

**Carmen** (Should take about 30 minutes: 5-10 to present, 10 to assign roles & set up, 10 to perform. Please be sure to collect all props when finished.)

Today we are going to talk about an opera written by Georges Bizet (Bee-zay). Then we are going to perform a small part of it. Does anyone know what an opera is? (a play that is sung) Has anyone seen an opera? What was it like? For those who don't know what opera sounds like I will play a small part. (Play a bit of track #5 *Carmen*)

Now, let's go over a little about opera.

An opera combines many different art forms. Let's look at the symbols of five different art forms:

The treble clef represents **music**

The books represent literature, the **story**

The two masks represent **drama**

The artists palette represents visual arts – **props & costumes**, and

The shoes are special ballet slippers representing **dance**



An Opera has four parts

1. Recitative – this is the narrator's part, spoken without music
2. Interlude – music without voices
3. Aria – solo voice singing
4. Ensemble – chorus of voices

(When play is over you can ask if they performed all parts of an opera and when each was)

Our composer today, **Georges Bizet** (1838-75) was born in France in 1838. Bizet's talent was recognized when he was only nine years old and was accepted into the Paris Conservatory. He also studied and lived in Rome. He was a gifted pianist and composed many instrumental pieces, but his greatest desire was to write a popular and successful opera.

In 1875, he wrote *Carmen*. However it was not popular and successful during his time. Audiences found it to be scandalous, bold, indecent, and very distasteful. Bizet died only three months after it opened. But today, *Carmen* is one of the most popular operas ever written.

(For those who need to know – He died of a heart attack in 1875 at 37 years old.)

Bizet based *Carmen* on a book that was written by a man, Mérimée, living in Paris. Bizet wrote the opera in French, about Spain, while living in Italy. *Carmen* has music that is lush, melodic, and brilliantly orchestrated. It unfolds a story of love, hate, jealousy, dishonesty, and murder. It is set in the exotic world of Spanish Gypsies and bullfighters.

Today we are going to perform several scenes from *Carmen*. We will have to do a little pretending.

- 1 We are not going to sing. We are going to talk.
- 2 The actors will know what to do by listening to the narrator.
- 3 We will use only a few props, so we will need to pretend a lot.
- 4 The stage will be divided into three settings – a gypsy camp, market, & jail.
- 5 Everyone has to listen and pay attention to get their parts right.
- 6 I will be the director
- 7 and ....maybe our opera won't be perfect because it is our first and only time, let's have fun
8. We will listen to the "Overture" (track #1) while we set up

*For Docent: There are 20 roles.*

*In lower grades if everyone does not want to participate then drop gypsies 2&3, soldiers 2&3, market 2 – the 1&4 can read those lines. Also you can use fewer narrators. You can operate the music.*

*In upper grades if everyone wants to perform, use more gypsies and have them ad-lib, could also have more soldier escorts, and split the narrators into smaller parts. Some kids could set the stage while others read through the script*

1. Assign roles (either randomly or not, however Carmen & Manuelita need to push each other)
2. Have them review their lines, everyone will hold their script during performance
3. Set up Stage
4. Hand out props
5. Tell the kids - While the narrators read the action, the actors act out what they say
6. Designate an off stage for -- Soldiers leave stage when not in action
7. Manuelita returns to audience, Market people can stay in market or be audience
8. Narrators can be audience & speak from there or come up front when their turn

**Cast:**

**Props**

Narrator 1 (largest narrator)	-
Narrator 2	-
Narrator 3	-
Narrator 4	-
Narrator 5	-
Carmen (has to push)	fan
Gypsy 1	1 bead necklace
Gypsy 2	1 bead necklace
Gypsy 3	1 bead necklace
Gypsy 4	1 bead necklace
Market Vendor 1	oranges in basket, ring on table
Market Vendor 2	flowers
Manuelita (has to push)	- black lace scarf
Don Jose	- red sash with emblem, get ring at market
Soldier 1	- red sash
Soldier 2	- red sash
Soldier 3	- red sash
Soldier 4	- red sash
Escamillo	black beret, red cape
Music coordinator (plays CD 2x)	-

**Stage:**

Set up fire logs on red material on left for Gypsy Camp; flowers & oranges on multi colored material in center for the market, and to the right with black material & cardboard bars for the Jail

# ***Carmen***

## Narrator 1:

We are going to perform the opera Carmen by Georges Bizet. We will speak the parts instead of singing and play 'Les Toreadores' from the opera in the background.

The setting is in a small town in Spain. The buildings are made of stucco & have tile roofs like many around Fremont. There is a large open market in the center of town where everyone shops and gathers to meet friends.

The story begins with a wild and spirited gypsy named Carmen. She lives in a gypsy camp just outside of town. She works in the nearby factory. One day, Carmen and her gypsy friends go to the market to walk around. Another girl named Manuelita is shopping at the market.

## **Scene 1 – Market**

*Action – Carmen and her gypsy friends walk to the market chatting. When they arrive at the market, they see a girl named Manuelita buying oranges and walk up to her.*

Market 1      Fresh ripe juicy oranges! Buy them here! Oranges for sale!  
Market 2      Flowers for sale! Fresh flowers! Flowers for sale!  
Carmen        Hey, what are you doing?  
Manuelita     Just buying oranges. It is none of your business! Leave me alone.  
Carmen        No, you've got to stop me!  
Manuelita     No, make me.  
Carmen        All right!

*Action – Carmen pushes Manuelita. Manuelita pushes Carmen back. Carmen pushes Manuelita again. Don Jose and the soldiers run into the market to stop the fight between Carmen and Manuelita. Don Jose stands near Carmen. Soldiers 1 & 2 pull Carmen away and hold onto her arms. Soldiers 3 & 4 pull Manuelita away and hold onto her arms.*

Carmen        It is all her fault.  
Manuelita     No, she started it. I was just standing in the market buying oranges.  
Carmen        You are a liar!  
Don Jose      It is against the law to assault someone. There is no hitting. You should settle your differences by talking. Who started this fight?  
Market 1      Carmen! Carmen did!  
Market 2      Carmen! Carmen did!  
Don Jose      I am a corporal in the Spanish Army. Carmen, you are under arrest!  
Soldier 1     Carmen, come with us.  
Soldier 2     You must come with us.  
Soldier 3     Manuelita, you are free to go.  
Soldier 4     Yes, Manuelita you may go.

*Action – Manuelita is released. Manuelita straightens her clothes and hair and walks from the market. Carmen's gypsy friends go back to camp. Don Jose and soldiers 1&2 take Carmen by the arms and lead her to jail. Soldiers 3&4 follow. Carmen struggles a little bit. After locking her in jail she leaves. Don Jose stays near the jail.*

## **Scene 2 – Jail**

Narrator 2 - Carmen is in jail behind bars. Don Jose approaches Carmen's cell and stands outside the bars.

Carmen        What is your name? Looks like you are an important man in the Spanish Army.  
Don Jose      I am a Corporal who follows orders.

Carmen Oh, but you are the kind of man I like. So strong and so handsome. Why don't you release me, and we'll go to my gypsy camp together.

Don Jose You are charming and beautiful. I think I like you.

Carmen I like you too.

Don Jose I need to go, but I will be right back.

*Action – Don Jose leaves the jail. He likes Carmen and goes to the market to buy a ring for her. He then returns to the jail with the ring.*

Don Jose Carmen, will you wear this ring and be mine?

Carmen Oh yes, Don Jose let's leave this place and go to my camp.

*Action – Don Jose unlocks the door and releases Carmen from jail. Together they walk to the gypsy camp.*

### **Scene 3 – The Market**

Narrator 3 – Carmen has taken Don Jose back to her camp and they have become good friends. Many days have passed. One day, Don Jose and Carmen go to the market with the other gypsies. The soldiers see Don Jose and Carmen. The soldiers realize that Don Jose has released Carmen from jail. The soldiers approach Don Jose.

Soldier 1 Come with us Don Jose!

Soldier 2 We have orders to put you in jail for setting Carmen free.

Soldier 3 Don Jose, you are under arrest!

Soldier 4 Don Jose, we must take you to jail now.

*Action - While the soldiers are talking to Don Jose, the gypsies gather around Carmen.*

Gypsy 1 Carmen, come away quickly before they take you to jail again.

Gypsy 2 Quick, Carmen come with us!

Gypsy 3 Quick, Carmen!

Gypsy 4 Hurry, Carmen!

*Action – Carmen quickly leaves the market with her friends for the gypsy camp. The soldiers lead Don Jose away. He goes silently hanging his head. They put him in jail.*

### **Scene 4 – The Gypsy Camp**

Narrator 4 – Days have gone by. Don Jose is still in jail. Carmen and her friends are around the fire at the gypsy camp when a brave bullfighter named Escamillo walks into camp to visit.

*Action – Play “Les Toreadores” #10 for one minute then fade to background. Carmen and the gypsies greet Escamillo*

Gypsy 1&2 Welcome, Escamillo.

Gypsy 3 Welcome, we have heard that you are a great bullfighter.

Gypsy 4 Come, by the fire with us.

Escamillo Oh yes, I am the greatest bullfighter in all of Spain. I have great courage.

Carmen Escamillo, you are so strong and so handsome!

Escamillo You are a beautiful woman.

Carmen I think I could like someone like you.

Escamillo You are very charming, but I have to go. I hope to see you soon.

Carmen We will meet again.

Gypsies 1-4 Farewell!

*Action – Escamillo leaves the camp. Carmen and the other gypsies go back by the fire. Play “Les Toreadores”*

Narrator – This is the end of our performance of Carmen.

Bizet's opera ends like this: Don Jose is released from jail. He finds out that Carmen has fallen in love with Escamillo, the bullfighter. Don Jose runs to the gypsy camp broken hearted and quarrels with Carmen. He draws a knife, stabs Carmen, and she dies. The soldiers take Don Jose away and put him in jail. Carmen's friends & Escamillo miss her very much.

Soldier

Soldier

Soldier

Soldier

**JAIL**