

Bizet – CARMEN

CARMEN Makes One's Heart Sing!

"There were many positive elements to Teatro Lirico D'Europa's production of Bizet's **CARMEN**, but those of us who were there will doubtless remember the evening for the thrilling performances of mezzo Kirstin Chavez and tenor Jeffrey Springer as the fearless gypsy and the soldier who loves her – to death. Chavez is beautiful, she's a terrific actress and she has a lovely mezzo sound that she produces with ease throughout the range. Springer's portrayal of Jose was equally vivid. His robust, bronze-tinged tenor filled the Majestic with powerful sound from start to finish. Conductor Krassimir Topolov got a strong, no nonsense reading from the players. The staging by Giorgio Lalov was vivid in the intimate interactions of the leads including the beautifully bright-voiced Veselina Vasileva (Micaela) and charismatic Vladimir Samsonov as winning toreador Escamillo."

THE BOSTON HERALD – T. J. Medrek

ENSEMBLE CAST SIZZLES in Teatro Lirico's CARMEN! (Boston)

"Last night's performance of **CARMEN** really cooked. Credit goes to the excellent Bulgarian ensemble of chorus and orchestra and two Americans in the starring roles. Kirstin

Chavez has sung the role at the New York City Opera. She's physically and vocally limber, and revels in her femme-fatale looks. She has a bright lyric mezzo with a strong top and sings with many a teasing, personal, and humorous inflection. She can play the castanets, and she acts up a storm, while always keeping her place in the ensemble effort. Tenor Jeffrey Springer has a strong, tireless voice with good high notes. His desperation, despair and degeneration were palpable. Veselina Vasileva brought fervor and gleaming high notes to the role of Micaela. Vladimir Samsonov, the swaggering toreador Escamillo, seemed to be having fun and acted with supreme self-congratulation that fits his character. Viara Zhelezova unleashed a formidable sound as Mercedes and the smugglers were terrific. The chorus poured out tone that left the ears ringing and the orchestra did some elegant work for Krassimir Topolov who kept things moving along in a stylish way. Giorgio Lalov's simple, sensible production gave his stars plenty of leeway to do their own thing."

THE BOSTON GLOBE – Richard Dyer

CARMEN – Lied Center of Kansas

"A sold out house waited Saturday evening for the opening curtain of Teatro Lirico D'Europa's **CARMEN** at the Lied Center. Carmen was sung by Kirstin Chavez. Her silky mezzo-soprano was perfect for the role, and she looked the part of the fiery and sensuous gypsy, taking control of the stage in her opening "Habanera" scene as she

slithered barefoot across the stage, flirting with one man after another. Soprano, Veselina Vasileva as Micaela sang the part impressively. Her "Je dis que rien" was a high point, rocking the second balcony with high Cs and concluding with prolonged applause. Igor Denisov showed a commanding stage presence as Escamillo. Costumes were colorful, with many flounced dresses in plentiful supply. The stone and brick urban setting, lighted in warm earth tones was quite satisfactory. The orchestra performed well, with especially nice work by bassoon, flute and harp. The subtitles were rendered in lively colloquial English and were a welcome addition." *LAWRENCE JOURNAL WORLD – Dean Bevan*

CARMEN (New Jersey Performing Arts Center)

"On March 18 Teatro Lirico D'Europa performed G. Bizet's popular opera **CARMEN** for a full house (2700) at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark. Stage director Giorgio Lalov presented a traditional retelling of the story aided by solid looking scenery and elaborate costumes by Vailntine Topencharov. Since three excellent flamenco dancers from Ballet Arabesk travel with this company, the presentation included dances that were an integral part of nineteenth century French opera performances but are seldom seen these days. The title role was sung by rising star, Kirstin Chavez. She has sung at the New York City Opera and will make her debut at the Metropolitan Opera next season. A charismatic, green-eyed seductress, this Carmen was as irresistible to the audience as her

stage lovers. Her voice was even throughout its registers with luminous high notes and luscious, creamy chocolate low tones. Jeffrey Springer was a strong Don Jose who sang with a smooth legato and ringing top tones. He portrayed an impulsive character whose reaction to a stressful situation was violence. Moldovan baritone, Vladimir Samsonov, sang his Toreador Song with powerful, robust tones as he strutted across the stage like a champion bull-fighter. Veselina Vasileva was a poignant Micaela who sang her lovely third act aria with lustrous silvery tones that soared over the orchestral accompaniment. Krassimir Topolov conducted the Sofia Symphony in a brisk but intense rendition of the beloved masterpiece and the audience reacted with tumultuous applause at the end of the evening." *MUSIC AND VISION DAILY*

Sensual CARMEN Heats Up Lied Center of Kansas!

"A sold out Lied Center crowd was on hand Saturday for the Teatro Lirico D'Europa's production of **CARMEN**. Kirstin Chavez, the stunningly beautiful mezzo soprano gave us a Carmen as sensual as Marilyn Monroe, as bright as Kathryn Hepburn and as down to earth as Sandra Bullock. Chavez held all eyes. She also held all ears. Chavez dramatic range, pitch-perfect intonation, and dramatic ability made us understand her character's innate sense of joie de vivre and apprehension. Defiantly throwing her raven locks at the constraints of the Spanish patriarchal society, the exotic Chavez teased and taunted with an effort no less devastating than Sharon

Stone in BASIC INSTINCT. Chavez leveraged her pinup girl good looks with a repertoire of come-hither gestures that kept men in the cast and audience spellbound and held all in rapture. We were also treated to the singing and acting talents of tenor David Corman, a substantive Don Jose. Igor Denisov's Escamillo and Veselina Vasileva's Micaela, were impressive. The magnificent music of Bizet was brought to vivid vocal and orchestral life under the capable baton of Krassimir Topolov."

TOPEKA CAPITAL JOURNAL – Chuck Berg

CARMEN – Lucas Theatre – Savannah, GA

"Teatro Lirico gave a buoyant performance of **CARMEN** filled with lovely singing, sharp acting and an entertaining comedic sensibility. David Corman did a fine job playing Don Jose. He has a sweet and muscular tenor, able to break glass one moment and hold your breath the next. His ability to release Jose's agony at story's end effected the right amount of pathos. Galia Ibragimova was a wonderful Carmen. Ibragimova kept the humanity in Carmen and didn't allow her to devolve into a gross cartoon of wantonness. Instead, the mezzo-soprano was, at turns, saucy, demure, coquettish and sexually aggressive. All the things that make a world class Jezebel. Ibragimova's voice was as rich in color as Carmen is rich in allure. The conflicting themes of fate, love and freedom made sense to the capacity audience last night, evoking a standing ovation."

SAVANNAH NOW – John Stoer

CARMEN AT KRAVIS CENTER – (W. Palm Beach)

"The setting, performance and acoustics were a treat to both eyes and ears and well received by the **sold out audience**. A theatrical production gives theatergoers an escape from reality and 2 hours of pure pleasure. This goal was accomplished by the Teatro Lirico's production of **CARMEN**, played to perfection by Galia Ibragimova. The supporting cast of soldiers and flamenco dancers combined into a flawless presentation under the direction of Giorgio Lalov. The conclusion was a standing ovation that touched the hearts of both singers and audience. " *OUT 2 NEWS – West Palm Beach*

PANAMA CITY CARMEN

"Our audience loved your **CARMEN**! Several board members reported back that patrons can't wait for AIDA All agree that the principles were wonderful, and again please thank them for coming to our post opera reception, where our patrons can tell them themselves." *Richard Bojko – Presenter, Opera New Hampshire*

NEW LONDON CARMEN

"Greetings! What a marvelous evening we had last night. Thank you... thank you... thank you! BRAVO Teatro Lirico d'Europa and the **CARMEN** cast and orchestra. Much love and affection!"

Jeanne Sigel – Garde Arts Center, New London, CT

Warner Theatre an asset to Torrington, CT - CARMEN

"It was intermission time and the drummer, Bob Bequillard Sr. of Winsted, and the classically trained singer, Marilyn Cone of Moodus, dismounted the wide balcony staircase to enjoy a glass of wine at the Warner Theatre lobby. They were spectators this fine Sunday afternoon, enjoying a superior live performance of Bizet's **CARMEN**. Teatro Lirico D'Europa, a European touring opera company widely known for magnificent voices and artful acting, was at its best!"

THE REGISTER CITIZEN – Owen Canfield

REVIEW: CARMEN is an operatic gem - (Muncie, IN)

"There is no other woman in the world of opera like **CARMEN**, the heroine of Georges Bizet well-known masterpiece. And on Thursday evening at Emens Auditorium, Muncie residents discovered exactly why this is the case. Set in the Spanish city of Seville, but performed in Bizet's native French **CARMEN** is an operatic tour-de-force. The story of the gypsy woman, Carmen, and her lover, Don Jose, this work is incredibly dramatic, often times irrational and always brilliant. It is opera at its core. The Russian mezzo-soprano Galia Ibragimova is perfect in the lead role. Her voice is outstanding and it is impossible to keep your eyes off of her when she traverses the stage. She is Carmen, from the sway in her hips to her mocking laughter at the men who fall for her. She is worth the ticket price alone, but, luckily, the other leads were equally as impressive, playing their roles with complete success. The Mexican tenor,

Gabriel Gonzalez plays Don Jose, the man who falls for Carmen with such passion, he forgets the woman he truly loves, Micaela, and ruins his career, to be by the heroine's side. Gonzalez is every much the equal to Ibragimova, which is essential when performing against such a strong character. He convinces the audience that he must leave everything behind for Carmen, even though it is clear to everyone that this can cause nothing but problems for everyone involved. And then there is poor Micaela, played sweetly by German soprano Christin Molnar. She does not appear very often on stage, but when she does, the audience cannot help but feel complete sympathy for her. Her love is gone and there is nothing she can do about it except sing with a sadness that seeps into the soul. This touring production was as good as it gets when it comes to opera performances. Their voices were strong, although the acoustics at Emens weren't perfect, and their acting was over-the-top, which is exactly what is expected in opera. Opera is also not typically performed in English, but with super titles above the stage at Emens, the audience was welcome to follow along with ever murmur. This, of course, isn't necessary with a good opera performance. This is clear when Molnar's character is singing with creeping sadness over the love she has lost. She is alone on the stage, her soprano ranging to unbelievable proportions, turning the audience to her side, causing them to feel her loss with every inch of their bodies. English isn't necessary to empathize with her performance, which is why she is great as well. For those who were in the audience on Thursday,

what they saw was a performance to rival any large city production. And at the end there was nothing else to say but, "Bravo!"

THE STAR PRESS – Ivy Farguheson

BOONE, NC CARMEN - Appalachian State - Farthing Aud.

CARMEN was absolutely breath-taking. I am so thankful that I got to see it! Truly, I hope your company comes back again. I will be first in line to go. I love opera, and it was such a breath of fresh air to get to see that in BOONE! Thank you so much Ms. Kelly!"

Emily Dunn - Lifestyles Reporter - THE APPALACHIAN, Boone, NC

BOONE, NC CARMEN

"We are very happy with the production of CARMEN, the singers, orchestration and staging. It was definitely one of the best opera productions we have hosted. I overheard many positive comments from audience members. We appreciate you for your attention and responsiveness to various details involved with this performance and look forward to the possibility of working with you again."

*Sali Gill-Johnsonson, Director - Appalachian State University
Farthing Auditorium*

Review: CARMEN - Proctors Theatre

"SCHENECTADY – A near-capacity crowd came to be entertained Friday night at Proctors by Teatro Lirico d'Europa's production of

Bizet's **CARMEN!** It was not disappointed. Almost single-handedly, mezzo-soprano Viara Zhelezova as Carmen captured the hearts of the audience and all the men on stage, including tenor Mauricio Trejo as Don Jose and baritone James Bobick as the toreador Escamillo. Carmen is one of those kinds of roles that require a singer to be as much an actress as she is a vocalist. Zhelezova inhabited the role with a brazen, feline seductiveness that spelled danger in big letters. She taunted her victims with relish and abandon. Even better, she sang to these men with an unusual degree of nuance that was almost conversational. She caressed the tones and enunciated the French words with clarity. There was no mistaking her intention. Don Jose falls for her challenge and in his famous aria in Act II when he tells her how he thought of no one else while in prison, Trejo sang with poignancy. Their chemistry was good. Trejo was also very charming in his duet with soprano Elena Razgulyieva as the sweet Micaela. Razgulyieva's voice soared with an effortless clarity. The singing from the chorus and the other leads was at a high level. More importantly, their acting kept abreast of the demands. Stage director Giorgio Lalov blocked the crowd scenes well. Vailtine Topencharov designed a brick-lined set for exterior and interior scenes that dictated a palette of reds and golds. The costumes, which were pretty, reflected those colors. It was a nice touch to include actual Flamenco dancers in the club scene. As Zhelezova sang standing on a picnic table, the three dancers spun and tapped in elegant combinations. The crowd particularly appreciated this segment and gave them strong applause. The orchestra under conductor Krassimir

Topolov did very well. Balances were never a problem. English super titles were understandable."

DAILY GAZETTE – Geraldine Freedman

Vacaville Performing Arts Center - CARMEN

“Teatro Lirico D'Europa’s staging of George Bizet's classic opera **CARMEN** at the Vacaville Performing Arts Theatre on November 2, 2008 – brought wonderful opera singers, authentic costumes, professional dancers and a full orchestra. There were excellent performances from tenor Gabriel Gonzalez, who played Don Jose; soprano Christin Molnar, who played Micaela, a peasant girl; and especially mezzo-soprano Galia Ibragimova, who played the saucy cigarette girl that gives the opera its name. Gonzalez turned in a strong vocal performance as Don Jose, brilliantly projecting the torment of his loss of Carmen's love in Acts 3 and 4. Molnar, a German soprano with excellent vocal projection, made a sturdy Micaela, a young innocent woman who is in love with Don Jose and cares for his very ill mother. Even though she had a small part, her performance was very touching and communicated authenticity. Ibragimova, a Russian singer with strong vocal control, is dramatically secure in Carmen's steamy seductive nature, the emotional glue that holds the story together. Her strong performance shined in Act 3, in which she foresees the future in fortune-telling cards, then realizes the imminence of her death. But it is in Act 4 that Ibragimova captivated the audience with her dramatic

and vocal fireworks. In the opera's culminating moment, she took a ring off her finger and threw it to the ground, just before Don Jose stabbed her to death. A small disappointment was the choreography of a dance – with feet tapping, arms waving, skirts swirling – that missed the essence of what a Spanish folk dance should be. Still, it was entertaining. The orchestra's performance of seductive and alluring music under the direction of Krassimir Topolov captivated throughout!”

THE REPORTER - ENTERTAINMENT - Vacaville, CA

Ruth Eckerd Hall, Clearwater - CARMEN

“(CARMEN) was wonderful as usual. We did 1518 SOLD. House looked good -and as always cast was friendly and seemed to enjoy being here again.”

Bobby Rossi, Director - Ruth Eckerd Hall, Clearwater, FL

OPERA NEW HAMPSHIRE - CARMEN

"Bravo! CARMEN was wonderful. Another terrific performance. Thanks for all you bring to Opera New Hampshire!"

Faith Wilson/Executive Director - Opera New Hampshire

Wilkes - Barre, PA - CARMEN

"The performance of **CARMEN** was outstanding. Lots of great compliments! Thanks for doing what you do!"

Will Beekman, GM – F. M. Kirby Center

Jacksonville, FL CARMEN - Moran Theatre

"**CARMEN** was beautiful! I really enjoyed Giorgio's pre-performance lecture too. Thank you for providing a great production!" *Karen Williams – Moran Theatre, Jacksonville, FL*

Nothing but Bravos for CARMEN! - PALMETTO OPERA

"Without a doubt our audience was convinced that when it comes to opera, it can't get much better than your **CARMEN** performance. Last Saturday they showed their appreciation with rave reviews and a standing ovation that never seemed to stop. The lovely Viara Zhelezova, our Carmen, commanded the stage from the moment she walked on and immediately convinced the audience she was the seductive, beautiful and fiesty gypsy, Carmen. Likewise, Simon Kyung Lee became Don Jose, the man who is willing to sacrifice everything for Carmen's love. Their excellent voices and their top-notch acting completely captured the hearts of our audience. Add the outstanding performances of Olga Orlovskaya as Micaela and Dobromir Momekov as Escamillo and it was an ensemble that sizzled! You and your cast have made many fans in South Carolina

these past four seasons. We appreciate you and can't wait for next season!"

*Kathy Newman, Chair, The Palmetto Opera, Columbia, SC
Performance at Koger Center, Columbia, SC, March 2014*

NEWBERRY OPERA HOUSE - CARMEN

"CARMEN was absolutely fabulous! Carmen herself (Viara Zhelezova) was terrific, and of course, I am in love with Giorgio Lalov. What's next?"

Deborah Smith, GM – Newberry Opera House

RAVE REVIEWS FOR CARMEN PRODUCTION - Peabody Auditorium - Daytona Beach

"Opera lovers got swept up by emotion in a drama of the seductress captivating the opera CARMEN. The Daytona Beach Symphony Society presents world-class productions, and without exception, CARMEN won admiration Friday evening at the Peabody Auditorium. Bizet's CARMEN was presented by Teatro Lirico D'Europa, a world-renowned opera touring company. The music came alive with vibrancy from a 40-piece orchestra, fully staged by Giorgio Lalov as the artistic director. "It's really wonderful!" said Guardine Wright-Gibson during the intermission. "I think that each CARMEN is different depending upon the production company. And this particular company is excellent."

DAYTONA TIMES - February 2017 - Jeroline D. McCarthy

DAYTONA CARMEN

"Hi Jenny,

The performance (**CARMEN**) was wonderful! Everyone that I spoke with just loved it. Thank you for allowing us to have the "opera stars" be part of the cast. It was a great fundraiser. Have a wonderful weekend!"

Christine Gerhardt

Director of Operations, Daytona Beach Symphony Society

DAYTONA - CARMEN

"Hi Jenny,

Just a quickie here, as I'm out the door to judge a piano competition this morning. We left the hall last night quickly but at intermission everyone seemed to be enjoying it (Bizet's **CARMEN**) very much! We continue to be grateful and impressed by your dedication to bringing a big production like this on the "road," a formidable task! Please convey to Giorgio our enjoyment and gratitude for bringing to us music that we could not otherwise hear/see "live." You two are The Best."

Love,

Nancy and Dallas Weekly

(Dallas Weekly is the booking agent for Daytona Beach Symphony Society)

PANAMA CITY CARMEN

"Teatro Lirico D'Europa's **CARMEN** presented last night at the Marina Civic Center in Panama City, FL was splendidly staged, performed and sung before an appreciative and enthusiastic audience. The dramatic force of this popular opera with its tale of fateful love and death was fully realized by beautiful singing, convincing acting and exciting orchestration—a perfect artistic marriage. And thanks to Giorgio and the friendly and receptive cast members who joyfully participated in the post opera dinner and reception. We anxiously await your return next winter!"

Bob Borich, Program Chairman - Panama City Music Association

Ft. Myers, FL CARMEN

"Jenny-

My sponsor loved it (Bizet's **CARMEN** at the Barbara Mann Perf. Arts Hall, Ft. Myers, FL) and Giorgio was great talking with her after the performance. She asked him about next year and he told her it would be **MADAMA BUTTERFLY** which pleased her!"

Mary Lee Mann - Barbara Mann Perf. Arts Hall, Ft. Myers, FL -