

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RECORD-BREAKING CARMEN
RETURNS TO VANCOUVER OPERA

The world's sexiest opera is back on the Queen Elizabeth Theatre stage
after shattering box-office records in 2009

Vancouver, BC ~ Five years ago, box office records were shattered when *Carmen* became the fastest-selling production in Vancouver Opera history. Vancouverites will be seduced again when the fiery gypsy returns to the Queen Elizabeth Theatre stage this September/October. The passion, the colour, the sensuality and, of course, the unforgettable music of the world's sexiest opera will come alive for 6 performances only.

Vancouver Opera's *Carmen* will be onstage from **Saturday, September 27 to Sunday, October 5, 2014:**

Saturday, September 27 • 7:30pm
Sunday, September 28 • 2:00pm matinée
Thursday, October 2 • 7:30pm
Friday, October 3 • 7:30pm
Saturday, October 4 • 7:30pm
Sunday, October 5 • 2:00pm matinée

All performances are at the **Queen Elizabeth Theatre**, corner of Georgia and Hamilton Streets, Vancouver, B.C.

Tickets are available exclusively through the **Vancouver Opera Ticket Centre:**
604-683-0222 or www.vancouveropera.ca

Visa, MasterCard and American Express are accepted. Special pricing for groups of 10 or more is available by phone. Follow Vancouver Opera on Twitter and Facebook for exclusive offers such as VO's Get O.U.T program, with \$35 tickets for patrons aged under 35.

THE PRODUCTION

Uninhibited dancing in a smoke-filled tavern. Songs pulsing with erotic power. Sinister felonies in a

mountain pass. Murder outside a bullring. Sensuous, astonishing and irresistible, and once considered too sinful to be staged, it's easy to see why *Carmen* is among the most popular operas in the world.

The gorgeous production, directed by **Joel Ivany** situates the action in late-**1940s Spain**. The powerhouse international cast will include two sizzling-hot mezzo-sopranos alternating the title role: **Kate Aldrich** and **Ginger Costa-Jackson**. Dashing tenor **Richard Troxell** will sing the role of Don José alongside Ms. Aldrich. Ms. Costa-Jackson's originally-slated Don José had to withdraw recently following an automobile accident. His replacement will be announced soon. Esteemed Canadian conductor **Jacques Lacombe** returns to the VO podium for the first time since 2011's *Roméo et Juliette*.

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Conducted by	Jacques Lacombe
Directed by	Joel Ivany
Carmen	Kate Aldrich †
Carmen	Ginger Costa-Jackson °
Don José	Richard Troxell †
Don José	TBC °
Escamillo	Morgan Smith
Micaëla	Marianne Fiset
Zuniga	Thomas Goerz
Le Dancaïre	Aaron Durand
Le Remendado	Rocco Rupolo *
Frasquita	Caitlin Wood *
Mercédès	Laurelle Jade Froese *
Moralès	Zachary Read *

Chorus Director / Associate Conductor: Leslie Dala

† *Sept. 27, Oct. 2, 4 performances*

° *Sept. 28, Oct. 3, 5 performances*

* *Member of the Yulanda M. Faris Young Artists Program*

Sensational mezzo-sopranos **Kate Aldrich** and **Ginger Costa-Jackson** share the title role in Bizet's brilliant masterpiece. Ms. Aldrich stunned VO audiences in 2009's *Norma*. "Kate Aldrich makes her VO debut: we will want to hear more from her. Solid throughout her range, capable of beautifully synchronised blend, she brought both fiery intensity and considerable sweetness to her role," raved *The Vancouver Sun* for that performance. Ms. Costa-Jackson is creating a sensation everywhere she

performs, for her compelling stage presence and her gorgeous singing. She has sung with Glimmerglass Opera, San Francisco Opera and at Carnegie Hall. This will be her VO debut.

Tenor **Richard Troxell** will sing Don José with Ms. Aldrich's Carmen. "His final murderous scene with Carmen outside the bullring built to a splendid intensity..." raved *The Oregonian* for Mr. Troxell's Don José.

Baritone **Morgan Smith** will sing Escamillo, the swaggering bullfighter known for the show-stopping *Toreador* aria. "[Morgan Smith] absolutely stole the show" raved *Opera Pulse* about his performance as Fritz in Dallas Opera's production of *Die Tote Stadt*. Soprano **Marianne Fiset** returns to VO to sing Micaëla, having moved audiences to tears as Mimi in 2012's *La bohème*. "Marianne Fiset brings a bell-like lyric soprano to the consumptive Mimi. Small in stature, Fiset has enormous stage presence and (ironically) robust lungpower," declared *WHERE Vancouver*.

Thomas Goerz sings Zuniga. Combining dramatic integrity and vocal clarity with perfect comic timing, Mr. Goerz has appeared frequently with VO; most recently he entertained audiences as the Sacristan in 2013's *Tosca*.

Alumni of and current participants in VO's Yulanda M. Faris Young Artists Program will also appear in this production. Baritone **Aaron Durand** will sing Le Dancaïre. Tenor **Rocco Rupolo** will sing Le Remendado. Frasquita will be sung by soprano **Caitlin Wood**; Mercédès by mezzo-soprano **Laurette Jade Froese** and Moralès by baritone **Zachary Read**.

THE STORY, IN BRIEF

Carmen is a fiery factory worker arrested for assault. Don José is her dutiful guard. But when Carmen ignites Don José's passion with her gypsy spell, his tragic descent begins. He deserts the army, abandons his family for a life of crime, and when Carmen discards him for a bullfighter, erupts with jealous rage to commit a shocking act of revenge.

BACKGROUND

Based on the novella of the same name by Prosper Mérimée, *Carmen* premiered at the Opéra-Comique in Paris in 1875. In it, Georges Bizet sought to create a new style of opera, one based on realistic depictions of everyday life, especially that of the lower classes. Some 15 years later, this innovative style (known in Italian opera as *verismo*) would come to be celebrated, but at the time,

presenting these sensual, violent characters on the family-friendly Opéra-Comique stage was risky. To make matters even more difficult, Bizet's orchestra complained the score was too demanding, and his chorus, when asked to smoke and quarrel onstage, threatened to strike.

The show garnered some critical praise, but it was not enough to boost ticket sales for a show that viewers did not appreciate or understand. *Carmen* opened to condemnation from the press and a cool reception from audiences.

Bizet's quest to renovate the genre ultimately succeeded. The day before he died, in June 1875, he signed a contract with the Viennese Imperial Opera. *Carmen* was produced in Vienna later that year to an audience not bound by the expectations of the Opéra-Comique: they were able to appreciate *Carmen* on its own terms. Backed by praise from Wagner, Brahms and Tchaikovsky, the exotic show was a resounding success. After a well-received run in Vienna, *Carmen* toured Europe and by 1878 was being performed in opera houses as far away as New York and Philadelphia.

Eventually, *Carmen* made it back to Paris, where it was received with much more warmth than in 1875. Its 500th performance was celebrated in October 1891 and its 1000th in December 1904. *Carmen* remains one of the most popular operas in the world, with timeless themes, juicy story and larger-than-life – yet realistic – characters. Bizet's most famous work continues to thrill modern audiences, from opera newcomers to the most seasoned aficionados.

“I do not know of any other instance where tragic humour, which constitutes the essence of love, is expressed ... in a more shattering phrase than in Don Jose's last words ...[You can arrest me. I killed her. Ah! Carmen! My adored Carmen!]” – Nietzsche

ABOUT VANCOUVER OPERA

Vancouver Opera is the second largest opera company in Canada. It is regarded worldwide for its fine mainstage productions; for its country-leading education programs, which have reached more than 1.6 million children and their families during the past 40 years; for its innovative and award-winning community programs; and for forging groundbreaking cross-cultural creative partnerships that have brought opera to new generations of Canadians. Visit www.vancouveropera.ca to find out more.

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