

Regina Opera's 50th Anniversary Season Begins with Bizet's *Carmen*

by Thomas Lenihan



Caroline Tye as Carmen

Photo by Steven Pisano

The lively overture electrified the audience as they viewed the blood-drenched scenery during the November 24, 2019, Regina Opera performance of *Carmen* in the beautiful school auditorium of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Academy of Brooklyn.

Caroline Tye is an experienced and alluring Carmen; she was totally believable and skillfully played castanets during the famous “Habanera.” Though not as “mezzo” as most Carmens, Ms. Tye triumphed during each act of the opera; her acting was quite moving especially in the final scene at the bull ring.

Peter Hakjoon Kim gave a vocally sound performance as Don José, especially in the famous “Flower Song”; his diction was somewhat problematic in other sections of the opera. Maria Brea served as his soon-to-be betrayed girlfriend Micaela; her lush tones and thrilling diminuendos were warmly received. On the smugglers’ mountain, Ms. Brea particularly excelled in her Act III aria “Je dis que rien ne m’épouvante” (“I say that nothing frightens me”).

Act II marked the arrival of Nobuki Momma as Escamillo, the bullfighter. Though initially overpowered by the orchestra, Mr. Momma triumphed during the famous “Toreador Song.”

The supporting cast had many outstanding performers including Cate Webber as Frasquita, Charlotte Merz as Mercedes, Gennady Vysotskiy as Captain Zuniga, and Danny Oakden as Morales, an officer. Equally excellent were Kevin Rockower as Dancairo and Joshua LeRose as Remendado, the two smugglers.

The orchestra was ably led by Gregory Ortega. Concertmaster Christopher Joyal skillfully led the first violins in a wonderful interaction with the second violins led by Mikhail Parkhomovsky. The enormous chorus, including nine soldiers and nine children in the Children’s Chorus, produced stunning musical moments.

Richard Paratley performed brilliantly on both piccolo and flute. Harpist Olivia Fortunato produced marvelous arpeggios during the “Flower Song.” Dancers Wendy Chu and Keiji Kubo provided a beautiful ballet during the Act IV overture. Stage Director Linda Lehr outdid herself and even had Mr. Vysotskiy miss a step which totally reinforced his portrayal of drunkenness.

All components came together and totally supported the climax of the opera during which Don José kills Carmen outside the bullring.

Dr. Thomas Lenihan is a retired Assistant Principal from Erasmus Hall High School, where he started a culinary program with an international restaurant and also founded the Museum of Education in the school’s 1787 building, complete with climb-in beds and quill pens. He plays the piano, pipe organ, and harp, and has written reviews of operas and musical performances in various Brooklyn newspapers since 1970.