

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Vancouverites have again been seduced by

**CARMEN**

VO remounts the world's sexiest opera after shattering box-office records in 2009  
Latin American setting will add heat and atmosphere to classic production

**Vancouver, BC** ~ Vancouver is captivated by the world's sexiest opera! Repeating the runaway success in 2009, tickets to Vancouver Opera's *Carmen* continue to fly out the door. Five years ago, box office records were shattered when *Carmen* became the fastest-selling production in Vancouver Opera history, and it looks as if it might happen again.

This gorgeous production of *Carmen*, directed by **Joel Ivany**, is set in 1930s-1940s Latin America, complete with the heat, grit and passion of that time and place. Hand-rolled cigars, poncho-clad bandits, even a New York Yankees baseball cap on a street urchin may be seen among the spectacle of more than 60 choristers.

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](http://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 powerhouse international cast will include two sizzling-hot mezzo-sopranos alternating the title role: **Kate Aldrich** and **Ginger Costa-Jackson**. Dashing tenors **Richard Troxell** and **Christopher Magiera** will sing the role of Don José, and dashing American baritone **Morgan Smith** sings the toreador Escamillo. Esteemed Canadian conductor **Jacques Lacombe C.M.** returns to the VO podium for the first time since 2011's *Roméo et Juliette*.

## CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Conducted by Jacques Lacombe C.M.  
Directed by Joel Ivany

|              |                        |
|--------------|------------------------|
| Carmen       | Kate Aldrich †         |
| Carmen       | Ginger Costa-Jackson ◦ |
| Don José     | Richard Troxell †      |
| Don José     | Christopher Magiera ◦  |
| 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. New York tenor **Christopher Magiera** makes his VO debut as Don José to Ms. Costa-Jackson's Carmen.

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 **Laurelle 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 500<sup>th</sup> performance was celebrated in October 1891 and its 1000<sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.vancouveropera.ca) to find out more.

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