

# CARMEN

BIZET

INTERACTIVE  
RESOURCE  
GUIDE

AUSTIN  
OPERA





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents .....	2
Welcome .....	3
TEKS: Texas Essential Knowledge & Skills .....	4
Synopsis .....	6
Cast & Creative Team .....	7
What is Opera? .....	8
Composer & Librettists .....	9
<i>Carmen</i> Throughout History and in the Media .....	10
Meet some key players .....	11
<i>Carmen</i> listening maps .....	12
What to expect at the opera .....	14

## AUSTIN OPERA STAFF

Annie BurrIDGE, *General Director & CEO*

Timothy Myers, *Sarah & Ernest Butler Music Director*

Jennifer Basten, *Chief Advancement Officer*

Nathan DePoint, *Chief Producing Officer*

Claudia Chapa, *Curator of Hispanic & Latinx Programming*

Andréa Ochoa, *Director of Education & Community Impact*

Melissa Bartling, *Director of Business Operations*

Dr. Charles D. Carson, *2023-2024 Michael & Patty Erspamer Season Scholar-In-Residence*

## CURRICULUM DESIGN

Andréa Ochoa, *Curriculum Design*

Laura M. Carrisosa, *Layout Design*

# WELCOME TO AUSTIN OPERA'S PRODUCTION

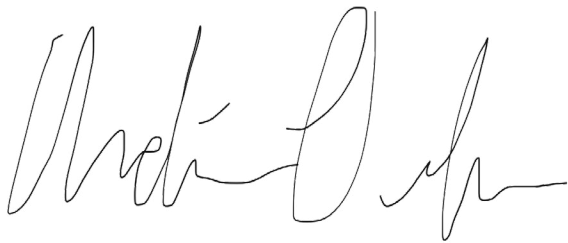
## CARMEN

Welcome to the Interactive Resource Guide for Bizet's *Carmen*. This operatic favorite is a story of love, lust, jealousy, and betrayal, one that audiences can't get enough of since 1875.

Before you arrive at the Long Center, we want you to dive into this opera and get a taste of all the work that goes into making the magic happen on stage. In this TEKS aligned Interactive Resource Guide, you will find a wealth of topics to further explore this piece and discuss with your students. You'll learn about the historical context of the story, hear from cast members and a creative team member, learn more about Bizet's beautiful writing, and prepare for your visit to the opera.

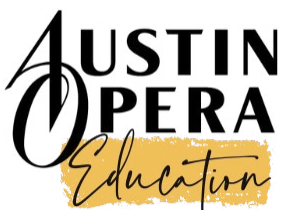
Whether this is your first time experiencing an opera or you're an avid fan, this guide is designed to teach you something new, and I know it will enhance your full Access Opera experience.

Enjoy, and we'll see you at the opera!



### **Andréa Ochoa**

Director of Education & Community Impact  
Austin Opera





# TEKS: TEXAS ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS

## **Overall Expectations: Knowledge and Skills**

117.310 Music, High School 1, Adopted 2013

**FOUNDATIONS:** The student describes and analyzes music and musical sounds. The student develops organizational skills, engages in problem solving, and explores the properties and capabilities of various musical idioms. The student is expected to:

- (A) experience and explore exemplary musical examples using technology and available live performances;
- (C) define concepts of music notation, intervals, and chord structure using appropriate terminology;
- (D) define concepts of rhythm and meter using appropriate terminology and counting system;
- (E) explore elements of music such as rhythm, meter, melody, harmony, key, expression markings, texture, form, dynamics, and timbre through literature selected for performance.

## **Overall Expectations: Knowledge and Skills**

117.208 Music, Middle School 1, Adopted 2013

**CRITICAL EVALUATION AND RESPONSE:** The student listens to, responds to, and evaluates music and musical performance in both formal and informal settings.

The student is expected to:

- (A) demonstrate appropriate concert and stage etiquette as an informed, actively involved listener and performer during live and recorded performances in a variety of settings;
- (B) identify criteria for listening to and evaluating musical performances;
- (D) evaluate the quality and effectiveness of musical performances by comparing them to exemplary models; and
- (E) demonstrate appropriate cognitive and kinesthetic responses to music and musical performances.





Carmen, photo by Don Ipock for Lyric Opera of Kansas City

# SYNOPSIS

## ACT I

Moralès and his soldiers pass the time watching the townspeople cross the public square. Micaëla enters, looking for Don José, a new corporal in the regiment, and is told to return later. Don José arrives at the changing of the guard. The nearby cigarette factory breaks, and all the men ogle the beautiful women who work inside, in particular the wild Romani girl, Carmen. While dancing the Habanera, she throws a flower to Don José.

Micaëla returns with a letter from Don José's mother, and José tearfully remembers his former life. His mother advises him to return home, marry and settle down. There is a fight inside the factory between Carmen and another woman. Don José is ordered to sort out the situation. When Carmen shows her indifference to his authority, Zuniga decides to send her to prison and commands José to tie her hands. Quietly she persuades José to let her escape by promising an amorous rendezvous.

## INTERMISSION

## ACT II

At Lillas Pastia's tavern, soldiers watch the Romani dance. Near closing time, Zuniga flirts with Carmen, but is rebuffed. She learns José will be released from prison that evening — for letting Carmen get away he was forced to serve the sentence in her place. The famous bullfighter, Escamillo, enters amidst great excitement. He too is enamored with Carmen, but she decides to wait for José.

Pastia manages to clear the room of customers, and Dancaïre and Remendado gather with the women to plan their next smuggling run. Carmen stays behind, disclosing her newly found love for José. The soldier soon arrives, and Carmen dances for him alone. He professes his undying love — while imprisoned, he kept the flower she had thrown to him. They are interrupted by the bugle call, summoning José back to the barracks. Carmen pressures him not to leave, but they are interrupted by Zuniga, who has returned to pursue Carmen himself. Don José makes it clear that he is now an outlaw himself.

## INTERMISSION

## ACT III

In the mountains, the smugglers rest after negotiating the harsh terrain. Don José has become disillusioned with life among the Romani and argues with Carmen. She suggests he return home, but José refuses. He is told to stand watch nearby. With friends Frasquita and Mercédès, Carmen reads her fortune in the cards and draws the Ace of Spades — the card of death.

Nearby, Micaëla has come in search of José with news that his mother is dying. Escamillo also appears, looking for Carmen. He and Don José begin to struggle, but the fight is broken up by the others. To finally be rid of him, Carmen commands José to go with Micaëla, but he will not be forgotten so easily, vowing to return.

## ACT IV

Back in Seville, the townspeople bustle in anticipation of the upcoming bullfight. Escamillo again expresses his undying affection for Carmen, who now loves him in return. She is warned Don José is among the crowd. As the bullfight begins, she remains behind to tell him their affair is over. He is incapable of letting go.



# MAIN CHARACTERS

Performance Run Time:  
Approximately 3 hours and 5 minutes

Carmen .....	Cecelia Hall*+
Don José .....	Samuel Levine*
Escamillo .....	Seth Carico*+
Micaëla .....	Raquel González*
Zuniga .....	Justin Hopkins*+
Dancaire .....	Conor McDonald
Moralès .....	Conor McDonald
Remendado .....	Micah Perry*+
Frasquita .....	Lily Guerrero+
Mercédès .....	Jaime Van Eyck

\*Long Center Season debut  
+Role debut

# CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor .....	Timothy Myers
Director .....	Rebecca Herman
Scenic Designer.....	R. Keith Brumley
Costume Design .....	Susan Allred
Lighting Design .....	Marcella Barbeau



Carmen, photo by Don Ipock for Lyric Opera of Kansas City



# WHAT IS OPERA?

For many of us, the word opera conjures up pictures of women singing in Viking helmets or—let’s be real—the over-the-top drama of Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd cartoons. Well, to be honest, those cartoons aren’t that far off. Operas are *supposed* to be dramatic! *But what is opera, actually?*

The word “opera” comes from the Latin word for “work,” and that’s what it is—all of the arts (music, singing, acting, movement, and design) combined to give you larger-than-life characters and dramatic situations in fantastic locations. (It’s like TikTok but live!)

Opera as we know it today began in 16th Century Italy, when musicians, scholars, and philosophers got together to try to re-create the “pure” drama of Ancient Greece. For them, this meant blurring the lines between singing and speaking, and using instruments to help to singers communicate deeper meanings than acting alone could. They thought this unified approach would speak more directly to audiences. *What do you think?*

The flexibility of opera means that these elements can be combined to tell many different kinds of stories—from hilarious comedies, to heartbreaking tragedies. One of the best examples of this range is *Carmen*, which uses some of the most famous operatic songs and melodies to tell an epic story of love and adventure among a gang of outlaws in Southern Spain in the 1800s. It is opera storytelling at its best: you’ll laugh, you’ll cry, but you won’t be disappointed.

By Dr. Charles Carson, 2023-2024 Scholar-In-Residence



*Carmen*, photo by Don Ipock for Lyric Opera of Kansas City



## COMPOSER & LIBRETTISTS



**Georges Bizet**, born on October 25, 1838, in Paris, France, was a renowned composer known for his operas, particularly *Carmen*, which is now one of the most popular and frequently performed operas in the world. Bizet showed exceptional musical talent from a young age and entered the Paris Conservatoire at the age of nine. Despite initial struggles, he eventually found success with works like the opera *Les pêcheurs de perles* (*The Pearl Fishers*) and the *Symphony in C*. However, Bizet faced critical and public rejection for his masterpiece, *Carmen*, which premiered in 1875, just three months

before his death. Despite its initial reception, *Carmen* went on to become one of the most beloved and frequently performed operas in the world, solidifying Bizet's reputation as a composer of great talent and originality.

Bizet's career was marked by a blend of successes and disappointments, but his contributions to the world of music have endured. He is remembered for his melodic gifts, skillful orchestration, and ability to evoke emotion through his compositions. Despite his untimely death at the age of 36, Bizet left behind a significant body of work that continues to be celebrated and performed worldwide, ensuring his place as one of the most important figures in French music history.

The **libretto** for *Carmen* was written by **Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy**. They were both French librettists known for their collaboration with composers during the 19th century. Meilhac and Halévy adapted the story of *Carmen* from the novella of the same name by Prosper Mérimée. Their libretto provided the framework for Georges Bizet's opera, with its vivid characters, dramatic storyline, and Spanish-influenced music. Meilhac and Halévy's work on *Carmen* helped create a compelling narrative that has captivated audiences since its premiere in 1875, despite the initial mixed reception. The libretto skillfully blends elements of drama, romance, and tragedy, making *Carmen* one of the most enduring and popular operas in the repertoire.



# CARMEN THROUGHOUT HISTORY

The story of *Carmen* originated as a novella by the French writer Prosper Mérimée, who was inspired to write this tale after a visit to Spain. The narrative introduces us to its central figures, Carmen and Don José, as well as to the Romani community in Spain. The Romani, also known as the Roma people, are an ethnic group with a nomadic lifestyle. They have roots tracing back to the Indian Subcontinent and have migrated worldwide. The term 'Gypsies,' has been culturally used to describe the Roma but is no longer used.

Romani culture and Spanish culture are intertwined, as seen in Flamenco music and dance. Flamenco is characterized by its passionate music and expressive movements, conveying themes of love, heartbreak, oppression, and defiance. The Roma have faced centuries of oppression and discrimination, which deeply influences the intense nature of Flamenco. Carmen and her friends are Romani, and we'll see elements of this culture in their performance.



## IF THIS OPERA TAKES PLACE IN SPAIN, WHY IS IT IN FRENCH?

That's a great observation! *Carmen* is actually an opera comique, a genre that was quite popular in France at the time. The choice to set the opera in Seville, Spain and use French was likely influenced by the desire to create an "exotic" and appealing story for the French audience, while also allowing Bizet and the librettists to explore themes that might have been seen as controversial if set in a more familiar French context. This was a common practice in opera during the nineteenth century, as it allowed composers and librettists to address complex themes without directly challenging societal norms.

## CARMEN IN THE MEDIA

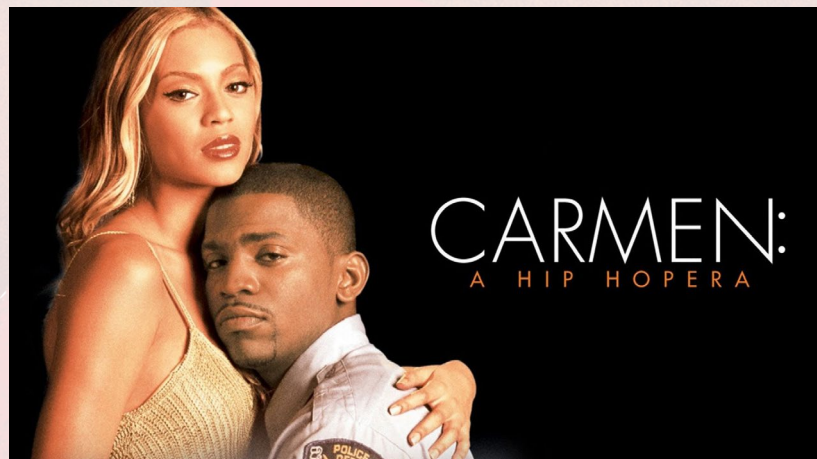
The tale of *Carmen* has fascinated audiences for generations. It has been adapted into more than 20 films, with the earliest released in 1913 and the most recent in 2022. One of the most well known adaptations is Beyoncé's "Carmen: a Hip Hopera," released in 2001.

You've probably heard the famous "Habanera" tune from *Carmen* before.

In Disney's *Up*, [Carl goes through his morning routine](#) to the tune of the tune of the "Habanera."

Additionally, The Muppets have a [rendition of this tune](#) that is both amusing and completely serious.

For further exploration of *Carmen*'s presence in popular culture, check out [this article](#) by Opera Colorado.





# MEET SOME KEY PLAYERS

Want to hear from the people who make the magic happen?  
Watch the videos below from our director and two singers about their creative process.



## REBECCA HERMAN

### Director

1. Tell us about a Director's job. What exactly do you do?
2. What is your favorite scene in the opera?
3. Tell us about the process of directing an iconic opera like Carmen. How do you make it your own?
4. What is your favorite opera?



## CECILIA HALL

### Carmen

1. Tell us about a Singer's job. What exactly do you do? What is your life like being a professional opera singer?
2. What is your favorite scene in the opera?
3. Tell us about the process of preparing for an iconic role like Carmen. How do you make it your own?
4. What is your favorite opera?



## CONOR MCDONALD

### Moralès/Dançaire

1. Tell us about a Singer's job. What exactly do you do? What is your life like being a professional opera singer?
2. What is your favorite scene in the opera?
3. Tell us about the process of preparing for an iconic opera like Carmen. How do you make it your own?
4. Tell us about your previous work with Austin Opera.
5. What is your favorite opera?



# CARMEN LISTENING MAPS

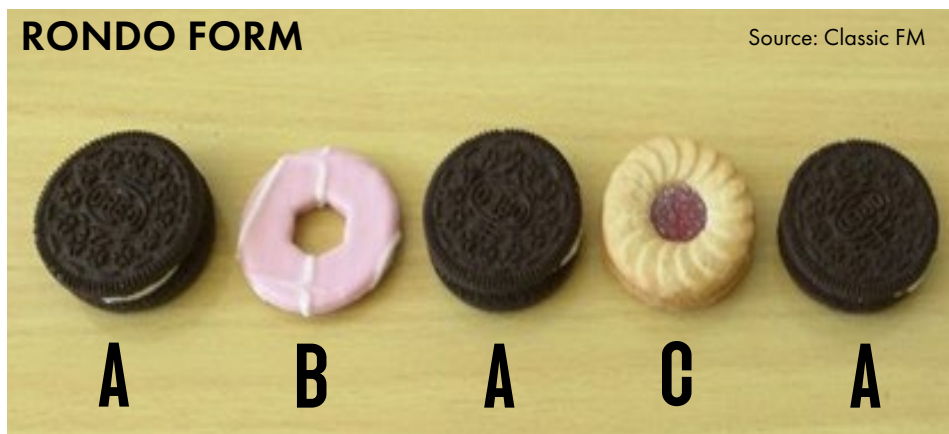
Learn about musical concepts through two pieces from *Carmen*.

## PRELUDE

The prelude, or **overture**, of an opera sets the mood for the action on stage, and previews musical themes that will be heard later.

### FORM:

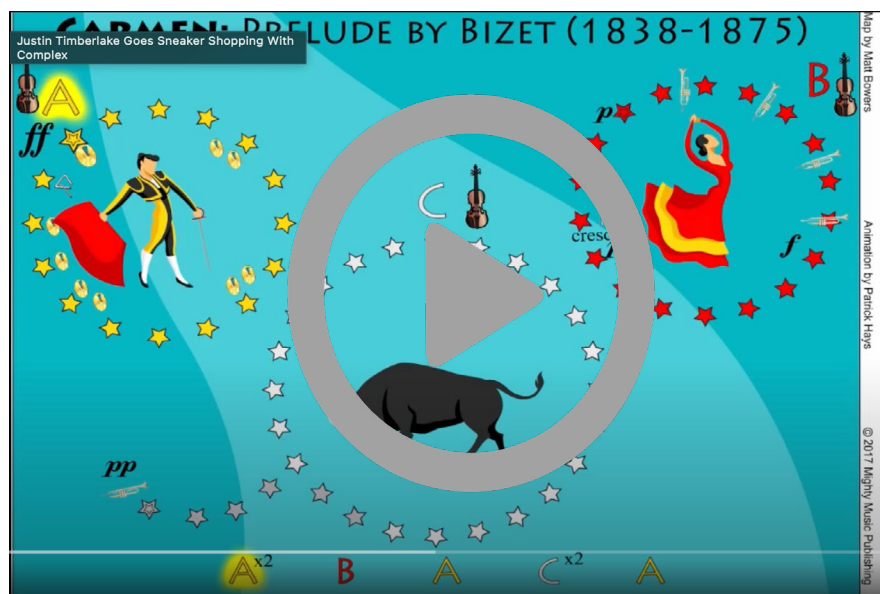
The word "form" refers to the overall shape of a composition. As you can see from the listening map, we have three distinct sections in this piece – A, B, and C. When the sections follow the pattern ABACA we have **rondo form**.



## WATCH THE PRELUDE LISTENING MAP

### THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR:

- The cymbals that will be heard playing accents in many places.
- The stars that will represent two beats each. The double concentric stars indicate where each section begins.
- Tap along and keep a steady beat!



# CARMEN LISTENING MAPS

Learn about musical concepts through two pieces from *Carmen*.

## HABANERA

The Habanera is the most famous piece from *Carmen*. This piece introduces us to our title character, and we can see her flirtatious and free spirit.

### WATCH THE HABANERA LISTENING MAP

#### THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR:

- Identify the solo and chorus sections of this selection.
- Find the pictures of the tarot cards that represent the four sections of this piece. Carmen and her friends use tarot cards to tell their fortunes in Act 3: When Frasquita and Mercédès turn the cards to tell their fortunes, they foresee love and riches for themselves, but Carmen's cards spell death—for her and for Don José.
- Notice the "Habanera" Rhythm pattern that will be heard throughout this selection and clap/read together.
- Notice the skyline of Seville, Spain at the bottom of the page.
- Notice the box in the upper right corner that will display both the French text and English translation as this selection is heard.

Carmen: Habanera by Bizet (1838-1875)  
(L'amour est un pigeon rebelle)

Habanera Rhythm  
Allegretto, quasi Andantino  $\text{♩} = 72$

JACKIE GUERRIDO habla de DON OMAR POR PRIMERA VEZ en Cara a Cara con Rodner Figueroa

si tu m'aimes pas, je t'aime!  
I will love you!

I SOLO

II CHORUS

III SOLO & CHORUS

IV CHORUS & SOLO

Map by Christina Tannert  
Animation by Patrick Hays  
© 2017 Mighty Music Publishing



# WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE OPERA

Whether it's your first time at the opera, or you've been more times than you can count, these tips and tricks for your visit will help you feel comfortable and help Access Opera run smoothly.

## **Final Dress Rehearsal**

Because this is a final dress rehearsal, there will still be elements of the production that are in process. There may be stopping to fix mistakes, or singers "marking," which means singing lightly to save their voices. There will also be a tech table in the middle of the audience where the production team, including the director, costume, lighting, and set designers, are working hard to make sure all of the finishing details are in place.

## **Be quiet and courteous**

Be quiet and courteous to the actors on stage. Since a night at the opera is a live theater experience, things work a little differently than they would at a movie theater or school assembly. Since there are singers on stage actively working, our audience needs to be as respectful as possible.

## **Applaud after arias**

Let the singers know that you love the work they're doing. You can say "bravo" for men, "brava" for women, and "bravi" for a group!

## **No food or drinks allowed**

No food or drinks are allowed in the theater. Concessions will be open for purchase before the show and during intermission, and you can enjoy your treats in the lobby.

## **Don't leave the theater**

We lock our doors from the outside during the show, so if you leave for a bathroom break or to get some fresh air, you won't be able to get back to your original seat. Save your breaks for after the show.

## **Dress like yourself**

Whether you wear that dress or suit you've been saving for a special occasion, or you're more comfortable going out in jeans or basketball shorts, dress like yourself at the opera!

and finally... **Have fun!**

