

# STATE OPERA

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

### EDUCATION

#### Carmen Study Guide



**General Capabilities:**

Literacy, Information and Communication Technology, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capability, Ethical Understanding, Intercultural Understanding.

**Cross Curriculum Priorities:**

Sustainability

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### General Capabilities:

Literacy, Information and Communication Technology, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capability, Ethical Understanding, Intercultural Understanding.

Carmen covers Literacy through communication through language, music and narrative, ICT through technical theatre, and Critical and Creative Thinking by giving students an opportunity to look at a unique art form while delving into important topics such as sustainability and interdependency, which allows them to be effective global citizens. The ideas and themes of Carmen as well as the theatrical genre and its culture meets the capabilities of Ethical Understanding and Intercultural Understanding.

### Cross Curriculum Priorities:

#### Sustainability:

By looking at themes of loyalty, destiny, freedom, identity and power, Carmen allows students to consider social justice and world views.



### Carmen presented by State Opera of South Australia

State Opera Brings Carmen to the people

*The real deal, no bull!*

The world's most popular opera, Carmen, will take over Adelaide's Victoria Square, with an unmissable production that will transform the centre of Adelaide into sultry Spain for one night only on Saturday 23 March 2019.

Carmen in the Square, takes opera out of the theatre and into the community as opera lovers and the broader public alike immerse themselves into this musical and visual spectacle, under the stars, in the centre of the city.

Carmen in the Square is the first performance on the 2019 State Opera South Australia program, and is directed by newly appointed Artistic Director, Stuart Maunder AM.

Maunder said he wanted this event to shine a spotlight on opera in Adelaide, marking a new era for the company and setting the scene for the season ahead.

"I wanted to bring the world's most popular opera to the people in a contemporary way that honours the beauty and truth of the art form, yet provides more choice in regards to how people can enjoy it."

"If you haven't seen Carmen, it's a tragedy!" he laughed.

Carmen in the Square combines live opera, a full orchestra and opera chorus, and large screen projection of the action so that no matter where you sit - you'll have the best seat in the house.

"Naturally this cast is talented, but they also embody the new face of opera," he said.

Starring mezzo-soprano Helen Sherman as Carmen, the cast includes some of the finest Australian opera talent assembled from all over the world.

The Northern section of Victoria Square (closest to the stage) features a range of reserved seating, bars and other facilities provided by event partners East End Cellars.

The Southern end of Victoria Square will be a General Admission picnic area for all the family with free-admission for under 16s. Relax on a rug with a picnic and enjoy the action live and on the large screens. Food trucks, bars and fun activities will also be available.

The State Opera Executive Director Yarmila Alfonzetti said the 2019 season is the most powerful and impressive program in recent times and truly belongs to the people.

"This year's program is so exciting. We have a long list of firsts including a new series focusing on Australia's 'lost' operas and a rejuvenated education program," she said.

"We want to deliver more opera for more people, and I think Stuart's program does this, starting with Carmen in the Square."

Opera's most famous seductress Carmen takes over the city centre in this very special event on Saturday evening, 23 March 2019. Conducted by Oliver von Dohnányi and directed by Stuart Maunder, it is suitable for the entire family, young and old. Tickets are on sale now.

This event is exclusive to Adelaide.

## Credits

### **Creatives**

Conductor – Oliver von Dohnányi

Director – Stuart Maunder

### **Cast**

Carmen – Helen Sherman

Don José – James Egglestone

Escamillo – Morgan Pearse

Micaela – Emma Pearson

Frasquita – Desiree Frahn

Mercedes – Bethany Hill

Morales/Dancairo – Samuel Dundas

Remendado – Adam Goodburn

Zuniga – Wade Kernot

State Opera Chorus

Adelaide Symphony Orchestra

*Sung in French with English surtitles*

## About Carmen in the Square

Adelaide's Victoria Square will be transformed into sultry Spain for one summer night in March, as Opera's most famous seductress Carmen takes over the city centre.

This very special family-friendly event combines live opera, a full orchestra and opera chorus, and large screen projection of the action so that no matter where you sit in the Square, you'll have the best seat in the house.

Starring mezzo-soprano Helen Sherman as Carmen, the cast includes some of the finest Australian opera talent assembled from all over the world for one night only. Conducted by Oliver von Dohnányi and directed by Stuart Maunder, this event is exclusive to Adelaide.

## Carmen - Synopsis



Based on an 1845 novella by French dramatist Prosper Mérimée, *Carmen* is an opera by Georges Bizet. The title character is unscrupulous in matters of the law and of the heart.

We set the scene in 1830s Seville, Spain where Carmen's beauty and charisma attracts the attention of all surrounding her, except soldier Don José who pretends not to notice her. Wild and flirtatious Carmen throws him a flower, which he intends to throw away,

but instead hides it when his girlfriend, Micaëla, arrives. A fight erupts between Carmen and another woman and José is ordered to arrest Carmen. Thinking fast, Carmen seduces José and escapes, which results in José's arrest for breach of duty.

A month later, Carmen and her friends are socialising with soldiers in a tavern. Escamillo, the famous bullfighter, arrives. He flirts with Carmen, who rebuffs him because she is waiting for José to be released from jail. When José arrives, Carmen tries to seduce him. As he prepares to return to the barracks for the night, she taunts him, saying if he really loved her, he would run away with her. José shows her the flower she gave him as a sign of true love. But suddenly José's lieutenant returns to arrest Carmen. The men fight and are separated by Carmen's gang of smugglers. Because José has attacked a superior officer, he has no choice but to run away with Carmen and the smugglers to the mountains.

Once in the mountains, Carmen becomes bored of José and tells him to go home to his mother. Escamillo arrives and invites everyone to his next bullfight before he leaves. The closing act depicts Escamillo's bullfight and Carmen on his arm. But she runs into José outside the arena who begs her to run away with him, but she refuses, saying that she was born free and will die free. In a jealous rage, José stabs her to death while the crowd inside the arena cheers Escamillo to victory.



## About Georges Bizet

25 October 1838, Paris, France - 3 June 1875, Bougival, France



Born Alexandre César Léopold Bizet, Georges Bizet was born to a father who was a wigmaker-turned-singing-teacher and a mother who was an accomplished pianist.

Bizet was a gifted pianist and prolific composer, who entered many music competitions, but rarely won prizes. He premiered new orchestral and vocal works, but would rarely win praise. He found he could make more money arranging other people's music than composing his own.

His untimely death at 36 was probably the best thing that could have happened to his career, because three months after *Carmen* premiered to a disapproving press, a special performance of his last opera in honour of his death won public hearts.

He also wrote *The Pearl Fishers*, which contains one of the most beautiful (and famous) duets in opera.

## About the Director: Stuart Maunder AM

Stuart Maunder is Artistic Director of State Opera South Australia.

For the past thirty years Stuart has been directing musical theatre and opera in Australia. He joined The Australian Opera as Stage Manager in 1978, becoming a Resident Director in 1981. In 1992 he joined The Royal Opera (UK) as a Staff Director whilst continuing to direct in Australia, regional UK, France and the USA.

In 1999 Stuart was appointed Artistic Administrator of Opera Australia, becoming Executive Producer 2004 - 2008. His OA productions include *Tales of Hoffmann*, *Manon*, *Gypsy Princess*, *Don Pasquale*, *My Fair Lady* and *A Little Night Music*. His *Trial by Jury*, *HMS Pinafore* and *Pirates of Penzance* have been televised nationally on ABC TV.



Music Theatre productions include Australian tours of *Dusty - The original Pop Diva* and *Shout!* and *Little Women* for Kookaburra. Stuart also directed *Music of Andrew Lloyd Webber* which toured Australasia and Asia in 2012. In 2018 in Seoul, Korea he directed the *70th Birthday Concert for Andrew Lloyd Webber* and the first concert version of *Phantom of the Opera*.

Recent Australian productions have included *Cunning Little Vixen*, *Into the Woods*, *Sunday in the Park with George* and *Sweeney Todd* (Victorian Opera) and *Cunning Little Vixen*, *Tosca*, *Rigoletto*, *Pearl Fishers*, *La Boheme* (West Australian Opera).

From 2014 to 2018 Stuart was General Director of New Zealand Opera where he has directed *Candide*, *Tosca*, *Sweeney Todd* and *The Mikado*.

#### Director's note – Stuart Maunder AM

*Carmen* is possibly the most famous opera of all time, probably because it contains more hits per square metre than any other opera.

Georges Bizet's masterpiece of the gypsy seductress who lives by her own rules, no matter what the cost, has had an impact far beyond the opera house. Its melodies have proliferated popular culture from Gilligan's Island to the Muppets.

*Carmen*, famously, was a scandal at its premiere and was roundly denounced in the press for its flagrant immorality. The power of the music and the drama, however, created an equally vocal faction in favour of the work. And everywhere away from Paris it was a success: Wagner, Brahms, Tchaikovsky and even two unlikely Germans: Otto von Bismark, the man who united the German states, and the great philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche all extolled the brilliance of the work. Nietzsche indeed praised the opera, describing the robustness of the score as nothing less than a cure-all for the world's spiritual ills.

Eventually, the Parisians were brought around and, by the turn of the Twentieth century, *Carmen* was universally hailed as being as close to perfection as a human can construct. A big call, but to my mind absolutely true.

*Carmen* was George Bizet's final work. His premature death on June 3, 1875, exactly three months after the famous opening night of *Carmen*, is one of the cruellest ironies in the history of music.

It's tempting to think that if only those prudish Parisians on the first night had been less parochial in their judgment, the success and recognition awarded to Georges Bizet might have staved off the chronic depression that precipitated the quinsy and rheumatism that led to his untimely death.

Here is one of the saddest quotes I've ever found from the ailing and beleaguered Bizet at age 36:

"Ah, music! What a beautiful art! But what a wretched profession!"

While it was certainly tragic that Puccini never lived to see *Turandot* and that Berlioz never lived to see *The Trojans*, those composers were at the end of illustrious careers. Bizet was just 36 and had revealed in *Carmen*, for the first time the true depth of his operatic genius. If Verdi, Wagner, or Strauss had died at that age, not many of their works would be heard in our opera houses today.

Just a few extra months granted to Bizet would have shown him that the Vienna Opera had presented *Carmen* to a brilliant reception completely the opposite to the shocked incomprehension that greeted it in Paris; just three more years would have given him the satisfaction of knowing that it had played in Brussels, Budapest, St. Petersburg, Stockholm, London, Dublin, New York, and Philadelphia.

And he would at last have made a respectable living as a composer instead of having to toil over four-hand arrangements of lesser operas by lesser composers.

And speaking of composers, Brahms went to see the opera over twenty times; the great Wagner declared, 'At last. Someone with new ideas'; Tchaikovsky was in awe at the premiere and later wrote, 'I am convinced that ten years hence *Carmen* will be the most popular opera in the world'.

Bizet was, however, used to failure, since none of his operas had found lasting success. Even the now popular *Pearl Fishers* vanished after a moderately successful early run only to find success in the 1950's, pretty much on the back of one recording of its famous tenor/baritone duet with Robert Merrill and Jussi Bjorling.

But back to the opera at hand. In 1872, Bizet was commissioned to write a three-act opera for the Opéra Comique, a theatre where operas traditionally ended happily. It was a family theatre where audiences would be amused and entertained, excited even, but never shocked. It was Bizet's own idea to base the opera on Prosper Mérimée's popular novella *Carmen*, published in 1845.

The choice of *Carmen* was, to say the least, unconventional, since the heroine is the villain, and meets her death on stage. She flaunts every feminine wile, she smokes, seduces soldiers, corrupts customs officials, and smuggles on the side. But she is fascinating, clever and sometimes even tender, and her music is so alluring that even the theatre manager of the Opéra Comique was seduced into programming the work. And he was vilified in the press!

And even more surprising Bizet himself had never been to Spain; he merely wrote what he thought audiences expected Spanish music to sound like, and from whatever exposure he had had to Spanish music heard on the streets of Paris. A popular song by the composer Yradier, possibly based on a traditional folk song from Cuba, served as the basis for the *Habañera* (the title derives from the city of Havana). It was most likely heard by Bizet when it was performed by the Parisian music hall singer Céleste Venard. Some have suggested that Venard herself may have served as Bizet's model for *Carmen*.

The score of *Carmen* contains so many instantly recognisable melodies that it can be easy to overlook how well constructed it is. The orchestra brings to life a wide palette of sound, and Bizet is now renowned as a master orchestrator. The major solo arias are not only arresting melodies, but all follow the dramatic purpose: the tenor's wrenching Flower Song in Act II, and Micaëla's soaring Act III aria and most notably the baritone's famous *Toréador* Song.

Bizarrely this, the most famous song in the opera features a completely made up word: *Toreador*. The proper term is *torero*, but Bizet invented another syllable to fit his tune.

*Carmen* and José have three remarkable duets marking the stages of their fateful relationship: the seduction phase (Act I), conflict (Act II), and tragic explosion (Act IV). Unlike in traditional operatic duets, however, they almost never sing at the same time, a device that emphasises their inherently disparate natures. Interestingly, *Carmen* has no actual aria but rather several solos in the form of songs—that is, moments in which the character is actually supposed to be singing within the context of the drama. Every time she sings a major solo, it's a performance within the performance. She is sort of the Sally Bowles of the opera.

With his choice of *Carmen*, Bizet was not attempting to upset the Parisian appletart, or to cause a scandal; rather he simply recognised a good subject for opera and knew he could bring it to life on the stage. This is music theatre charged with an unprecedented realism that



makes the two principal figures, Carmen and Don José, as vivid as flesh and blood, destroyed by their appetites and their weaknesses.

His librettists, Meilhac and Halévy were an experienced team, most famous for providing the librettos for many of Offenbach's operettas, but also Gounod's *Faust* and later Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffmann* and Massenet's *Manon*. They made the story convincingly operatic by introducing two balancing characters, neither of any importance in Mérimée's original story. First is Micaëla, whose purity, devotion to Don José, and attachment to his dying mother make Carmen's personality all the more striking and brazen. And Escamillo is the irresistible lure that entices Carmen from Don José.

But even though it's full of colorful characters, *Carmen* is really just about two people: Carmen and José. Carmen, as even she herself knows, is doomed from the start, she does not change from beginning to end. She is entirely free. Her interest in José is slight. She never says she loves him as she does to the bullfighter Escamillo in their brief exchange in the last act, in fact, she loses interest in José before their relationship has barely begun when he decides to leave her and return to his barracks after the bugle for retreat sounds.

José, in contrast to Carmen, undergoes a complete, doomed metamorphosis. He changes from a naive country boy, to a besotted lover, and finally into a homicidal demon who, driven mad by unrequited love, murders the object of his fierce love.

It is his disintegration that forms the core of the opera.

And we see Carmen totally from Don José's perspective, so in a strange way we are all turned into Carmen's lovers. The same is true of the Mérimée novella, but in the original, Carmen is a pale imitation of the operatic version. She has no voice, rather is the silent object of José's desire, as told by José to the male novelist.

In the novella José speaks for Carmen, and in the opera the feisty, modern woman speaks for herself.

*Carmen* in many ways was the first French verismo opera. School of Verismo opera, begun in the late nineteenth century in Italy. This was an Italian school of opera developed out of the excesses of French opera, which demanded grander and grander operas set in more and more exotic locations. Think *Samson and Delilah*, *Pearl Fishers*, *L'Africaine*, *Lakme*.

In these verismo operas, such as the operas of Puccini and Mascagni the drama unfolds in 'real time', they are peopled with 'real' people, set in 'real' locations often based on 'real' incidents. The word 'Verismo' comes from the Italian 'Vero' meaning 'true', it's a slice of life.

*Carmen* shares many attributes to the later operas of Italy, these so-called verismo operas. Bizet's true genius shows in his ability to marry the traditional structures of 19th-century opera with French musical 'exoticism' to create a more or less continuous and engaging narrative: a real story

But as with much opera ultimately it comes down to the power of the music. The music of *Carmen* is so well known, and so ingrained in our collective consciousness that virtually anyone who hears the complete opera for the first time will recognise most of its numbers. But it is *Carmen's* final scene that is something else. There are no melodies here – just raw passion. This is one of opera's most brilliantly constructed and devastating final acts.

*Carmen* and José are alone on the stage outside the bullring. Their violent exchange is punctuated by outbursts from inside the arena marking the toreador's triumph. Any Art rarely

reaches the level of this opera as a whole, and of this conclusion in particular. It is quite simply an operatic masterpiece.

*Carmen* is the quintessential grand opera in all its glory and it never fails to excite audiences be they new to the genre or seasoned veterans. We couldn't be more proud of this production. Please have the best time and tell your friends. Enjoy.

### A minute with Adam Goodburn - Remendado

**1. Where did you grow up?**

Para Hills, Adelaide. My family moved to Brighton when I was nine.

**2. How old were you (approximately) when you knew you wanted to be a professional musician?**

I don't think there was a specific time when I desired to become a professional musician; I just wanted to improve and explore the performing possibilities. Moving into professional work was the natural progression of my journey.

**3. Do you play other instruments/have other musical pursuits?**

I play the piano, flute, a bit of the tuba (I was in one of the Marion City Bands a couple of years ago – a lot of fun but it was hard finding the time to rehearse!).

**4. Career highlight to-date?**

Playing Mahatma Gandhi in the Philip Glass opera, *Satyagraha*, the comic roles Nathanael/ Cochenille/Pittichinaccio/Franz (*The Tales of Hoffmann*) and getting to work with Anthony Warlow in *The Mikado*.

**5. Does it run in the family? Do you have siblings, spouses, parents that are in showbiz or music?**

My grandpa played the piano a lot and my family have a strong interest in music. My brother, Daniel, is involved with State Opera as well and has performed roles with the company as well as independent companies in Adelaide.



### A Minute with Emma Pearson - Micaela

**1. Where did you grow up?**

Perth (Western Australia) on a five-acre property with many pets and trees to climb. My dad grew and exported wildflowers.

**2. How old were you (approximately) when you knew you wanted to be a professional musician?**

An inkling that I would like to spend my life in the theatre started when I played the Wicked Queen in *Snow White* at eight, but I didn't really think I could be a professional musician until I was accepted into a Bachelor of Music at 18.



**3. Do you play other instruments/have other musical pursuits?**

I had to play the flute in primary school, I didn't love it but it was good for learning how to breathe correctly at young age. I have loved playing the piano and guitar all

my life, quite badly, by ear. A few years ago, I finally had time to start piano lessons again and am now less of a vexation to the neighbours.

#### 4. Career highlight to-date?

Probably accidentally saving the opening night of our premiere of Alban Berg's *Lulu*. At a point in Act 2, the trombones came in too early and the singers on stage were lost in the music, it looked like the opening night would have to stop, which is The Worst Thing, Ever. (The heads of the EU opera industry were watching.) But in the cacophony, I heard the harpist play her two bars before my entry while I was changing upstage behind some set. I ran down in time for the conductor and we were able to haul the music back together, "Aber Kinder! Wir erwarten Besuch!" ("But kiddies, we are expecting company!") I was nominated for an award for that season in Germany's *OpernWelt* magazine. It was a thrill working with that orchestra at Hessisches Staatstheater, Wiesbaden for nearly 10 years.

#### 5. Does it run in the family? – Do you have siblings, spouses, parents that are in showbiz or music?

There are musicians and performers in my extended family. And though my parents and sister have a great love for classical music and theatre, they were too good at other occupations to need to take this path! (My sister is a lung transplant physician.) Wade Kernot, of course, my husband, is an opera singer and in this cast, too, in the role of Zuniga.

### A Minute with Helen Sherman - Carmen

#### 1. Where did you grow up?

On a lettuce farm in Bathurst, NSW.

#### 2. How old were you (approximately) when you knew you wanted to be a professional musician?

I wanted to be a singer from the age of five, when my year one teacher (who had trained as a singer) spotted my voice (apparently, I would sing at my desk when it was colouring-in time!). I didn't really put my mind to having a career in music till I was about 14/15. I had got it into my head that I should do something 'sensible'... that didn't last long!

#### 3. Do you play other instruments/have other musical pursuits?

I played piano accordion, piano, violin and flute, all quite badly. Singing was always my thing.

#### 4. Career highlight to-date?

Such a hard question! I guess being invited to meet Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh at Buckingham Palace as one of 300 Aussie's excelling in their fields, in the UK was sort of a 'pinch me' moment!

I was once an honorary Adelaidian for the evening, when I performed at a gala at The Australian High Commission in London celebrating Adelaidians in London. The line-up included ex-Adelaidians Grant Doyle and Sky Ingram - I was chuffed to be asked!



**5. Does it run in the family? Do you have siblings, spouses, parents that are in showbiz or music?**

My father was a brilliant piano accordionist before he took over the farm from his parents and even after he took it over, he maintained his teaching of over thirty private accordion students. My brother and sister are both very musical; when we were young, we all performed in local musical society productions that were choreographed by our Aunty Carole. My brother John still plays piano accordion for fun alongside running his property management business in Sydney and my sister Mary works as an all singing all dancing host for children's shows such as *Kung Fu Panda*, *Cat in the Hat* and *Shaun the Sheep*, when she's not busy completing her honours degree in psychology. So you could say performing is in our blood!

**A minute with Samuel Dundas – Morales/Dancairo**

**1. Where did you grow up?**

I grew up in Melbourne after a momentary welcome to the world in Sydney.

**2. How old were you (approximately) when you knew you wanted to be a professional musician?**

I was sixteen when I started to sing, eighteen when I studied music, twenty-one when I got my first job, worked since then, but was probably twenty-eight when I finally put all my cards in the middle to really be a "pro".

**3. Do you play other instruments/have other musical pursuits?**

I noodle at the piano.

**4. Career highlight to-date?**

Every show I've ever done in Moorunda (population 14) and *Pelleas et Melisande* with Victorian Opera.

**5. Does it run in the family? – Do you have siblings, spouses, parents that are in showbiz or music?**

My brother is the drummer from the Australian band, *The Temper Trap*, so there is definitely a streak in the family. Mum loves music and Dad loves to brag we got our skills from him... we didn't!



**A Minute with Wade Kernot - Zuniga**

**1. Where did you grow up?**

Oratia Valley. A small apple orchard village west of Auckland

**2. How old were you (approximately) when you knew you wanted to be a professional musician?**

I was about 19 and halfway through my first year of a Bachelor of Science. Singing is way more interesting than the "evolutionary development of the anus in Flatworms" that was in my first year Biology paper!



**3. Do you play other instruments/have other musical pursuits?**

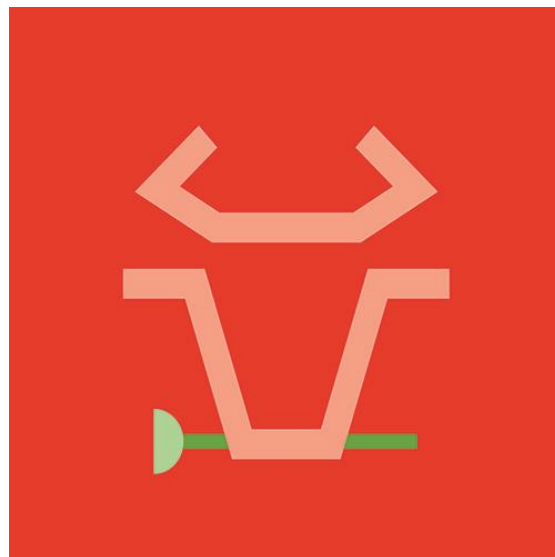
I play a little bit of everything. Growing up (see below) I was surrounded by the many instruments associated with country music. I only had the patience to learn the mandatory three chords of all of them. Singing was where the fun was for me.

**4. Career highlight to-date?**

The best day for me was a concert with Dame Kiri te Kanawa for a very select audience at a luxury resort on the coast of Italy. Not only was it a stunning view as we sang beside a beautiful infinity pool on the edge of a cliff with the full moon behind us. We then went on for a special dinner with the Counts and Barons of north west Italy. But more importantly I sat next to the granddaughter of Enzo Ferrari!

**5. Does it run in the family? Do you have siblings, spouses, parents that are in showbiz or music?**

Yes, absolutely. My mother studied piano to a very high level and my father was the band leader of a successful country music band. My sister and I were brought up on the side of the stage listening to my parents perform. Quite often sitting on a bean bag just behind the stage curtain! We both joined our parents on stage at around eight or nine. It was no big deal, just a normal Saturday night for us!



**Helpful Links:**

<http://www.roh.org.uk/learning/learning-platform/unit/carmen-meet-the-characters/#Carmen-The-Free-Bird/Don-Jose-The-Lost-Soldier/Escamillo-The-Star>

<https://indaily.com.au/arts-and-culture/music/2019/03/19/carmen-its-a-chance-for-us-to-say-opera-is-for-everyone/>

<https://www.adelaidereview.com.au/arts/performing-arts/state-opera-breaking-new-grounds/>

[https://www.nzherald.co.nz/entertainment/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1501119&objectid=11590100](https://www.nzherald.co.nz/entertainment/news/article.cfm?c_id=1501119&objectid=11590100)

<http://artsreview.com.au/on-the-couch-with-stuart-maunder/>



### Themes

- Power
- Loyalty
- Freedom
- Jealousy
- Outsiders
- Destiny

### Motifs and Symbols

- Fate melody
- Toreador song
- Rhythm
- Rose
- Tarot card

### Before the show

#### Activities

- Research the life and career of Georges Bizet.
- Research *Carmen* and compare the opera to the original novella.
- Study the genre of opera and its culture.
- Find out how many shows have been staged in Victoria Square/ Tarntanyangga.

#### Discussion questions

- How do you think an opera in the outdoors will add to or detract from the performance?
- Have a look at the marketing materials for the show. Based on these, what is your prediction for how the show will be portrayed and presented?
- Read the plot of *Carmen*. To what extent do you think this tragedy is still relevant in 2019?

## After the show

### Discussion questions

- *Carmen* includes themes of freedom, possession, jealousy and loyalty. How did the director bring these to life and how did it make you feel?
- How did the director use sets, costume, lighting, movement and music to get across the main themes of the production?
- How did the outdoor venue add to your experience of the show?
- In what way did *Carmen* meet your initial expectations of the show?
- Who was your favourite character and why?
- What would you change about the production?
- What social issues and questions did the story and production bring up for you?
- If you were directing *Carmen*, how would you present the story?
- Did the marketing materials for *Carmen* accurately represent the production you saw?

### Activities

- Make a model of the set from *Carmen*.
- Devise a different ending for the show and act it out in front of your class
- Give a one-minute persuasive oral presentation on the theme of freedom.
- Make a poster for your own production of *Carmen*.
- Write a review of *Carmen in the Square*.
- Design your own production of *Carmen* and describe the costumes, set, lighting, music and actors you would use.
- Write a diary entry for one of the characters.
- Choose an alternative setting and era for *Carmen* and design costumes for it.
- Choreograph a dance piece following the theme of possession.
- Discuss the notion of power in *Carmen*. Who has it? Who uses it? Who is lacking in it?
- Research opera as an artform and give a presentation highlighting influential operas and composers.
- *Carmen* is a famous tragedy. Highlight some other theatrical tragedies, and compare and contrast them with *Carmen*.

### Essay questions

- Georges Bizet said, ““Ah, music! What a beautiful art! But what a wretched profession!” Discuss this statement in the context of his life and career.
- *Carmen* is a tragedy relevant to any era because the themes are universal. Discuss with reference to the show you saw.
- *Carmen is an unusual female protagonist in the world of opera, since the heroine is the villain, and meets her death on stage. She flaunts every feminine wile, she smokes, seduces soldiers, corrupts customs officials, and smuggles on the side. But she is fascinating, clever and sometimes even tender.* To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement. Discuss with reference to the show you saw.
- The bull in the ring meets the same demise as Carmen. Compare these two characters.
- To what extent is Carmen’s tragic end foreshadowed in the production and what theatrical techniques are used to do this?
- José, in contrast to Carmen, undergoes a complete, doomed metamorphosis. He changes from a naive country boy, to a besotted lover, and finally into a homicidal demon who, driven mad by unrequited love, murders the object of his fierce love. Discuss to what extent you think his disintegration is the core of the opera.
- Director Stuart Maunder says, “Even though it’s full of colorful characters, *Carmen* is really just about two people: Carmen and José.” Discuss whether or not you agree with this statement with reference to the show you saw.

## Essay Writing Tips

Writing an essay can seem like a huge task, but with a bit of organisation, a plan and a breakdown of the essay question, an essay can become a manageable assignment.

Here are some tips to help keep the stress levels down and assist you to write an essay you can be proud to submit.

### Choose a question:

- Choose a question you are interested in finding out the answer to.
- Define your purpose. Is your essay to inform or persuade? Once you have determined your purpose, you will need to start breaking down the question.
- Highlight the key words in the question. These will become the focus of your essay. These highlighted words will become the focus of your plan. Highlight words that might narrow the argument down, for example, “between chapters 1 and 3”, “during the 19<sup>th</sup> century” or “with reference to the minor characters”. Use a dictionary to look up any words you don’t understand.
- Highlight what the question is asking you to do. Is it ‘discuss’, ‘argue’, ‘explain’, ‘compare’? Does the question ask for personal opinion or experience? Make sure you keep coming back to these instructions to make sure you are meeting the criteria.
- Don’t Google the question! There may be plenty of answers to the question online, but that doesn’t mean they’re good/right.

### Prepare an outline or diagram of your ideas.

- In order to write a successful essay, you need to organise your thoughts. After you’ve highlighted the key words in the question, jot down your ideas around them. You can do this either in a mind map, spider diagram, or whatever way your planning works best. By taking your ideas and putting them to paper, you will be able to see links between your ideas more clearly, and this will help to flesh them out with examples and evidence.
- A good way to organise the essay is to divide your answer to the question into three parts. If you’re having trouble finding points ask yourself, ‘what are three good reasons this answer to the question is the right one’. Those three reasons become your main points to answer your topic and the ones you will back up with quotes from the text or examples from the performance.



- Note some quotations that may be useful, but also jot down the page number, so you can ensure the source of the quotes is acknowledged and referenced if they're used.

### **Write your thesis statement.**

- Once your ideas are sorted into relevant categories, you can create a thesis statement. Your thesis statement tells the reader the point of your essay; it answers the question. To discover your thesis question, look at your outline or diagram.
- Your thesis statement has two parts. The first part states summarises the question and the second part answers it, presenting the point of the essay.

### **Write the body.**

- The body of your essay argues your answer to the question or topic. Each main idea from your diagram or outline will become a separate section within the body of your essay.
- Each body paragraph will have the same basic structure. Begin by writing one of your main ideas as the introductory sentence. This topic sentence should have impact, so make it strong. Under your topic sentences, write each of your supporting ideas in sentence form, but leave three or four lines in between each point to come back and give detailed examples to back up your position. Fill in these spaces with relative information (quotes, examples, evidence) that will help link ideas together. Use words like 'however', 'moreover', 'in addition' to link to the previous paragraph.
- Always begin your paragraph with a topic sentence to make clear what the paragraph is about. For example:

“Playwrights often present similar ideas in different ways. Williamson’s interpretation of Hamlet is no exception to this.”

“The death of Tom Robinson can clearly be linked to three people.”

- Explain your point and give a clear example from the text or production to support.
- Finish each paragraph by linking the idea back to the question.
- Embed your quotes effectively and intelligently. Don’t include a quotation for its own sake, or one that floats amongst your sentences. Integrate them into the paragraphs with context. For example:

*Richard III defends his actions, believing that, "Conscience is but a word that cowards use" (Shakespeare, Act 5, Scene 3, p14). ✓*

versus

*Richard III defends his actions. "Conscience is but a word that cowards use". (Shakespeare, Act 5, Scene 3, p14). ✗*

- Avoid passive language or sweeping generalisations. You should use strong, impactful sentences backed up with relevant evidence.

### **Add an introduction.**

- Now that you have developed your thesis and planned the body of your essay, you can write your introduction. The introduction should attract the reader's attention, show the focus of your essay and answer the question.
- Make sure you name any texts to be discussed.

### **Write the conclusion.**

- The conclusion should do just that: conclude. No new information should be brought up in the conclusion and you should avoid using quotes or evidence in this part. The conclusion brings closure of the topic and sums up your overall ideas while providing a final perspective on your topic. To write a strong conclusion, simply review your main points and provide reinforcement of your thesis.

### **Polish your essay.**

- If this is a draft, it is important you are submitting your best work for drafting. Your teacher should not be seeing the first draft of your work. You should proofread (reading your essay aloud will help you to find errors) several times and make sure you are giving a draft that is free of errors. If your teacher is spending their time adding or subtracting apostrophes, correcting spelling, telling you to reference or adding inverted commas to quotes, they will not be paying close attention to the content, which is where the good grades are. Help your teacher to get you the best grade possible by submitting your best work for drafting.
- Check the order of your paragraphs. Your strongest points should be the first and last paragraphs within the body, with the others falling in the middle. Make sure that your paragraph order makes sense and you have effective linking sentences.
- Read the question again. Have you answered it?

- Read the assessment criteria. Have you met the requirements?
- Have you 'discussed', 'explained', 'analysed', 'compared' as the essay question asks you to do? Have you included personal experience or opinion in every paragraph (only if the essay question indicates)?
- Delete anything irrelevant and stick to the word limit.
- Read your essay again (and then maybe again!).
- You are ready to submit!



## Review Writing Tips

While there is no perfect formula for review writing, there are some basic techniques you should consider in order to write an effective, engaging review. A review is both a report of an event and an appraisal of it. As a report, it should give basic factual detail, such as the place and date of the performance, the full name of the company and the name and author(s) of the text (and the text it is based upon, if applicable). It is also important to credit the director, costume, set and lighting designer(s) and actors. Make sure to access a program, rather than try to improvise without one. Programs often include all the facts you need, as well as directors' notes, which might help you get an idea of the company's objectives and viewpoints.

When you attend the event you are going to review, make sure you get there in comfortable time, get your program and get settled in. Look around you a bit; take a look at the set, if it's visible. See who the audience is and get some sense of their reaction to the show. Take notes if you can, but you may discover it isn't easy writing in the dark. The important thing is that you note your impressions, themes, moments when the show comes to life, or times when it is unsatisfying.

Prepare yourself beforehand. If it is a classic work, like *Richard III* by Shakespeare or an historically recent work like *Waiting for Godot*- read the play, or at least become

familiar with it. You are not there for the suspense and titillation of the story; rather, you want to know what they have done with the original production.

In the review itself, don't get caught up retelling the plot - we already know what happened to Macbeth and Hamlet. But, in the case of a new play, you will need to give a synopsis of the plot as part of your information. Having said that, the synopsis should only be brief, and not a bunch of paragraphs recounting the narrative.

Your review is a personal piece and can be in any sequence you wish, but it might be advisable to start factually and work your way gradually to the evaluative comments. A sequence like the following works well:

- An introduction indicating the name and nature of the production.
- A paragraph or two briefly outlining what happens.
- A paragraph on the director's role - what styles has he/she used, what interpretation has been imposed?
- An account of the performances, the design (costumes, set, lighting) and how well these aspects highlight the ideas and themes in the work.
- Don't generalise - superlatives or condemnation are not much use without examples. Always try and find an instance which illustrates your point. Don't just say it was 'wonderful' or, worse still, 'boring', without accounting for yourself.
- A conclusion appraising the success of all these elements.

Remember that the production sets its own terms of success - within budget, expertise, the quality of the concept, whether it's a touring company etc. Be reasonable within those terms. Be gracious. You are assessing a production, rather than writing an essay arguing why the company did or didn't ruin *Romeo and Juliet*. You can be honest, but not insulting. You're not a sit down comedian and your review shouldn't be full of clever one-liners. Your task is to give a clear and vivid account of the performance.

It helps to read other reviews, but not ones on the show you are covering. You either end up feeling you can't repeat ideas or that you are in a debate with another reviewer, or sometimes you might inadvertently take those ideas and use them as

your own. Trust your own judgment, it doesn't matter what the others are saying. If you want to read reviews to get an idea of how some good ones are written, though, look in *The Australian*, *The Adelaide Review*, *The Guardian*, *New Yorker*, etc.

Theatre reviewing will help you develop your understanding of drama and the theatre. It will improve your theatre literacy skills. The task of reviewing will make you more responsive to what you see and improve your creative and critical thinking skills.

Theatre reviews should:

- Give an accurate impression of the performance for someone who has not been there
- Convey a considered, personal judgement of the quality of the experience
- Consider how a text was interpreted.

Here are some other things to mention:

- *What kind of play is it? What is it about? Mention the genre and style of the piece.* Is it dance, drama, music? Is it absurdist, realism or contemporary? Is it elaborate, simple, rough, naturalistic, or a mixture of styles?
- *What is the nature of the theatre experience?* You must note your own responses, but as theatre is a public event, you should make mention of how others respond, the atmosphere of the evening, and the social context.

Style guide:

*This will vary from teacher to teacher, publication to publication, but here are some things to note*

- List the details of the show, theatre, date at the top of the review
- Use the full names of the author, playwright, crew, actors, director in the first instance. Subsequent mentions must be referenced by surname.
- Use title case and italics for the show name
- Use short paragraphs
- Don't use too many gushing superlatives ('amazing' is way overused. Try something different – there's a list below)
- Check your facts: spelling, grammar, dates, names, historical references etc.
- Talk about all of the aspects of theatre (set, costume, design, lighting, script, direction, music, sound, acting, theatre)



*associated with performance:*

Outrageous, shocking, persuasive, compelling, inspiring, affecting, absorbing, daring, provocative, obscure, delightful, captivating, morbid, surreal, challenging, nostalgic, complex, spectacular, chilling, foreboding, enchanting, astonishing.

*Words to describe the mood or tone:*

Entertaining, facetious, sensational, didactic, bombastic, forceful, servile, persuasive, chauvinistic, nostalgic, querulous, guarded, indifferent, sensible, earnest, fervent, wistful, embittered, detached, sincere, tolerant, jocular, cautious, pensive, thoughtful, passionate, conservative, arrogant, critical, ponderous, antagonistic, ardent, admiring, disrespectful, bitter, cynical, satirical, sardonic, sarcastic, quizzical, ironical, anxious, resentful, disappointing, cautious, neutral, despondent, pessimistic

*Words to describe the direction:*

Skilled, purposeful, exciting, clever, thought-provoking, challenging, stimulating, visually exciting, aesthetic, earnest, cautious, sincere, sensitive, sensitive, aggressive, theatrical, dynamic, confident, bold, adventurous, conservative, lacklustre, predictable.

*Words to describe the set:*

Elaborate, realistic, understated, rough, skeletal, simplistic, minimal, abstract, naturalistic, unrealistic, cubist, surreal, stylised, traditional, representational, imaginative, lush, dense, open, vivid, jagged, symbolic, shiny, lavish, detailed, sparse, functional, elegant, delicate, durable, romantic, impressionist, expressionist.

*Words to describe costumes:*

Outrageous, transforming, flattering, stylish, elegant, chic, bright, dull, plain, elaborate, ornate, evil, revealing, tailored, period, symbolic, ornate, vivid, lavish, stylised, colourful, extravagance, simplistic, beautiful, dainty, alluring, luxurious.

*Words to describe the makeup:*

Skilfully applied, realistic, period, fantastical, shocking, simple, elaborate, vivid, stylised, abstract, traditional, clever, minimal.

*Words to describe sound:*

Menacing, rhythmical, repetitive, haunting, eerie, overpowering, complementary, engulfing, pulsating, lapping, trickling, swishing, blaring, lyrical, grating.

*Words to describe lighting and effects:*

Simplistic, minimal, abstract, eerie, dull, gloomy, bright, majestic, shocking, forbidding, shadowy, luminous, flickering, twinkling, hypnotic, pulsating, flashing, thematic.

*Words to describe style and/or genre:*

Comedy, classical, symbolic, expressionistic, absurdist, naturalistic, representational, tragic, comic, satirical, melodramatic, surreal, period, traditional, contemporary, existentialist, avant-garde, romantic, allegorical, farcical.

*Words to describe character:*

Miserly, clumsy, careless, conceited, cocky, ambitious, mean, merciful, confident, generous, gracious, greedy, gregarious, garrulous, noble, needy, humble, grotesque, irritable, lazy, loyal, patient, pragmatic, placid, serious, eccentric, quarrelsome, industrious, petulant, enlightened, reliable, determined, cruel, arrogant, sophisticated, slovenly, vivacious, cantankerous, fussy, obsessive, unpredictable, neurotic, uncouth, vicious, mature, shrewd, insular, feminine, effeminate, calculating, callous, self-indulgent, flippant, jaded, compassionate, zealous, brash.

*Words to describe performance:*

Dynamic, disciplined, pedestrian, uninspired, complex, flat, skilful, agile, versatile, emotive, compelling, surprising, delightful, demanding, under-stated, lively, energetic, restrained, inspired.

*Words instead of 'good':*

Capable, quality, fine, adept, accomplished, masterly, skilful, seasoned, vigorous, adept, high-standard, superior, skilled, proficient, choice, sound, supreme, prominent, pre-eminent, potent, important, distinguished, illustrious, influential, awe-inspiring, grand, splendid, majestic, monumental, resplendent, brilliant, impressive, magnificent, imposing, enjoyable, profound.

*Words instead of 'effective':*

Powerful, practical, emphatic, moving, affecting, compelling, competent, impressive, potent, striking, telling, cutting, penetrating, sharp, successful, efficacious.

