OPERA
Pacific Lyric Association

OPERA EDUCATION
for
YOUNG AUDIENCES

Escondido Shows	San Diego Shows
Oct 14 - 7:00 PM	Oct 21 - 7:00 PM
Oct 15 - 7:00 PM	Oct 22 - 7:00 PM
Oct 16 - 3:00 PM	Oct 23 - 3:00 PM
Escondido PREVIEW	**San Diego PREVIEW**
Thu, Oct 13 - 7:00 PM	**Thu, Oct 20 - 7:00 PM**

TEACHER'S GUIDE

2022

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MESSAGE FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Dear Educators and Students,

“Carmen” is the most popular opera of all times and nations. This masterpiece was written in Paris by the French composer G. Bizet in 1875 to the original story of Prosper Mérimée about free-spirited Gypsy woman who chooses to die free over becoming the property of a man. Its music is colorful, vibrant, and unforgettable. Every song, aria, dance, and orchestral episode has its own distinct character. And sadly, the issue of women’s right to make their own choices is still a subject for debates and controversial opinions today, as it was 150 years ago...

We invite you to see this amazing show at our Preview Performances for no cost. This Teacher’s Guide is designed to educate our young audiences and newcomers about opera and prepare them to understand and enjoy “Carmen”. Opera genre is more complex than any other art form and is considered to be the most beautiful of all. Remember, the true magic only happens in the theater when stage set, costumes, makeup, lights, sound of an orchestra, and beautiful voices come together to tell you the story from the beginning to the end in real time. I look forward to seeing you at our Preview Performance.

Alexandra Keegan
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Know the story! In opera, it is important to know as much as possible about what is going on beforehand, including the ending. By all means, read the synopsis and libretto; listen to a recording! Once the music, the voices, the setting, the lights, and the dramatic staging come together at the performance, audience members will be better able to fit all the elements seamlessly together into the plot. The plot then becomes the springboard for the real power of opera, the music.

Experience the music! Composers use many tools to communicate with music. They create melodies that evoke a variety of emotions. They use tempos (how slow or fast) and dynamics (how loud or soft) and rhythms (the frequency and pattern of beat). They choose particular instruments to add color to the music they have written. Think of instrument choice as a type of painting for your ears! The term "soundscape" is often used in describing the music of an opera, and it can set the atmosphere and give information about character and plot. What is it telling you?

Understand the singers! Opera singers are vocal athletes. They practice every day to exercise their vocal chords and their extensive breath control. The combinations of notes that they have to sing are very difficult, and the things that they can do with their voices are extreme.You can easily compare a regular singing voice and an opera singing voice to a weekend jogger and a gold-medal-winning Olympic track champion! BUT, the reason that their voices are prized is that they can express so much emotion on a grand scale.

Plunge in! This is the most important step. Everything about opera is over-the-top, on the edge, enormous in every way. It's an art form that thrives on its intensity and passion. Opera stories portray people at their most extreme, and the singers and the music communicate in ways that words alone cannot. You have to let go, allow yourself to stop thinking and analyzing and simply FEEL THE EMOTION!

OVERTURE: An orchestral introduction to an opera.
ARIA: A solo piece written for a main character, which focuses on the character's emotion.
RECITATIVE: Words sung in a conversational style, usually to advance the plot.
FINALE: The last musical number of an opera or the last number of an act.

COLORATURA: Very high and mobile soprano that can handle many fast notes and trills.
SOPRANO: High women's voice.
MEZZO-SOPRANO or ALTO: Low women's voice.
CONTRALTO: Very low women's voice.
TENOR: High men's voice.
BARITONE: Low men's voice.
BASS: Very low men's voice.

TO MARK: To sing very softly or not at full voice.
TESSITURA: Literally "texture" - refers to the average pitch of a role. Two roles may have the same range from the lowest to the highest note, but the one with a higher average note has the higher tessitura.
TROUSER ROLE: A role depicting a young man or boy but sung by a woman (can be a soprano or mezzo).
VIBRATO: A natural wavering of frequency (pitch) while singing a note.
VOCAL REST: Period of time required for the vocal cords to rest after performance, or to recover from illness.

CONCERTMASTER: The first-chair violinist who plays occasional solos and is responsible for coordinating all of the stringed instruments.
PRINCIPAL: Singer who has a big role.
COVER: An understudy who replaces a principal in case of illness or other misfortune.

BLOCKING: Directions given to singers for on-stage acting and movements.
CUE: A signal to a singer or orchestra member to begin singing or playing.
CURTAIN CALL: At the end of a performance, all of the members of the cast and the conductor take bows. Sometimes this is done in front of the main curtain, hence the name curtain call. Often, however, the bows are taken on the full stage with the curtain open.

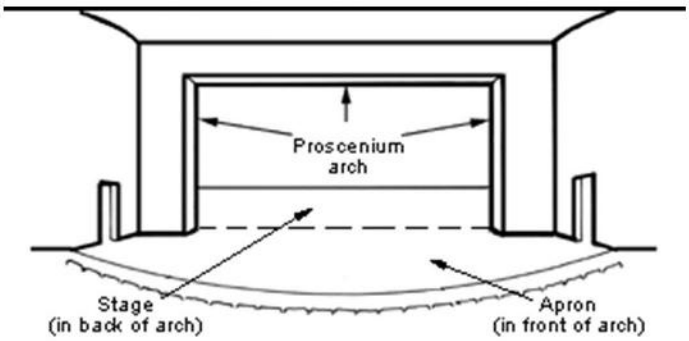
ORCHESTRA READ: The rehearsal for an orchestra in a rehearsal studio or a pit without singers.
SITZPROBE: Means "seated rehearsal". It is the first rehearsal of all singers with the orchestra and no acting.
TECH: Short for technical rehearsal.
DRESS REHEARSAL: A final rehearsal that uses all of the costumes, lights, etc. While sometimes it is necessary to stop for corrections, an attempt is made to make it as much like a performance as possible.

HOUSE: Seating area for audience and a lobby.
HOUSE MANAGER: The person who is responsible for the audience and everything related to audience.

SYNOPSIS: A written description of an opera's plot (in some cases including instructions for acting).
LIBRETTO: Exact words of the whole opera.

MAESTRO: Literally "master;" used as a courtesy title for the male or female conductor.
CHORUS MASTER: The one in charge of chorus during rehearsals and performances.

PROSCENIUM: Short for proscenium arch.



APRON: The rounded area in front of the proscenium.
PIT: The "apron" is usually a lift that goes up and down. It becomes an orchestra pit once it's all the way down.
CYC: [saik] Short for cyclorama. It is a curved plain cloth filling the rear of the stage. Backwall of the stage.

OPERA ANATOMY

There are many different kinds of songs in opera. Performers may sing alone, in couples (duets), trios, or larger groups, and there are also moments when no one sings at all - and each composer develops his or her own preferred combinations of these options.

THE OVERTURE

An opera usually begins with an orchestral piece of music called the overture, which functions as an introduction to the opera. Lasting anywhere from five to twenty-five minutes, these opera overtures usually contain important themes from the rest of the production. Before 1800, house lights were not dimmed while the overture played, and audience members continued to talk, drink, and even play cards! This ceased in the l900's as the overture became a more integral part of an operatic performance. At the end of the overture, the curtain rises and the story of the opera unfolds through a series of scenes. These scenes are organized into acts.

ARIA

An aria is a solo moment for an opera singer and is usually accompanied by the orchestra. Italian for "air" or song, an aria stops the plot momentarily, giving each character the opportunity to express their innermost thoughts and feelings. These pieces also provide an opportunity for the singer to demonstrate their vocal and artistic skill. Mozart, Verdi and Puccini were able to achieve a remarkable balance between memorable melodies that perfectly suit the human voice while still reflecting the drama of the text.

RECITATIVE

Recitatives, a type of singing unique to opera, help to advance the plot. They can be accompanied either by a full orchestra, or, as is often the case with opera written before 1800, by harpsichord or keyboard instrument. Often introducing an aria, the text is delivered quickly and encompasses a very limited melodic range. It has no recognizable melody and the rhythms follow those of the spoken word.

ENSEMBLE

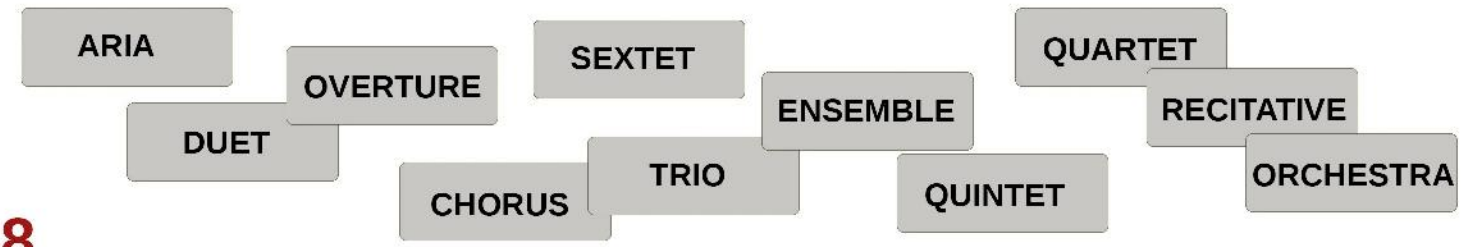
Ensemble singing deals with two or more voices of different range performing together. These include duets, trios, quartets, quintets, and sometimes sextets. The composer blends the voices depending on the dramatic requirements of the plot. For instance, a love duet may begin with each performer singing different music at different times, then gradually unifying into harmony. Conversely, the music of a duet may depict conflict. Georges Bizet used this technique in Carmen: if you listen to the duets sung by Carmen and Don Jose, you might notice that their musical lines are never completely blended, and this foreshadows their tragic ends.

CHORUS

Most operas include music sung by a large group of singers (sometimes more than 40) called a chorus. The chorus often appears in a crowd scene and can provide a stunning contrast to solo or ensemble singing. In one opera by Benjamin Britten, the chorus is played by a single male and a single female, as in the tradition of ancient Greek theatre.

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC

The orchestra accompanies the singing and introduces the opera with the overture. Musical and emotional themes often appear in orchestral introductions and conclusions to arias, recitatives, and choruses. In many cases, the orchestra plays such an important role, the gravity of its existence is that of a leading character.



In-Studio Rehearsals

The PLA Opera's season begins with rehearsals outside of the theater, at the regular rehearsal studios. The stage action is mapped out, the performers experiment with their characters, and the director's ideas for the flow of the opera are shared with the cast. At the same time, the orchestra is rehearsing with conductor at the separate rehearsal studio. Once everyone is done preparing their own material, it is time to combine the effort.

Moving Into the Theater

Four to five days before the first performance, the sets, costumes and props are "loaded in" to the theater. There is a table in the middle of the orchestra-level seats for the stage manager, the director, and the designers. This serves as a central location for communicating with the singers and crew onstage, the conductor in the orchestra pit, and the technicians in the lighting booth and backstage.

Sitzprobe

For the studio rehearsals opera companies use a skilled piano accompanist, but once the show moves into the theater, the performers will have a Sitzprobe rehearsal (a German word meaning to sit and try out.) The Sitzprobe is a "sing-through" with the orchestra and conductor, concentrating on the nuances of the music only, without staging. It is the first time that the orchestra and singers meet. Sitzprobe is for the singers and conductor to work out fine musical details before adding costumes, lights, and staging.

Piano Tech

A piano tech rehearsal is held to give singers a chance to adapt to the set and lights. The rehearsal accompanist comes into the orchestra pit and plays the music when it is needed for the tech crew and singers. The conductor is also in the pit with the piano player to lead the singers and the chorus if needed. This rehearsal also gives the tech crew time to practice scene changes, synchronize lights with the music and plot, check communication devices, and bring all other technical elements together. Singers usually do not sing their difficult arias and other big music numbers to save time, and allow the tech crew to practice, and set up their equipment.

Orchestra Tech

Finally, the orchestra tech rehearsal puts all the elements together: lighting, set changes, costumes, make-up, the orchestra, and the supertitles (if any). The time set aside for the orchestra tech is usually 1 hour more than the length of a show. The extra hour is needed in case if something goes wrong and the tech crew must stop the “run”, go back and fix the problem.

Dress Rehearsal

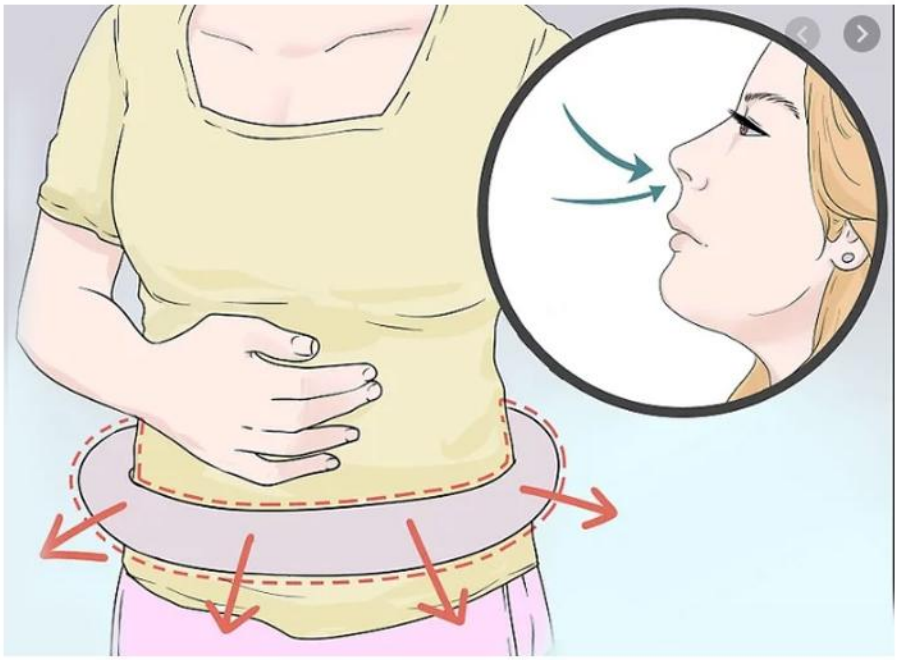
The dress rehearsal is basically a “preview” of the show with all tech elements, full cast, full orchestra and some audience. The director will stop the action if needed, but it is exceedingly rare and generally only for a technical malfunction on the stage. Like theatre, an opera dress rehearsal is the final chance before the performance to make an extremely complex collaboration come together seamlessly.

During the final dress rehearsal, the audience may notice lighting changes as the designer makes final adjustments.

Because of the strenuous nature of the singing, singers may choose to "mark" (sing half-voice) on the final dress rehearsal in order to preserve the vocal chords for the next day performance . Nevertheless, all of their acting and vocal expression will be at full power, with all the passion and conviction that opera requires. They are ready for their first audience, and excited to present their story and their music.

How Singers Breathe

Every day, opera singers work on improving their breath control, because it's an essential element of vocal technique. They must be able to sing very complicated musical passages, to sustain long notes, and to project their voices without microphones. They work all the time on their abdominal muscles, particularly the diaphragm muscle which runs along the bottom of the rib cage.



DO IT YOURSELF

1. Practice Correct Breathing Technique

- Breathe deeply from your lower lungs - imagine a rubber ring around your waist (see pic)
- Breathe in and try to push the ring outwards.
- Breathe in through your nose and out through your nose and mouth.
- Avoid raising your shoulders as you breathe in - keep them relaxed and level.

2. Exercise your breathing muscles

- Fill your lungs with the biggest breath you can, and let it out as slowly as you can with a hissing sound.
- Try it again and while you are hissing have your partner count how long you can make the hissing sound.
- Now do it again making "aaaaah..." sound.

Which one is harder?

If you were to practice this every day, you would build the muscles and be able to make sound for longer periods of time, as opera singers can.

During the performance - pay attention to which passages seem to require the most breath control.

WHAT TO WEAR
Many people think of a night at the opera as a glamorous event and like to bring out their fancy attire. But it is also acceptable to dress comfortably. A big warm scarf, and a cozy jacket will also be appropriate.

BIG BAGS
Big backpacks are not allowed in the theater. If there is no other choice, you should check your big item in at the lobby, and pick it up after the show.

NO FOOD OR DRINKS
"No food or drinks" is an international standard for all major opera houses. The lobby is the only appropriate place for snacks and drinks unless otherwise specified.

ALWAYS BE EARLY
Please arrive early to ensure you have enough time to locate a restroom, finish your snack, talk to people you know, and find your seat before the orchestra tunes and the performance begins. Experienced opera patrons arrive 30-40 min in advance.

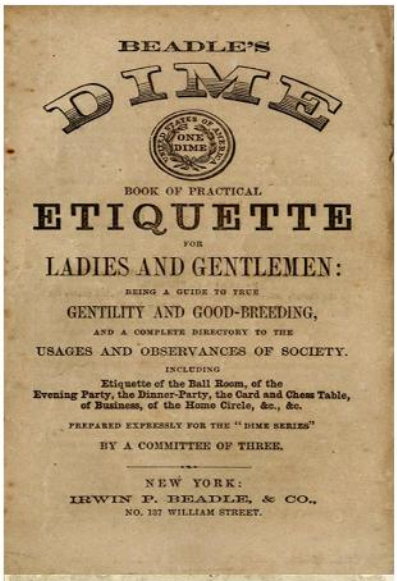
GETTING TO YOUR SEAT
Modern opera theater etiquette requires all patrons to enter the row while facing the back of the theater, that your rear end is not gliding along the row ten inches in front of people's faces. On the contrary, if you are in your seat and someone is approaching you the wrong way, the only way to avoid an "awkward moment" is to stand up.

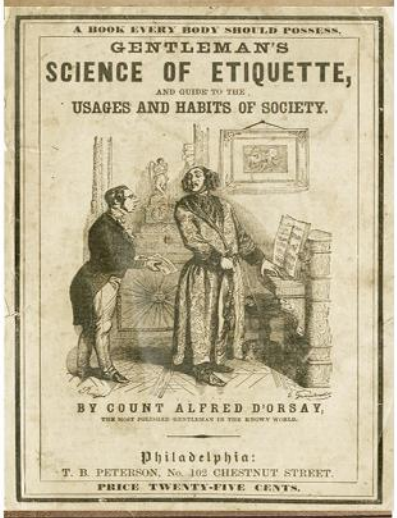
ELECTRONIC DEVICES
Be sure to turn off your phone and other electronic devices you have with you.

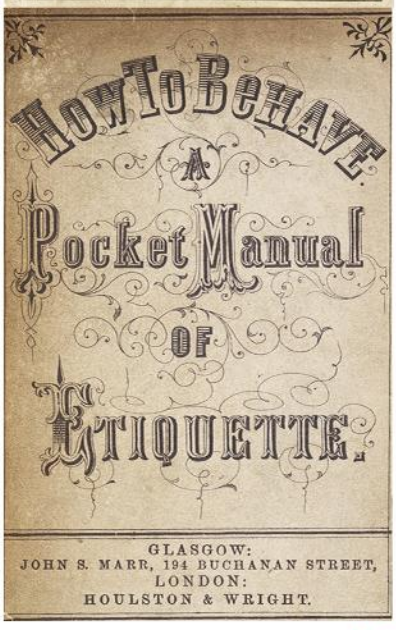
REMAIN SEATED
Once in the theater it is courteous to remain seated and involved in the production until intermission. Please do not leave the theater unless there is an emergency.

APPLAUSE WELCOME
There are several times during a performance when it is appropriate to applaud the performers: when the conductor comes in; after the Overture; after an aria, ensemble or a big finale number. At the conclusion of the performance it is appropriate to continue applauding until all singers have stepped forward to accept their applause during "curtain call". Sometimes, audience members stand up to applaud to show extra appreciation. This is called a "standing ovation."

NO PHOTOS OR RECORDINGS PERMITTED







PACIFIC LYRIC ASSOCIATION

G. Bizet

"CARMEN"

Music by Georges Bizet - Libretto by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy
based on the short novel by Prosper Mérimée

Director - GABRIEL REOYO PAZOS
Conductor - ALEXANDRA KEEGAN

ESCONDIDO
Oct 14 (Fri) - 7:00 PM
Oct 15 (Sat) - 7:00 PM
Oct 16 (Sun) - 3:00 PM

SAN DIEGO
Oct 21 (Fri) - 7:00 PM
Oct 22 (Sat) - 7:00 PM
Oct 23 (Sun) - 3:00 PM

CAST

Carmen	Anna Pflieger, Emily Weinberg
Don José	Alexis Alfaro, Gerardo Gaytan
Escamillo	Dr. Joshua Wentz, Carlos Oliva
Micaëla	Chelsea Seener, Caroline Nelms
Zuniga	Patrick Anderson
Frasquita	Brooke Iva Lohman
Mercédès	Kelsey Fahy
Le Dancaïre	Stephen Blavet
Le Remendado	John Nettles

TICKETS
www.pacificlyricassociation.org

MORE INFORMATION
Contact PLA Opera at 619.977.0827 or visit www.pacificlyricassociation.org

THIS TEACHER'S GUIDE
was created by Alexandra Keegan

ABOUT THE COMPOSER

Source: https://www.classicfm.com/composers/bizet/guides/facts-gallery/carmen-premiere/

A child prodigy
Georges Bizet was born in Paris on 25 October 1838. His father was a singing teacher and his mother was an accomplished pianist who gave Georges his first lessons. The Paris Conservatoire was so impressed by the boy's abilities that it waived its age rule and offered him a place when he was nine.

Inspired by Gounod
A brilliant student, Bizet won many prizes for his outstanding piano playing. The composer Gounod became a lasting influence on his musical style. Shortly after his 17th birthday, Bizet wrote his own symphony, which bore a close resemblance to Gounod's – note for note in some passages.

Meeting Rossini
As a young man, Bizet became a regular guest at Offenbach's parties, where among other musicians he met the veteran Rossini, who Bizet described as 'the greatest of them all, because like Mozart, he has all the virtues.

Unsuccessful early compositions
Bizet's early keyboard and orchestral compositions were largely ignored, and he earned his living mainly by arranging and transcribing other people's music.

Admired by Liszt
In May 1861, at a dinner party at which Liszt was present, Bizet astonished everyone by sight reading one of the maestro's most difficult piano pieces. Liszt said, 'I thought there were only two men able to surmount the difficulties ... there are three, and ... the youngest is perhaps the boldest and most brilliant.'

Operatic failures
Bizet started many theatrical projects during the 1860s, most of which he abandoned. Neither of the two operas that reached the stage - The Pearl Fishers and The Fair Maid of Perth – were immediately successful. The Pearl Fishers later won more popularity for its beautiful duet.

The arrival of 'Carmen'
The production of Bizet's final opera, Carmen, was delayed because of fears that its themes of betrayal and murder would offend. In the audience at the opera's premiere were Massenet and Saint-Saëns, who loved it. Gounod accused Bizet of plagiarism, and much of the press comment was negative. Bizet was convinced that the opera was a failure.

Posthumous appreciation
Bizet, who was a heavy smoker, died of a heart attack at age 36, three months after the première of Carmen, unaware that his opera would become a spectacular and enduring success. His other works also began to be performed more frequently in the 20th century, and he is now recognized as a composer of brilliance and originality.

CHARACTERS

Carmen (Lead)
Carmen is an attractive, quick-tempered, thieving gypsy girl who seduces, torments, and eventually tries to drop Don José, as she had done with several other lovers before. As a gypsy woman, she is without rights, lives by her own code, and belongs nowhere.

Don José (Lead)
A corporal of the Spanish Dragoons who falls for Carmen's charms

Micaëla (Lead)
A kind and naive young woman in love with Don José

Escamillo (Lead)
A glamorous bullfighter who turns Carmen's head from Don José

Zuniga (Supporting)
The captain of Don José's platoon

Frasquita (Featured)
One of Carmen's friends

Mercédès (Featured)
One of Carmen's friends

Dancairo (Featured)
Leader of the smugglers

Remendado (Featured)
A member of the smugglers

Morales (Featured)
Another corporal in the Spanish Dragoons

SYNOPSIS

ACT 1

Spain. In Seville by a cigarette factory, soldiers comment on the townspeople. Among them is Micaëla, a peasant girl, who asks for a corporal named Don José. Moralès, another corporal, tells her he will return with the changing of the guard. The relief guard, headed by Lieutenant Zuniga, soon arrives, and José learns from Moralès that Micaëla has been looking for him. When the factory bell rings, the men of Seville gather to watch the female workers—especially their favorite, the gypsy Carmen. She tells her admirers that love is free and obeys no rules. Only one man pays no attention to her: Don José. Carmen throws a flower at him, and the girls go back to work. José picks up the flower and hides it when Micaëla returns. She brings a letter from José's mother, who lives in a village in the countryside. As he begins to read the letter, Micaëla leaves. José is about to throw away the flower when a fight erupts inside the factory between Carmen and another girl. Zuniga sends José to retrieve the gypsy. Carmen refuses to answer Zuniga's questions, and José is ordered to take her to prison. Left alone with him, she entices José with suggestions of a rendezvous at Lillas Pastia's tavern. Mesmerized, he agrees to let her get away. As they leave for prison, Carmen escapes. Don José is arrested.

ACT II

Carmen and her friends Frasquita and Mercédès entertain the guests at the tavern. Zuniga tells Carmen that José has just been released. The bullfighter Escamillo enters, boasting about the pleasures of his profession, and flirts with Carmen, who tells him that she is involved with someone else. After the tavern guests have left with Escamillo, the smugglers Dancaïre and Remendado explain their latest scheme to the women. Frasquita and Mercédès are willing to help, but Carmen refuses because she is in love. The smugglers withdraw as José approaches. Carmen arouses his jealousy by telling him how she danced for Zuniga. She dances for him now, but when a bugle call is heard he says he must return to the barracks. Carmen mocks him. To prove his love, José shows her the flower she threw at him and confesses how its scent made him not lose hope during the weeks in prison. She is unimpressed: if he really loved her, he would desert the army and join her in a life of freedom in the mountains. José refuses, and Carmen tells him to leave. Zuniga bursts in, and in a jealous rage José fights him. The smugglers return and disarm Zuniga. José now has no choice but to join them.

ACT III

Carmen and José quarrel in the smugglers' mountain hideaway. She admits that her love is fading and advises him to return to live with his mother. When Frasquita and Mercédès turn the cards to tell their fortunes, they foresee love and riches for themselves, but Carmen's cards spell death—for her and for José. Micaëla appears, frightened by the mountains and afraid to meet the woman who has turned José into a criminal. She hides when a shot rings out. José has fired at an intruder, who turns out to be Escamillo. He tells José that he has come to find Carmen, and the two men fight. The smugglers separate them, and Escamillo invites everyone, Carmen in particular, to his next bullfight. When he has left, Micaëla emerges and begs José to return home. He agrees when he learns that his mother is dying, but before he leaves he warns Carmen that they will meet again.

ACT IV

Back in Seville, the crowd cheers the bullfighters on their way into the arena. Carmen arrives on Escamillo's arm, and Frasquita and Mercédès warn her that José is nearby. Unafraid, she waits outside the entrance as the crowds enter the arena. José appears and begs Carmen to forget the past and start a new life with him. She calmly tells him that their affair is over: she was born free and free she will die. The crowd is heard cheering Escamillo. José keeps trying to win Carmen back. She takes off his ring and throws it at his feet before heading into the arena. In a rage, José stabs her to death.

Act 1

Prelude (orchestra)
La cloche a sonné (Chorus of citizens, soldiers, cigarette girls)
Habanera: L'amour est un oiseau rebelle (Carmen, chorus as above)
Parle-moi de ma mère (José, Micaëla)
Que se passe-t-il là-bas? Au secours! Au secours! (Chorus of cigarette girls, soldiers, Zuniga)
Seguidilla: Près des remparts de Séville (Carmen, José)
Finale: Voici l'ordre; partez (Zuniga, Carmen)
Entr'acte (orchestra)

Act 2

Les tringles des sistres tintaient (Carmen, Mercédès, Frasquita)
Vivat! Vivat le torero! (Chorus of Escamillo's followers, Zuniga, Mercédès, Frasquita, Moralès)
Toreador Song: Votre toast, je peux vous le rendre (Escamillo, Frasquita, Mercédès, Carmen, Moralès, Zuniga, Lillas Pastia, chorus)
Quintette: Nous avons en tête une affaire! (Le Dancaire, le Remendado, Carmen, Frasquita, Mercédès)
Je vais danser en votre honneur ... (Carmen, José)
Finale: Holà! Carmen! Holà! (Zuniga, José, Carmen, le Dancaire, le Remendado, Mercédès, Frasquita, chorus)
Entr'acte (orchestra)

INTERMISSION

Act 3

Mêlons! – Coupons! (Frasquita, Mercédès, Carmen)
C'est les contrabandiers le refuge ordinaire (Micaëla)
Je suis Escamillo, torero de Grenade! (Escamillo, José)
Finale: Holà holà José! (Carmen, Escamillo, Micaëla, Frasquita, Mercédès, Dancaire, José, Remendado, chorus)
Entr'acte (orchestra)

Act 4

Les voici, voici la quadrille ... (Chorus of citizens, children, Escamillo, Carmen, Frasquita, Mercédès)
Finale: C'est toi! – C'est moi! (Carmen, José, chorus)

TIMELINE OF AN OPERA PRODUCTION

Did you know that preparing for an opera production takes between 1 and 2 years? Below is a timeline of events leading up to Opening Night:

18 months before - Choice of Opera
The Artistic Staff meets (while the current opera is being planned) and chooses the opera for the following season. Many factors are considered when making this choice, including past opera productions, current talent pool, other local opera companies' season, etc.

8 months before - Initial Auditions
Pacific Lyric Association publicizes its auditions to our large atabase of singers, as well as placing notifications in publications and online. Singers are asked to submit videos or 2 contrasting arias (opera solos).

7 months before - Final Round of Auditions
Singers who pass the inititial audition are asked to attend an in-person audition for a particular role.

6 months before - Cast is Announced
Following the final round of auditions (which can take up to one month), the Artistic Staff (Artistic Director, stage director, and Chorus Master) meet to decide on the final cast. PLA' double-casts all of the major roles, to make sure no one singers is overtaxed and that we always have a backup if a singer becomes ill.

4 months before - Production Meetings Begin
Production meetings consist of the Artistic Team (Artistic Director, Stage Director, Chorus Master, Set Designer, Costume Designer, Poperty Master [props]) meeting to discuss the look of the production and timeline. These meeting continue as needed until Opening Night.

3 months before - Initial Costume Fittings
Acotrs are asked to submit measurements to the Costume Designer before meeting with him/her to try on the costumes. The Costume Designer then makes adjustments to the costumes so they are ready to go when the production moves into the theater.

6 weeks before - Music Rehearsals Begin
Music rehearsals represent the official start of the opera production process. At least one or two weeks of rehearsals are dedicated to learning the music. This is necessary before turning the cast over to the Stage Director.

4 weeks before - Staging Rehearsals Begin
Once music is learned, the Stage Director works with the actors and instructs them on their entrances and exits, where to stand in each scene, and what props they use - all while singing.

2 weeks before - Orchestra Rehearsals Begin
In a separate rehearsal space, the conductor rehearses the music with the orchestra.

4 days before - Move into Theater
Once all elements have been thoroughly rehearsed in the rehearsal venue, it's time to move into the theater, build the set, prepare the orchestra pit, and move the costume and props in.

3 days before - Technical Rehearsals
Technical rehearsals can at times be tedious, as each technical elements (lighting, set changes, etc) of the production are carefully worked out.

2 days before - Dress Rehearsal #1
After all technical elements have been perfected, we do a final run-thru without stops, just as if an audience is present.

1 day before - Final Dress Rehearsal (Preview Performance)
Youth are invited to see the opera, which gives the actors a final chance to test everything before a live audience.

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CARMEN

ACT I

Carmen and her friends work at a cigarette factory. Outside of the factory, the men of the town gather to look at the women passing by. Every man (except one of the guards named Don José) think Carmen is attractive. They ask Carmen to pick one of them as a lover. Carmen chooses Don José by throwing a flower at him. After returning to the factory, Carmen gets into a fight with another girl and Zuniga, the head officer of the Guard, tells Don José to put Carmen in prison. On the way to prison, she convinces Don José to let her escape. He does and is himself arrested.

ACT II

A couple months later, Carmen and her friends entertain guests at the local tavern. Carmen is happy to learn that Don José has been released from prison. A bullfighter named Escamillo enters and flirts with Carmen, but she refuses him because she already is in love with Don José. Don José then enters the tavern and Carmen tries to convince him to stay with her instead of returning to the army. Zuniga, the head guard, enters the tavern and fights with Don José. José escapes with Carmen and a band of smugglers.

ACT III

Carmen, Don José, and the smugglers are hiding in a secret location in the mountains. Carmen tells Don José she is bored with him. Frasquita and Mercédès warn Carmen that their fortune-telling cards state that she will die. Escamillo appears and invites everyone, Carmen in particular, to his next bullfight.

ACT IV

Back in Seville, the crowd cheers the bullfighters on their way to the arena. Carmen arrives with Escamillo. José appears and begs Carmen to forget the past and start a new life with him. She calmly tells him that their affair is over: she was born free and free she will die. She takes off his ring and throws it at his feet before heading into the arena. In a rage, José stabs her to death.