

OPERA
WORCESTER
Charity No: 1183967

CARMEN

NORBURY THEATRE DROITWICH
MARCH 25TH-28TH 2026

Performance Programme £2.50

BY BIZET
Sung in English

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THE TUTORS' ASSOCIATION
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2025-2026

Opera Worcester presents

CARMEN

An Opera in Four Acts

Composer: Georges Bizet

Libretto: H. Meilhac & L.Halevy

English Version: Herman Klein & Henry Hersee

SYNOPSIS

ACT 1 - A Square in Seville, 1936 (A few days after the first battle of the Spanish Civil War)

Outside of the munitions factory, a small group of Nationalist soldiers, are eagerly awaiting the midday bell signalling the arrival of the female workers, a break from the boredom of identity checks and patrols. They especially wait for Carmencita, or Carmen, the captivating leader of the gypsy women.
The guard changes, a Corporal, from Navarre in the north, arrives with the change of the guard. For Don José, this day will change his life and his destiny for ever.

ACT 2 - Lillas Pastis' Bar. A month later.

A disreputable haunt of smugglers, Republican sympathisers and local gypsies alike. Whilst apparently entertaining the soldiers, the Republican resistance are organising the smuggling of arms across the region. Their plans are interrupted by the arrival of Escamillo, a famous Bull-Fighter, who enthrals the crowd with his tales of the la corrida de toros and his own bravery.

INTERVAL

ACT 3 - A Cave in the Mountains. Several Months later.
Hidden in the caves a group of Republican Soldiers and Resistance fighters have stopped overnight, whilst transporting a consignment of arms and munitions across the borders of enemy territory.

ACT 4 - Outside of La Corrida de Toros, the famous bullfighting arena in Seville.
As on el reudo, the yellow sandy floor of the arena, the combatants circle one-another, a blade is drawn, and the tercio de muerte or the stage of death commences.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT



Welcome to the Norbury Theatre for our production of Carmen.

This is the second time we have presented this opera, which is always popular despite its tragic story and bloodstained climax. If the only music you already know is the Habanera or the Toreador's Song, you are in for a treat!

Much of the music is demanding and takes a lot of work to perform well. We are delighted to have been able to work with the familiar team of Tony Ravenhall and Garry Bailey to reach the high standard I am sure you will enjoy at this performance.

Paul Thompson

NOTES ON THE MUSIC OF CARMEN

The music of Carmen is everywhere - in adverts, films, sport, and everyday life - its melodies instantly recognisable and impossible to forget. What gives Bizet's score such lasting power, 150 years after its premiere?

A key factor is its vivid evocation of Spain, achieved through folk-inspired melodies, dance rhythms, and exotic harmonies, despite Bizet never visiting the country. The Habanera, adapted from Sebastián Yradier, blends sensual rhythm with chromatic tension, while the Seguidilla and Chanson bohème intensify Carmen's seductive freedom, framed by a refined French orchestral style.

Bizet's gift for melody, dramatic economy, and harmonic daring gives the opera its emotional force. Recurring motifs, especially the ominous "fate" theme, underline the story's inevitability. Carmen transcends its genre, its music roaming far beyond the opera house - as untameable as its heroine.

This page is dedicated to the memory of a dear Opera Worcester Member.
John Bosworth

DIRECTORS NOTES

Carmen centres on a fiery, free-spirited Romani woman whose passion and defiance ultimately lead to tragedy. Bizet was drawn to Prosper Mérimée's novella for its vivid characters and dramatic realism, which stood in stark contrast to the polite, conventional subjects dominating French opera at the time. Inspired by Mérimée's travels in Spain during the 1830s, the story blends adventure with raw human emotion. Its themes of love, jealousy, freedom, and fate aligned with the mid-19th-century appetite for realism and exoticism, while its Spanish setting offered an alluring, romanticised vision that captivated French audiences.

Working with librettists Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy, Bizet initially shaped Carmen as an opéra comique, complete with extended spoken dialogue. His meticulous compositional process fused Spanish folk colour, flamenco rhythms, and dance forms such as the habanera and seguidilla with his own lyrical voice, creating a bold and distinctive musical language. Although the 1875 premiere was met with mixed reactions—critics unsettled by its realism, moral ambiguity, and tragic ending - Bizet remained committed to revising the work. He died suddenly only months later, never witnessing the opera's eventual success.

Following his death, Carmen gained recognition beyond France and is now regarded as one of the masterpieces of French opera. Bizet's innovative storytelling, cultural integration, and dramatic musical instinct transformed Mérimée's novella into an enduring work of extraordinary power.

Our production relocates the opera to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s, a period marked by political violence and social upheaval. This setting intensifies the opera's central themes of passion, freedom, and rebellion, mirroring Carmen's resistance to societal constraint. Don José's pursuit of Carmen becomes not merely an act of obsession, but one of treason, heightening the danger and desperation surrounding the characters.

This transposition resonates uncannily with the era in which Mérimée wrote the original story. The political instability of 1830s Spain - following the death of King Ferdinand VII and the ensuing conflict between liberal reformers and conservative forces—finds a powerful parallel in the Civil War of 1936–39. That conflict, sparked by a failed military coup against the Republican government, descended into brutal civil war, culminating in Franco's dictatorship.

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

— George Santayana, The Life of Reason

This sentiment stands as an epitaph not only for Spain's history, but for the tragedy of Carmen herself.

CAST

Carmen	Shara Parry
Micaela	Catherine Barrett
Frasquita	Hannah Morse
Mercedes	Meriel Ford
Don Jose	Mike Ferris
Escamillo	Samuel Taunton
Dancairo	Paul Ellis
Remendado	Ed Kimberley
Zuniga	Tim Cranmore
Morales	Phil Joseph


Shara


Mike


Samuel


Catherine


Meriel


Hannah

OPERA WORCESTER ENSEMBLE

Lisa Adams
Caroline Causier
Ellen Fearnley
Janet Hay
Nick Phillips
Mike Pugh
Ali Ravenhall


Paul


Phil




Tim


Ed





ENSEMBLE

Keys 1 - James Jarvis

Keys 2 - Joy Reeve

Flute - Harry Jones

Clarinet - Anthea Matthew

Alto Sax - Ruth Jones

Tenor Sax - Susan Fairclough

Trumpet - Richard Harrison

Cello - Gemma Dakin













DANCERS

Translucent Dance Studio

Principal - Liz Winter

Choreographer - Ella Webley

Dancers - Lucas Campbell

Ella Webley

Conductor - Garry Bailey

Director - Anthony Ravenhall





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The Norbury Theatre, Friar Street, Droitwich, WR9 8ED

Cast of Street Urchins:

Esme Bullock

Zara Cawston

Thalia Dixon

Ottilie Houghton

Lyla Jackson

Liberty Oliver

Evie Turner





With special thanks to the Chaperones:

Tracey Dixon * Becky Fearnley * Donna Hawker * Becky Houghton * Kate Jackson * Becky Neale * Sarah Oliver

PRODUCTION TEAM

Assistant Stage Manager - Steve Willis

Norbury Crew - Brian Hooper & Ben Thompson

Lighting - Steve Bull

Backstage Crew - Zero Butler, Amelia Jessop,

Barnaby Struthers & Jon Wardle

Props - Katie Ingram & Lucy Richards

Guns - Altrincham Garrick Playhouse

Wardrobe ~ Jeanette Anderton, Caroline Causier,

Susan Black & Becky Fearnley

Programme & Prompt - Tammara Adams

Front of House ~ Friends of Opera Worcester

Ticket Manager ~ Norbury Theatre

Poster Design ~ Anthony Ravenhall

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Rehearsal Pianists ~ Joy Reeve & James Jarvis

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As always our appreciation goes to our Friends and Patrons

Friends: Janet Emmerson, Canon Douglas Lamb & Catherine Warren

Patrons: Susan Black, Jane Dodd, Rachael Tovey

This page is dedicated to the memory of one of our dear Opera Worcester Friends.

Val Adams

Opera Worcester attracts singers from all over Worcestershire and surrounding counties. Our repertoire is varied and as well as opera, includes musicals and operetta.

We like to give opportunities to aspiring young singers as well as established local performers but, above all, Opera Worcester seeks to bring passionate singers of all ages together to perform.

Why not join us?

Opera Worcester rehearses on Monday evenings in St Mark's Church Hall, Cherry Street, Worcester WR5 3DW. Rehearsals run from 7.30pm to 10pm.

www.operaworcester.uk **info@operaworcester.uk**

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