the cigar factory.

One of the workers is Carmen.

Carmen is a beautiful and charming woman.

She sings and throws a flower at Don José.

Then she returns to the cigar factory.

Don José picks up the flower
and he hides it.
Micaëla returns to the square.
She gives Don José some money
and a letter from his mother.

Micaëla leaves
and Don José reads the letter.
The mother writes in the letter
that she wants Don José to marry Micaëla.
He agrees to marry her.

Screams come from the cigar factory.
Carmen has injured a cigar maker
with a knife.

Zuniga is Don José's boss.
Zuniga tells Don José to arrest Carmen.

Carmen charms Don José
and invites him for a date
at Lillas Pastia's tavern.
Don José accepts and frees Carmen.
She runs away.

Act 2

Carmen is in Lillas Pastia's tavern.
She dances and sings
with her friends Frasquita and Mercédès.

Zuniga tells Carmen

that Don José was put in prison
because he helped her escape,
but he is now released.
Zuniga is fascinated by Carmen.

Escamillo enters the tavern.
He is also fascinated by Carmen.

Lillas Pastia is the owner of the tavern.
He makes Zuniga, Escamillo
and some other people leave.

When they have left,
Dancairo and Remendado enter the tavern.
They are two smugglers.

Dancairo and Remendad ask Carmen
to help them with their illegal business.
She says no.
Carmen is in love with Don José.
She wants to stay at the tavern
and wait for him.

Don José arrives at the tavern.
He tells Carmen that he loves her.

A trumpet sounds.
This means that Don José
must return to the barracks.

Carmen gets angry.
She does not want Don José to go.

Zuniga comes back to the tavern.
He wants to seduce Carmen.

Don José gets angry with Zuniga.
He thinks that Carmen belongs to him.

Don José fights with Zuniga.
It is a bad thing to fight with your boss.
Don José decides after the fight
to join the smugglers.

Act 3

The smugglers hide in the mountains.
Carmen and Don José live there.
They are not happy and argue often.

Frasquita and Mercédès come to visit.
They use tarot cards
to tell Carmen's future.
Tarot cards are special playing cards
with pictures on them.

The tarot cards tell that Carmen will die.
When Carmen is dead,
Don José will also die.

Micaëla goes to the mountain.
She hides.

Escamillo also goes to the mountain.
He tells Carmen that he loves her.
Don José gets jealous of Escamillo
and starts fighting with him.
Carmen stops the fight
and Escamillo leaves.

Micaëla comes out from hiding.

She asks Don José to return with her.
Carmen tells Don José
that if he leaves with Micaëla,
she will marry Escamillo.

Micaëla tells Don José
that his mother is about to die.
Don José leaves with Micaëla.
Before he leaves,
he threatens Carmen.

Act 4

Escamillo and Carmen are engaged.
They go to the square
in front of the bullfighting arena in Seville.
The square is full of people.

Everyone except Carmen enters the arena.
She meets Don José.
He asks her to come back with him
and gives her a ring.

Carmen throws away the ring.
She does not love him anymore.
Don José gets very angry
and he kills Carmen.

People leave the arena.
They find Don José
and the body of the dead Carmen.
Don José confesses he killed Carmen
and he is arrested.

This is how the story of Carmen ends.

The Director

The director of this performance of Carmen is Franco Zeffirelli.

He was from the city of Florence in Italy.

A director decides how an opera or a theater should be performed.

The lyrics and music are still almost the same, but the director can change parts of an opera.

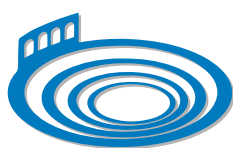
For example:

- the characters' costumes
- the scenography,
which is the decor and objects on the stage

Franco Zeffirelli's version of Carmen is modern and it is very popular.

He died a few years ago,

but his version of Carmen is still performed.



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