Voice of the Hawaii Opera Theatre

Aria

HOT Grand Opera
SEASON 2002

CARMEN

by Georges Bizet

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In this period of extraordinary circumstances, economic adversity, and fear, it becomes the mission of the arts to remind us of the depth and grandeur of human existence. Our own being is the source of endless adventure, stimulation, and learning. The riddles we as a species create for each other are some of the most confounding and fascinating that the universe holds. The opera is but one art form where we can go beyond everyday life to look at some of its mythologies and gain insight into the lives of other characters, and thus into our own.

The tales of this season's wanton women (they have also been called “the bad girls” and even “the wicked wahine”) have become myths of the confrontation of women with their social environments. All three of our wanton women, the courtesan Violetta Valery, the princess Salome, and the gypsy Carmen, are considered thus because they have committed themselves to their destinies with a purpose and dedication which challenge the culture of the societies around them. It is their strength of purpose, their beauty in strength or their tragedy in circumstance that fascinates us. They are wanton in the eye of one beholder, and in another’s eyes, they are anything but.

We are pleased this year to welcome a truly International cast of artists to HOT. We come together from all the corners of the globe to make opera happen here in Hawaii. Together, we, the ensemble of the 2002 season, invite you to come and join the wanton women, in a celebration of endless adventure and insight. Welcome to 2002 at HOT!
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Act Two - The tavern operated by Lillas Pastia, where Carmen and her friends are entertaining the customers. Zuniga tells Carmen that José has been released from prison. The toreador Escamillio arrives and is immediately attracted to Carmen.

Two smugglers urge Carmen and her friends to join them in a new scheme, but Carmen prefers to wait for José. When he arrives, she sings and dances for him. Hearing a bugle in the distance José says he must return to the barracks. Carmen mocks him. José takes the now faded flower from his jacket and tells how much it means to him. If he really loved her, Carmen says, José would join her in their carefree life. Zuniga appears, hoping to see Carmen. José draws his sword on his officer who is disarmed by Carmen's friends. José is now forced to desert the army and join the smugglers.

Act Three - In the smuggler's camp, Carmen finds José's homesickness tiresome and suggests he go back to his mother. José says if Carmen again suggests that he leave her, he will kill her. When Carmen tells her fortune with cards she sees only death.

The smugglers depart leaving José on guard. Micaëla appears searching for José. She hides at the sound of a shot, fired by José at Escamillio, who has come looking for Carmen. The two men fight, but are separated by Carmen. Micaëla is discovered. She tells José his mother is dying. José leaves, warning Carmen they will meet again.

Act Four - The bullfighters' procession includes Escamillio, who arrives with Carmen. Carmen's friends warn her that José has been seen in the crowd, but she defiantly remains to meet him. José begs her to return to him, but Carmen says everything is over between them, and hurls a ring he has given her at José's feet. As cries hailing Escamillio come from the arena, José stabs Carmen and then falls by her body in despair.
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BY GEORGES BIZET

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Stage Director .............................................. Bernard Uzan
Scenery designed by ...................................... Peter Dean Beck
Choreographer ............................................ Vanessa M. Chong
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English Captions by ...................................... Matthew Lata

IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Moralès .................................................... Quinn K. Kelsey
Micaëla ..................................................... Karen Driscoll
Zuniga ....................................................... Jamie Offenbach
Don José ..................................................... Matthew Kirschner
Carmen ...................................................... Ning Liang
Frasquita .................................................... Mary Chesnut
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Paris, France

March 1, 3, 5 & 7, 2002

Aria 2002 7
"Perfect Opera" had a sad start

In the Spring of 1875, the composer Bizet, contemplating the cool reviews of his opera Carmen, wrote to a friend: "In order to succeed today you have to be either dead or German."

It was a prophetic remark.

Incredible as it seems to us today, when Carmen is perhaps the best known and among the most often performed operas in the world, it was a failure when it was first performed at the Opéra Comique in Paris in March, 1875, a failure that almost literally broke Bizet's heart.

The composer died of heart disease, probably aggravated by the reception of Carmen, in June, three months after the premier.

Reading the first night reviews of the opera that has since been called practically perfect by such as Brahms, Wagner, Puccini, Tchaikovsky and others, is instructive. One critic says Carmen lacked tunes. Another called it "too Wagnerian." Perhaps the crowning insult was the opinion that it lacked dramatic impact.

Audience reaction to Carmen wasn't any more encouraging. On opening night, the first act was applauded, but as the evening progressed enthusiasm waned and the final curtain drew only lukewarm reaction.

Carmen ran for 36 performances at the Comique - Bizet died on the night of the 33rd -- and the size and enthusiasm of the audience dwindled nightly.

And then, a month after Bizet died, Carmen was staged in Vienna, and took the town by storm. Then came Brussels, London, New York, everywhere a triumph. Finally, in 1883, eight years after Bizet's death, Carmen was revived in Paris to an ecstatic reception. Bizet's words had come true.

There were reasons for Carmen's bad start. For one, the theatre was wrong. The Comique was known as a "family theatre," and its audiences were accustomed to happy endings. There were objections, also, to the presentation of what were called prostitutes, pimps, smugglers and murderers on stage. The last straw was the sight of women smoking in public.

Bizet, who was just 36 when he died, had written several operas before Carmen, including The Pearl Fishers, but all were saddled with weak librettos. Hence, he was delighted to be given the opportunity to turn into an opera a popular novel by Prosper Mérimée, dealing with the turbulent love life of the willful Spanish gypsy Carmen. Here at last was the perfect story for him.

Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy, his librettists, also did well by Bizet. They made the Toreador, a minor character who appears only at the end in the novel, into a principal figure. They also invented the role of Don José's hometown sweetheart, and placed the murder of Carmen outside the bullring just as the death of the bull is acclaimed inside. In the book, Carmen is killed days later on a lonely road.

Bizet wrapped this promising story in music that has been whistled and hummed ever since. His musical characterizations are superb, and the progress of the drama is magnificently propelled to a climax of tremendous impact.

Alas, just as he had predicted, he had to die in order to achieve the success he deserved.
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Peter Dean Beck, Set & Lighting Designer

Mr. Beck has designed scenery and/or lighting for close to 200 productions around the country. Among his opera credits are Falstaff, Turandot, Manon, Don Giovanni, Madama Butterfly, Hansel and Gretel, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, and Roméo et Juliette for such companies as Atlanta Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, Virginia Opera, and Chautauqua Opera. He has designed productions of Andrea Chenier, L’Italiana in Algeri, Macbeth, Elektra, and Tristan und Isolde for Hawaii Opera Theatre, where he has been principal designer for 17 seasons. His other musical theater credits include West Side Story, Guys and Dolls, Candide, The King and I, and Fiddler on the Roof. For Eugene Ballet, he designed Firebird, Petrouchka, and Swan Lake. He recently did a double bill of Le Rossignol and Cavalleria Rusticana for Sakai City Opera in Japan.

Mary Chesnut, Soprano (Frasquita)

Mary Chesnut has been appearing on Hawaii stages for the past 5 years, singing leading roles in Evita, Phantom, Amahl and the Night Visitors and Kismet to name a few. Locally, she has also been a soloist with the Honolulu Symphony and the Maui Symphony, singing in performances of the Messiah and Beethoven’s 9th and has been nominated for and received the local Pookela award for achievement in theater. She came from California where she sang two seasons with Opera Pacific. Mary holds a Bachelor’s Degree in voice performance from the University of Massachusetts, where her father is on the music faculty. She recently finished her Master’s Degree in Voice Performance at the University of Hawaii, studying with John Mount. Mary currently teaches at Iolani School and conducts the choirs at First Presbyterian Church. She studies voice with Neva Rego and John Mount and resides in Mililani with newlywed husband, Kalani Hicks, and Skye Terrier pup, William Wallace.

Vanessa M. Chong, Choreographer

Vanessa’s interest in dance began at age ten when she began studying the hula as well as other dance forms. She began to focus on flamenco dance and continued her studies in the U.S.A. with Monica, Omaya Amaya, Laila del Monte, Mariana Madueñ, Roberto Amaral, and Laura Throughton. She later went on to live in Seville, Spain in 1996 where she studied extensively with La Tona and Amparo Cazalla Mora. She also studied with Raul in Cordoba, Spain and participated in Pacho Pena’s Festival de la Guitarría. She has performed with Arte y Compas, a flamenco dance company based in San Francisco, California, in Una Noche en Andalucía at the Honolulu Academy of Arts, and Tierra y Mar at the Hawaii Theatre, as well as Hawaii Opera Theatre’s 1995 production of Carmen. This is her debut as choreographer with HOT.

Karen Driscoll, Lyric-Soprano (Micaëla)

Karen Driscoll has attracted considerable interest from her appearances throughout North America during the past two seasons, including the title role in Massenet’s Manon for the Florentine Opera; the role of Mimi in La Bohème for L’Opéra de Montréal and Baltimore Opera’s Tatyana in Eugene Onegin for the Lyric Opera of Kansas City; the title role in Susannah for L’Opéra de Montréal; Juliette for Vancouver Opera and Opera Saskatchewan; Musetta in La Bohème for the Florida Grand Opera; and Micaëla in Carmen for the New Jersey State Opera; Florida Grand Opera as Manon; Michigan Opera as Musetta; Montréal Opéra as Despina in Così fan tutte; and made her debut with Hawaii Opera Theatre as Nedda in I Pagliacci. This season, she will debut with Seattle Opera as Tatyana and Opera Columbus as Musetta; return to Baltimore Opera as Pamina; and return to Hawaii Opera as Micaëla; Montréal Opera and Lyric Opera of Kansas City as Pamina; and to Michigan Opera as Susanna in Le Nozze di Figaro.

Mark Flint, Conductor

Maestro Flint returns for his ninth production with HOT, having conducted last season’s Tales of Hoffman. This season he has led the opening productions for the Edmonton Opera Association with Rigoletto and for the Orlando Opera with Hoffman. After Hawaii, he conducts Les Pécheurs de Perles for the Nashville Opera Association; the international premiere of Thérese Racquin for L’Opéra de Montréal; and Lakmé for the Michigan Opera Theatre. This summer he returns to the Lake George Opera Festival for La Fille du Régiment. Having served as Music Director/Principal Conductor for Michigan Opera Theatre and for San Francisco Opera’s Western Opera Theatre, upcoming engagements include Die Zauberflöte for L’Opéra de Montréal and Don Pasquale for both Michigan Opera Theatre and Orlando Opera.

Beebe Freitas, HOT Associate Artistic Director

A graduate of Oberlin College, Ms. Freitas received her Master’s Degree from Boston University and studied at Juilliard where she was choral accompanist. Ms. Freitas has performed with such renowned soloists as Yo Yo Ma, Bass Virtuoso Edgar Meyer and with the
Eric Haines, Baritone (Dancaire)
Mr. Haines, HOT’s Education and Outreach Programs Manager, made his first appearance with the company in 1986. Hawaiian audiences have seen him perform baritone roles in Un Ballo in Maschera, Roméo et Juliette, Turandot, La Bohème, Samson et Dalila, Faust and other productions. Retraining as a tenor he recently appeared in the role of Arithmetik in the Mae Z. Orvis Opera Studio production of Ravel’s L’Enfant et les Sortilèges. Mr. Haines holds a Master of Music Degree from the University of Hawaii at Mānoa and has taught there as well as at Chaminade University, Windward Community College, and Punahou Music School. He has been a National Association of Teachers of Singing State Governor and a board member of the Hawaii Alliance for Arts Education.

Quinn K. Kelsey, Baritone (Moralès)
Mr. Kelsey is currently a senior at the University of Hawaii Music Department studying under John Mount, working toward a Bachelor’s Degree of Music in Vocal Performance. He recently attended the Chautauqua Institution in western New York where he studied with Marlena Malas. While at Chautauqua, he performed the role of the Clock in Ravel’s L’Enfant et les Sortilèges. Other recent roles include Luther in Offenbach’s Tales of Hoffmann; Melot in Wagner’s Tristan und Isolde; and Yamadori in Puccini’s Madama Butterfly; all with Hawaii Opera Theatre. Mr. Kelsey is a scholarship recipient of the Hawaii Opera Theatre’s Opera Studio as well as a soloist with the Honolulu Symphony, the O’ahu Choral Society, and the Kona Association of Performing Arts (KAPA).

Matthew Kirchner, Lyric-Tenor (Don José)
The young American tenor Matthew Kirchner has performed principal tenor roles in Turandot, I Masnadieri, Lakmé, Azúcar, Il Turbarro, Pagliacci, Tosca, Carmen, Yol di Notte, Madama Butterfly, La Traviata, Yevgeny Onegin, La Bohème, and Faust, among other operas. His credits include The Royal Danish Opera; Minnesota Opera; Opera Orchestra of New York; the Metropolitan Opera of Taiwan; Sarasota Opera; Bohème Opera; Opera Theater of Connecticut; Tulsa Opera; Long Beach Opera; Salt Marsh Opera; the Orchestra del Teatro Carlo Felice; the Rundfunk Symphony Orchestra; the Spanish National Symphony; Connecticut Grand Opera; San Jose Symphony; Monterey Opera; Annapolis Symphony; Opera San Jose; Palo Alto Philharmonic; and the New West Symphony. He has received awards from the Metropolitan Opera; George London Foundation; Gerda Lissner Foundation; Leni fei Bland Foundation and Opera Index among others.

Ning Liang, Mezzo-Soprano (Carmen)
The mezzo-soprano Ning Liang received a Master’s Degree in Music from the Juilliard School, New York. She was winner of the Metropolitan and many international competitions. She performed in many important houses such as La Scala, Milano; The Metropolitan, New York; and Hamburg, Vienna, Berlin, Amsterdam, Bologna, Marseille, Washington, Toronto etc. She has sung roles like Octavian, Komponist, Dorabella, Rosina, Carmen, Idamante, Sesto, etc. In the movie Madama Butterfly, she played the role of Suzuki. Ms. Liang has been working with conductors such as Giuseppe Sinopoli; Riccardo Muti; Sir Colin Davis; Christian Thielemann; and many others. She has also been heard in many important European festivals e.g.: Wiener Festwochen and the Bregenz Festival. Her engagements now include Mahler’s Das Lied von der Erde and roles such as Azucena and Preziosilla.

Nola A. Nāhulu, Choral Director
This is Ms. Nāhulu’s eleventh season as Choral Director with HOT and her 16th season with Hawaii Youth Opera Chorus as Executive & Artistic Director. A native of Waianae, ‘Oahu, she serves as Choral Director for the Pearl Harbor Hawaiian Civic Club and the Kawaiha’o Church. She is a lecturer at the University of Hawai'i, Mānoa in Hawaiian Choral Music and Director of Kawaiolanaopuakaleo, an a cappella vocal ensemble whose goal is to perpetuate Hawaiian Choral Music. She is past-president of the Executive Board of the Hawai‘i Chapter of the American Choral Directors’ Association.

Jaime J. Offenbach, Bass-Baritone (Zuniga)
Jamie J. Offenbach has appeared with Los Angeles Opera; Santa Fe Opera; San Diego Opera; Savonlinn, Finland Opera Festival; Opera Pacific; Brooklyn Academy of Music; Glimmerglass Opera; Colorado Opera Festival; Opera Colorado; Kentucky Opera; Pittsburgh Opera; Santa
Barbara Opera; and Hawaii Opera Theatre. Notable roles include both the title role and Don Bartolo, Le Nozze di Figaro; Basilio, Il Barbiere di Siviglia; Raimondo, Lucia di Lammermoor; Leporello, Don Giovanni; Mephistopheles; Faust; Colline, Alcindoro, and Benoît, La Bohème. As a concert soloist, he has appeared with Los Angeles Opera; Opera Pacific; Honolulu Symphony; Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival; Colorado Springs Orchestra; National Repertory Orchestra; New York Festival of Song; and Joseph Papp New York Public Theatre. A native of Honolulu, Mr. Offenbach studied at the University of Hawaii, New York University, and the Juilliard School. He has also performed extensively in musical theatre as a dancer and singer in Regional, Summer Stock, Off-Broadway, and National Tours.

**Philip Skinner, Bass-Baritone (Eccamilo)**

Philip Skinner has performed over thirty roles with San Francisco Opera including the Water Gnome (Rusalka), Mephisto (Faust), and Colline (La Bohème). He has sung Figaro (Marriage of Figaro) and the Four Villains (Tales of Hoffmann) with Houston Grand Opera; King Philip (Don Carlos) in Portland; Ferrando (Il Trovatore) in Dallas; the Count (Marriage of Figaro) in Nantes, France; and has been a principal with the opera companies of Chicago; Brussels; Naples; Toronto; Seattle: Melbourne (Australia); San Diego; Vancouver; Edmonton; and Louisville. In concert, Skinner has performed with the orchestras of Tel Aviv; San Francisco; Minneapolis; Honolulu; San Jose; Charleston (SC); and the Spoleto Festival. Recently, he sang Basilio (Barber of Seville) in Washington, D.C. and Minneapolis; Ramfis (Aida) at the Hollywood Bowl; and Escamillo (Tragédie de Carmen) with Festival Opera and Ferrando in Atlanta.

**Georgine Stark, Mezzo-Soprano (Mercédès)**

This marks Ms. Stark’s HOT main season debut as Mercédès in Carmen. Her mainland productions include Musetta in La Bohème, Mrs. Gobineau in The Medium and Fortuna in L’Incoronazione di Poppea. Most recently, Ms. Stark performed with Teatro Felice’s production as the title role in Carmen and Kate Pinkerton in Madama Butterfly in New York City. She also appeared with the Honolulu Symphony as soloist in Bach’s St. Matthew Passion and Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. She received many awards including finalist in the San Francisco Opera Merola Program, semi-finalist in the Meistersinger Vocal Competition in Austria, and winner of the Hawaii Art Song Contest. Ms. Stark also performs voice/violin recitals with her husband as “The Stark duo.”

**Richard Stead, Wig & Make-up Designer**

Mr. Stead has been Wigmaster at The San Francisco Opera where he won an Emmy Nomination. He has worked with Minnesota Opera; Netherlands Opera; Royal Shakespeare Company; Central City Opera; Utah Opera; Boston Opera; American Conservatory Theatre; Spoleto Festival USA; Bolshoi Ballet; San Francisco Ballet; Ballet Hawaii; films and television. Mr. Stead operates his own wig & make-up company in San Francisco. This season, Mr. Stead celebrates his 20th consecutive season with HOT.

**Bernard Uzan, Director**

Paris-born Uzan made his Seattle Opera debut stag- ing Giordano’s Andrea Chénier in 1996, and returned as stage director of Gounod’s Faust, and Puccini’s Tosca. Uzan serves as general and artistic director of L’Opéra de Montréal and has worked with several Canadian companies, including Canadian Opera in Toronto, Vancouver, Edmonton, and Calgary Operas, and the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. In the U.S., he has worked extensively with San Francisco; Florida Grand; Detroit; Portland; Miami; Dallas; and New Orleans Operas. In Europe, he has directed productions at Zurich Opera; Opéra de Monte Carlo; Teatro Massimo in Palermo; Opéra de Lyon; Marseilles Opéra; and Toulouse Opéra. He has directed more than 85 operas in approximately 200 productions and has designed more than 20 productions.

**Eric Van Hoven, Tenor (Remendado)**

Tenor Eric Van Hoven’s recent and upcoming engagements include: Beppe with Nevada Opera, Gaston and the Second Jew with Hawaii Opera Theatre. Last season he sang Tony in Master Class at Coconut Grove Playhouse, the Second Jew with Opera de las Americas, Seno Mendoza in the Skylight Opera Theater’s Rosina and Frederic with Chattanooga Symphony and Asheville Lyric Opera. Nationally Mr. Van Hoven has sung with New York City Opera, at Avery Fisher Hall with American Symphony Orchestra and on Broadway in Candide. He has performed with Mobile Opera, Virginia Opera, Portland Opera, Chautauqua Opera, Augusta Opera, and Chicago Chamber Opera among others. He has premiered roles in Reverend Everyman with Florida State, Under the Arbor with Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Keepers of the Light with Opera Roanoke.
Catching Rays with Opera

It's the off season at the opera and staff and board finally get a chance to relax, go to the beach and enjoy the leisure activities our community has to offer. Not so! The 'off season' time is when the hard work planning, raising money, building sets and many of the less glamorous aspects of opera production come to life. It is also a busy time for HOT's Education and Outreach programs. So what happened between last season and this season?

The Mae Z. Orvis Opera Studio of Hawaii Opera Theatre followed the 2001 Season with several master-classes in the spring that fed into a workshop production of Ravel's masterpiece L'Enfant et les Sortilèges this past October. Two artists associated with the Paris Opera were engaged to provide a strong foundation for this production. In a developing relationship with Hawaii Public Radio, studio members performed in two live broadcasts this fall including the first annual Robert S. Hines Christmas Concert.

Opera Express, our touring opera designed for elementary schools, gave performances around the island of Oahu and also traveled to schools on the islands of Kauai and Maui. The work Aesop's Fables was performed. The show was created by staff member Stephanie Conching and used some of opera’s most popular arias to tell the story of several of Aesop's favorite fables. The show was extremely popular with audiences and played again on Oahu this past fall.

Our HOT Opera Residency program has been working with students on Molokai and at Aina Haina Elementary School on two separate projects. Both of these residency projects will culminate with the students producing and performing, with some help from HOT and their teachers, an adaptation of Bizet's opera Carmen. The performance will take place on Molokai in early April and in Aina Haina in mid-May.

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We are very fortunate to have our dedicated Hawaii Opera Theatre staff, without whom we could not present the wonderful season that we have.

--Marion Vaught
La Traviata
Production Sponsor

Join the Apple Corps!

Thomas Woodruff, guest designer for HOT’s production of Salome, has made a series of eight limited edition lithographs inspired by his work Apple Canon, an installation of 365 paintings of apples that was exhibited at The Contemporary Museum in 2000. Proceeds from the sale of the prints support the acquisition of Apple Canon for TCM's collection.

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Sample lithographs are on view at TCM at First Hawaiian Center. All donors will be recognized in the wall label whenever Apple Canon is exhibited in the future.

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