

# Carmen

**GEORGES BIZET** | 1875

**SUNG IN FRENCH**  
**APPROXIMATE RUNNING TIME: 170 minutes**

With its arias famous all over the globe, *Carmen* is probably one of the most notorious opera ever composed. Bizet's music appears to be imbued with far more complex a charm than it actually appears to and the elaborately detailed character of its heroin undoubtedly enhances the all experience.

Written by French composer Bizet in 1875, *Carmen* is one of the youngest opera ever produced and narrates the tragic story of an attractive and rebellious gypsy and of her impossible love toward a soldier. With its very forward looking writing style, it has profoundly changed the history of Opera music.



*Carmen* avec Anita Rachvelishvili  
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## MAIN CHARACTERS

**Carmen** : street cigars sellers gypsy (mezzo)

**Don José** : Superintendent (tenor)

**Micaela** : young Navarrese, engaged with Don José (soprano)

**Escamillo** : Bullfighter (baritone o baritone-bass)

## THE PLOT

The action takes place in 19th century Seville and sees superintendent Don José consumed by the love he feels for hot-blooded gypsy Carmen, who makes a living out of selling cigars in the main square. Blinded by the passion, Don José forsakes his family and gives up all obligations only to later find himself miserable, powerless and without Carmen's love who has feelings for bullfighter Escamillo, instead. Don José passion escalates and ultimately leads him to stab Carmen which eventually gets him arrested.

### Act 1

In Seville's main square, Don José, who is engaged with Micaela, is captivated by Carmen, who throws a flower at him while singing a Habanera « L'amour est un oiseau rebelle ». Later on, the attractive gypsy gets involved in a harsh fight among other cigars sellers, resulting in Carmen getting arrested for allegedly attacking and punching one of them. Once in prison, she tries to talk the superintendent into letting her go by swearing she would give herself to him, however, after accepting the proposal and releasing her, he finds himself imprisoned.

### Act 2

At the Lilla Pastia's tavern, Carmen amuses the soldiers with her dancing while kindly turning down young bullfighter Escamillo's advances. She later decides to join her fellows traffickers hiding in the mountains and is eventually joined by Don José, who had gotten out of prison and, parted between his feelings for the gypsy and his obligations as a superintendent, eventually gives everything up to stay by Carmen's side.

### Act 3

In the mountains Carmen gets continually harassed by insanely jealous Don José and in the cards she foresees her premature and savage death. On the other hand, Micaela, after coming to terms with her fears, goes to the mountains to join her beloved Don José and tell him his mother is severely ill. In the meantime, Don José bumps into Escamillo, who joined them in the mountains looking for Carmen, and the two engage in a fight which is sedated by Carmen that eventually dismisses Don José.

### Act 4

Seville is getting ready for the bullfight and before entering the arena, Escamillo parades around the city, accompanied by Carmen's cheerful applause. Don José, who is torn apart by passion, spots Carmen and after reaching her he begs her to get back together but the beautiful gypsy wards him off stating she's a free woman and repeating she picks Escamillo over the old superintendent, who, in turn, blinded by jealousy, stabs Carmen and gives himself up to the police.

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