

Hit-and-run collision declared fatal after pregnant victim loses baby

SEE OUR HOT WEEKLY DEALS!     [SHOP NOW](#)

Home →
San Jose Neighborhoods
Story

'Carmen' works her charms at Opera San Jose

By Leeta-Rose Ballester | lballester@community-newspapers.com

POSTED: 01/27/2016 06:08:40 PM PST

UPDATED: 6 DAYS AGO

0 COMMENTS

Opera aficionados and newcomers alike can revel in Carmen's fiery charms--and the drama that surrounds her--in Opera San Jose's production of Georges Bizet's classic.

"Carmen" will tempt the audience at California Theatre in San Jose during its Feb. 13-28 run.

The opera, its controversial characters and the death of a main character stunned audiences when it first premiered in 1875, but the themes of jealousy and thwarted love quickly made it an international favorite.

The Andalusian gypsy woman conjures up an image for nearly everyone, says director Layna Chianakas.

"Most of the time it's a gypsy with a rose in her teeth," she said, adding that most people know the songs, too--even if they have never attended the opera. But being part of the classical canon can be a "double-edged sword" as people arrive with preconceived notions, she said.

Chianakas, who sang the role of Carmen dozens of times, is quite familiar with the character herself.



Carmen works her magic at California Theatre, 345 South First St., San Jose, Feb. 13-28. Photo by Eric Wolfinger (Leeta-Rose Ballester)



More room.
Less roomies.

Space, inside and out.

[Inquire here →](#)



"I know her intimately, but it has been fascinating to be on the director side of it and to be 25 years older than when I performed it," she said. "It's given me a fresh, almost childlike excitement."

Written in the genre of opéra comique with a mix of musical numbers and dialogue, the opera follows the relationship between Carmen and Don Jose, a soldier who simply cannot resist the passionate and stubborn woman.

Advertisement



PM Report BayArea NewsGroup

Receive the PM Report

Subscribe to our daily newsletter and receive our latest news

Don Jose, sung by Kirk Dougherty and John Lindsey, casts aside his decidedly less exciting childhood love and his duties as a soldier to be with Carmen but, alas, she has her gaze set on the thrilling bullfighter Escamillo.

Consumed with Carmen, and having thrown away his life to be with her, Don Jose cannot bear the rejection and kills her.

As exciting as the story is, Chianakas said she feels the main character of the opera is the large chorus.

"They are telegraphing Carmen's sexiness and they are telegraphing Don Jose's anger," she said. "You have 32 people putting across the emotions of the characters."

The chorus will be dancing as well, choreographed with the guidance of Raphael Boumaila.

The dancing in conjunction with the music/dialogue version of the production "makes it wonderful and more theater like," the director said.

Apart from the debauchery and tragedy, Chianakas said she also has focused on the theme of community, as the strong ties Carmen has with her gypsy family play an important role in how she reacts.

"That's my theme in a raw and visceral production," Chianakas said. "I'm trying my best to convey realism," even in a grand opera.

Mezzo-Soprano Lisa Chavez graces the Opera San Jose stage as Carmen, a role that has been interpreted in different ways by directors and performers through the years.

For Chavez, the leading lady may be a "woman ahead of her time" but isn't someone to look

MOST POPULAR

[POPULAR](#) [HOUR](#) [NEWS](#) [SPORTS](#) [BIZ](#) [A&E](#) [LIFE](#)

Murder arrest: How did Virginia Tech students' lives intersect with 13-year-old Nicole Lovell?

San Jose police release video of Eastridge Mall robbery suspects

San Jose: Hit-and-run collision declared fatal after pregnant victim loses baby

California jailbreak: In San Jose motel, fugitive fought to save cab driver's life

San Jose gets 'lucrative' offer for historic Hayes Mansion

[» More most-popular news stories](#)

Love your job? Give your company a shout out!



**TOP
WORK
PLACES
2016**

**BayArea
NewsGroup**

NOMINATE NOW

up to.

"She's kind of the ultimate feminist, but she's kind of living a violent life," she said. "She's conniving; she sees opportunities and takes them. But in all of that she is true to her desire to live life as her own person."

Carmen has literally seen her death in the cards, but believing fate is fate, she refuses to give in to Don Jose's advances in order to spare her life.

Though Don Jose ends up killing her, he faces his own struggles.

"His life is turned upside down. ... He is caught up in this craziness that is Carmen," Chavez said. "It's his complete 180 in life because he was in the wrong place at the wrong time. He truly fell in love with the wrong woman."

And why has the tale of scandal and jealousy enchanted audiences for so long?

"This is truly a soap opera, and it comes from a novella," Chavez said. "It's this weird juiciness, and you can enjoy it better from the audience than if it was happening to you."

"Carmen" will be sung in French with English supertitles. Six performances are scheduled from Feb. 13 to Feb. 28 at the California Theatre, 345 S. First St. Tickets are on sale at the Opera San José box office, online at operasj.org and by phone at 408.437.4450.

- [Article commenting rules of the road](#)

Sorry, the browser you are using is not currently supported. Disqus actively supports the following browsers:

[Firefox](#)
[Chrome](#)
[Internet Explorer 10+](#)
[Safari](#)

comments powered by [Disqus](#)

