

CARMEN

1875

music by Georges Bizet, words by Henri Meihlac & Ludovic Halevy

dialogue vs. recitative

The March 1875 premiere of *Carmen* featured spoken dialogue between the set musical pieces. Bizet died just a few months after the premiere, at the age of 36.

Later that year the composer Ernest Guiraud wrote recitative to replace the original dialogue. The opera continues to be performed in both iterations.

No. 1 Prelude orchestral

ACT I A square in Seville, proximate to a cigarette factory and a guard house.

No. 2 *Sur la place* Chorus of Soldiers, (Officer) Morales, Micaela

The soldiers hang out, smoking, playing cards and watching the townspeople come and go.

Micaela arrives looking for her lifelong friend (Corporal) Don Jose.

Morales tells her that Don Jose's company will soon be arriving for the changing of the guard and encourages her to stay and wait.

No. 3 *Avec la garde montante* Chorus of Children

Children hear the bugle call and arrive to play at being soldiers.

Morales tells Don Jose that a young woman was looking for him.

Don Jose tells (Captain) Zuniga that he's in love with Micaela and has no interest in the girls from the cigarette factory.

No. 4 *La cloche a sonne* Chorus of Soldiers and Townsmen, Chorus of Cigarette Women

The women who work at the cigarette factory enter singing.

The men realize that Carmen is coming.

No. 5 *Habanera: L'amour est un oiseau* Full Chorus and Carmen

Carmen sings her first famous aria, about the fickle nature of love.

No. 6 *Carmen, sur tes pas* Full Chorus and Carmen

The men want to know who Carmen will love.

Carmen throws a flower at Don Jose and so begins her hold on him.

The women tease Don Jose. The factory bell rings and all disperse except Don Jose.

No. 7 *Parle-moi de mere* Don Jose and Micaela

Micaela returns to give Don Jose a letter from his mother, and a kiss.

We learn that Don Jose joined the army to escape the repercussions of unspecified trouble.

No. 8 *Que se passe-t-il donc la-bas?* Zuniga and Cigarette Women

A fight broke out in the factory between Manuela and Carmen.

Half of the women accuse Carmen of starting the fight, half defend her.

No. 9 *Coupe-moi, brule-moi* **Don Jose, Zuniga, Carmen, Cigarette Women**

Don Jose brings Carmen out of the cigarette factory and Zuniga demands an explanation. Carmen responds insolently and evasively. Zuniga orders Don Jose to tie up Carmen and watch her. Zuniga and the women exit, leaving Don Jose and Carmen alone. Carmen tells Don Jose that he will help her escape. He commands her not to speak so instead she sings.

No. 10 *Seguidilla: Pres des remparts de Seville* **Carmen, Don Jose**

Carmen sings her second famous aria, about how she loves to drink and dance at the tavern of Lillas Pastia. But it's no fun at Pastia's without a companion and she has recently broken up with a man. Who will console her broken heart? A certain soldier has caught her eye. Carmen's song and words captivate Don Jose.

No. 11 *Voici l'ordre, partez* **Zuniga, Carmen**

When Zuniga returns, Don Jose indeed helps Carmen to escape.

Entr'acte **orchestral**

ACT II **The interior of Lillas Pastia's tavern.**

No. 12 *Les tringles des sistres* **Carmen, Frasquita & Mercedes**

(Carmen's friends and fellow bohemians/gypsy smugglers)

Women are entertaining soldiers, including Zuniga. The three principal women sing and dance. It's time for the tavern to close. Carmen learns that Don Jose has been released after spending a month in jail.

No. 13 *Vivat, vivat le Torero!* **Full Chorus**

Adoring fans cheer the toreador Escamillo. Zuniga invites them all to the inn.

No. 14 *Votre toast, je peux vous le rendre* **Escamillo, Carmen, Frasquita, Mercedes, Morales, Zuniga and Full Chorus**

Escamillo sings of life in the bullfighting arena. What drives him is the truest reward: love. Escamillo asks Carmen's name. Next time he faces the bull he will be thinking of her. All exit except Carmen, Frasquita and Mercedes.

No. 15 *Nous avons en tete une affaire* **Carmen, Frasquita, Mercedes, El Dancairo, El Remendado**

The bandits Dancairo and Remendado enter and ask the women to help smuggle a new cargo. The lads are counting on the women, who are irresistible, to get them past any soldiers, border guards, or police.

No. 16 *Halte-la, qui va la?*

Don Jose, Carmen

Don Jose is singing as he approaches the tavern.

Carmen shoos everyone out so that she can be alone with him when he arrives.

No. 17 *Je vais danser en votre honneur* **Carmen, Don Jose**

Carmen sings and dances to entertain Don Jose, to thank him for taking the fall for her escape.

When Don Jose hears the bugle calling him back to camp he prepares to go.

Carmen mocks him for being a slave to the army and berates herself for caring for him.

Don Jose presents Carmen with the flower that she tossed at him in the square. The flower kept him company in prison.

Carmen doesn't accept this as proof of love.

She wants Don Jose to join her in her itinerant, free lifestyle.

Don Jose refuses to abandon the army so Carmen tells him she detests him.

No. 18 *Hola, Carmen, hola!* **Zuniga, Carmen, Don Jose, Frasquita, Mercedes,
Dancairo, Remendado, Full Chorus**

Zuniga arrives unexpectedly and he and Don Jose get into a fight over Carmen.

Carmen calls for help. The rest of the crew arrives and overpowers Zuniga.

Now Don Jose has become one of them and has no choice but to leave his old life behind.

Entr'acte **orchestral**

ACT III **A mountain pass.**

No. 19 *Ecoute, compagnon* **Carmen, Frasquita, Mercedes, Don Jose, Dancairo,
Remendado, Full Chorus**

"Be careful, be cautious - in our line of work danger lies everywhere."

The smugglers set up camp and get some rest.

Dancairo goes scouting.

Carmen and Don Jose bicker.

No. 20 *Melons! Coupons!* **Mercedes, Frasquita, Carmen**

The three women read their fortunes in the cards.

Mercedes and Frasquita see only good things. Carmen sees only death.

No. 21 *Quant au douanier* **Carmen, Frasquita, Mercedes, Dancairo,
Remendado, Full Chorus**

Dancairo returns with a good report - only three guards on patrol.

The women prepare to take them on.

Don Jose will stand guard.

The stage empties.

No. 22 *C'est des contrebandiers* **Micaela**

Micaela has arrived to beg Don Jose to return home. She prays for courage. She hides.

No. 23 *Je suis Escamillo* **Escamillo, Don Jose**

Escamillo has come in search of Carmen. He is intercepted by Don Jose.

The two discover that they are rivals in love and duel.

No. 24 *Hola, hola Jose!* **Carmen, Frasquita, Mercedes, Micaela, Don Jose,
Dancairo, Remendado, Escamillo, Full Chorus**

The rest of the smugglers return.

Escamillo bids them all farewell and invites them to be his guests at the upcoming bullfight.

As Escamillo departs Micaela is discovered.

Micaela pleads her case.

Carmen urges Don Jose to go.

Don Jose refuses to go, knowing that Carmen will leave him for Escamillo.

Micaela tells Don Jose that his mother is dying and he finally agrees to go with her.

Entr'acte **orchestral**

ACT IV **A square in Seville, close to the bullfighting arena.**

No. 25 *A deux cuartos* **Chorus of fan-girls, orange-girls, program-peddlers,
water-peddlers, cigarette-peddlers, wine-peddlers,
Zuniga**

Peddlers are selling concessions. It's a fun day!

No. 26 *Les voici!* **Chorus of Adults and Children, Escamillo, Carmen,
Frasquita, Mercedes**

The spectators greet the bullfighters as they arrive.

Escamillo arrives with Carmen on his arm, they pledge their love to each other.

Frasquita and Mercedes warn Carmen that they have spotted Don Jose in the crowd.

No. 27 *C'est toi? C'est moi!* **Carmen, Don Jose, Chorus**

Don Jose approaches Carmen and tries to persuade her to start life anew with him.

Carmen tells him that she doesn't love him anymore.

Don Jose accuses Carmen of being Escamillo's lover. He will not let her go.

She refuses to give in to him.

Carmen attempts to leave but Don Jose stabs her in his jealous rage.

In the arena the chorus cheers on Escamillo.