

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a vibrant red, strapless, floor-length dress, is captured in a dramatic pose. Her arms are raised high, with her hands slightly curled, as if in a dance or theatrical performance. The background is a plain, bright white, which makes the red of her dress stand out. The overall mood is one of elegance and intensity.

# Carmen

photo in honor and memory of  
the late, great Neil Johnson

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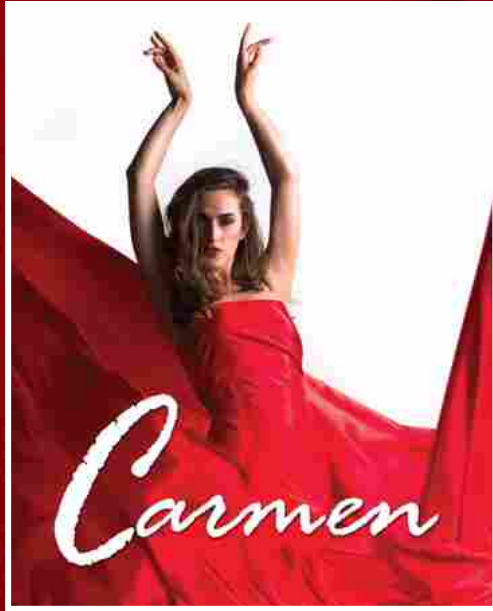
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# SHREVEPORT OPERA PRESENTS



## AT THE RIVERVIEW THEATER

Composed by **Georges Bizet**  
Libretto in French by **Henri Meilhac** and **Ludovic Halévy**

Directed by **Haley Stamats**  
Conducted by **Joe Illick**

### CAST

Mariam Mouawad  
Gwenyth Sell  
Gabrielle Gilliam

Taylor Comstock  
Justin Ramm-Damron  
Cambria Metzinger

Steve Valenzuela  
Conner McWhirter  
Jonathan Lawlor

Orchestra reduction by Motet Music Publishing Company

Any videotaping or other video or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited.

# SYNOPSIS

## ACT I

In Seville, Spain 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.

## Scene 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 Dancaire 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.

# 15 MINUTE INTERMISSION

# ACT II

## - SEVERAL MONTHS LATER -

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.

## Scene II

Back in Seville, the crowd cheers the bullfighters on their way to 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 for the arena. José stabs her to death.

# CAST

Mariam Mouawad.....	Carmen
Taylor Comstock.....	Don Jose
Gwenyth Sell.....	Micaela
Steve Valenzuela.....	Escamillo
Justin Ramm-Damron.....	Zuniga
Cambria Metzinger.....	Mercedes
Gabrielle Gilliam.....	Frasquita
Conner McWhirter.....	Remendado
Jonathan Lawlor.....	Morales & Dancairo
Andrew Perez.....	Lillas Pastia & Guide
Ellen Lindsay.....	Manuelita
Mayor Tom Arceneaux.....	The Mayor

# PRODUCTION STAFF

Stage Director.....	Haley Stamats
Maestro/Conductor.....	Joe Illick
Stage Manager.....	Carol Brian
Assistant Stage Manager.....	Jeffrey Sholar
Lighting Designer.....	Kennedy Wilcher
Technical Director.....	Robert New
Rehearsal Pianist.....	Robert Cruz
Wig & Makeup Designer.....	Sondra Nottingham
Assistant Wig & Makeup.....	Elizabeth Dickinson
Costumes.....	Glenn Breed
Costumer.....	Eura Coleman
Stage Labor.....	IATSE Local 298
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*Artist  
Biographies*



## Artist Biography



### HALEY STAMATS, STAGE DIRECTOR

**Sponsored by: Steve & Cathey Sholar**

**Haley Stamats** makes her directorial debut at Shreveport Opera with *Carmen*. Her 2024-2025 season featured three directorial debuts with consecutive productions of *La Bohème* at OperaDelaware, Opera Baltimore and Charleston Opera Theater. In addition, she directed a new production of *Armida* at Pittsburgh Opera and returned to Opera Baltimore to direct *Maria Stuarda* in February. Last season, she directed *Iphigénie en Tauride* and *Proving Up* with Pittsburgh Opera, *Zorro* and *Intimate Apparel* at Arizona Opera's New Works Festival, associate directed *Florencia en el Amazonas* with Opera San José and assistant directed *Così fan tutte* and *Silent Night* with Wolf Trap Opera. Other past company credits include Cincinnati Opera, Cedar Rapids Opera, The Glimmerglass Festival, The Grimeborn Opera Festival, Mill City Summer Opera, Resonance Works/Pittsburgh, Opera Santa Barbara, Opera Southwest, and Virginia Opera. Stamats has held resident artist and fellowship roles with Arizona Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, and Wolf Trap Opera and earned a B.A. in Music from Simpson College.

## *Artist Biography*



### **JOE ILICK, CONDUCTOR**

#### **Sponsored by: Dayne & Kathy Hassell**

**Joe Illick** served as the Artistic Director of Fort Worth Opera from 2017 to 2022, having served for fifteen seasons as Music Director and Principal Conductor. He has also served as Artistic Director of the Lake George Opera Festival, as Interim Artistic Director of Greater Miami Opera (now Florida Grand Opera), Music Director of the Pittsburgh Opera Theater, Artistic Director of Shreveport Opera and Principal Guest Conductor of the Teatro Lirico d'Europa.

He has also conducted for Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Opera Carolina, San Francisco Opera (Merola), Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Augusta Opera, Opera Omaha, Skylight Opera Theater, Eugene Opera, Nevada Opera Theater, Minnesota Opera National Tour, Pittsburgh Opera Theater, Stadttheater Aachen, Vienna Chamber Opera and the Covent Garden Ensemble.

His operas include *Frida Kahlo* and *the Bravest Girl in the World*, *Stone Soup*, *Bernadette's Cozy Book Nook*, *Ricky*, *Feel the Tango*, *UnShakeable*, and *Stand Up*.

## *Artist Biography*



### **ROBERT CRUZ, CHORUS MASTER; SOX MUSIC DIRECTOR**

**Sponsored by: Dayne & Kathy Hassell, Robert & Marcia Moffatt,  
Mike & Susan Zavalydriga**

A versatile musician whose musical passions and expertise run the gamut from Gregorian chant to contemporary musical theatre, **Robert Cruz** currently works as a freelance musician based in Shreveport, Louisiana.

Robert is the organist at the historic Noel Memorial United Methodist Church, resident pianist and chorus master for the Shreveport Opera, the artistic director of the Carrefour Collaborative Music Project, and regularly performs as keyboardist with the Texarkana Symphony Orchestra and the Shreveport Symphony Orchestra. He has also regularly served as music director for productions at Stage Center, the Emmett Hook Center, and the Shreveport Little Theatre and as an accompanist and non-credit instructor at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches.

Originally from the flatlands of central Indiana, Robert completed his graduate studies in organ and sacred music at Indiana University with additional study in collaborative piano at Boston University.

## Artist Biography



### MARIAM MOUAWAD, CARMEN

**Sponsored by: Carol Reyenga, Dale Bauman & Paula Leonard, Kathleen Hinton, Robert & Marcia Moffatt, Bob & JoAnna Robinson, Robert & Cheryl McGowen**

Born and raised in Zahlé, Lebanon, mezzo-soprano **Mariam Mouawad** moved to the United States at the age of 13. She is the 2024 Marilyn Horne Song Competition Winner, and the First Place winner of the 2023 MTNA Young Artist Competition and the 2022 La Jolla Symphony and Chorus Young Artist Competition.

For the 24/25 season, she is a Resident Artist with Fort Worth Opera, where she will sing Tisbe and cover the title role in Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, and as well as cover the role of Meg in *Little Women*.

She was a 2024 Lehrer Vocal Institute Fellow at Music Academy of the West where she performed the title role in Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges* and covered the role of Carmen.

During her time as a Resident Artist with Shreveport Opera, she performed Dorabella in *Così fan tutte* and Musetta in *La Bohème*.

She's happy to return to Shreveport Opera to perform the role of Carmen. She completed her Master of Music in Vocal Performance and Vocal Pedagogy from the University of Houston, under the tutelage of Melanie Sonnenberg.

## Artist Biography



### TAYLOR COMSTOCK, DON JOSE

**Sponsored by: Mr. & Mrs. Larry Clarke, Susan Stafford, Dale Bauman & Paula Leonard, Robert & Marcia Moffatt, Margaret Oden, Bob & JoAnna Robinson, Sybil Patten**

**Taylor Comstock** has been hailed as “...stirring...” (Portland, ME Press-Herald), with “...smooth power...” and “sheer, glorious size” (BroadwayWorld).

In his emerging career, Mr. Comstock has already performed many standards of the tenor repertoire, notably Radamés (*Aida*), Des Grieux (*Manon Lescaut*), Manrico (*Il Trovatore*), Rodolfo (*La Bohème*), Rinuccio (*Gianni Schicchi*), Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*), and Alfredo (*La Traviata*).

In concert performance, Taylor most recently made his Carnegie Hall debut as Tenor Soloist in Mozart’s *Coronation Mass, K. 317*. He also performed in *Three Tenors! The Next Generation* with the Vallejo Festival Orchestra.

Taylor was most recently named 3rd Runner Up and received the Audience Prize in the 2024 Mary Jacobs Smith Singer of the Year at Shreveport Opera, and 1st Place in the 2023 John Alexander National Vocal Competition at Opera Mississippi.

He was also a 2018 Grand Finalist at The Dallas Opera Guild Vocal Competition, and a 4-time Regional Finalist at the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition.

## Artist Biography



### GWENYTH SELL, MICAELA

**Sponsored by: Mark & Shirlee Owen, Mike & Jennifer Owens, Will Blanchard, Dale Bauman & Paula Leonard, Robert & Marcia Moffatt, Dr. & Mrs. Jack Berg, Anonymous**

**Gwenth Sell**, Soprano, is thrilled to be joining Shreveport Opera as the soprano Resident Artist for the 2023-2025 season. She recently graduated with her Performer Diploma and Master Music from Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music, where she studied under the tutelage of Jane Dutton and was awarded two Performer's Certificates.

During her time at Jacobs, Gwenth performed the roles of Arminda (*La Finta Giardiniera*), Lauretta and Nella (*Gianni Schicchi*), Le Prince (*Cendrillon* by *Pauline Viardot*), and Georgette (*La Rondine*).

Most recently Gwenth was a Young Artist at Cedar Rapids Opera where she performed the role of the Sandman (*Too Many Sopranos*) and in the chorus of *Tosca*.

Other recent roles include Nannetta (*Falstaff*) and Laetita (*The Old Maid and the Thief*).

## Artist Biography



**STEVE VALENZUELA, ESCAMILLO**

**Sponsored by: Mark & Shirlee Owen**

**Steve Valenzuela**, Baritone Steve Valenzuela is a dynamic and versatile performer, celebrated for his rich, expressive voice and compelling stage presence. Praise by *Opera News* as a “committed actor with a voluptuous baritone,” he has garnered recognition for his work across a broad spectrum of genres, including traditional and contemporary opera, musical theater, concert and oratorio repertoire.

Recent highlights include performances at Papageno in “The Magic Flute,” Billy Bigelow in “Carousel,” Shaunard and Marcello in “La Boheme” with companies such as Winter Opera St. Louis, The Florentine Opera, First Coast Opera, Shreveport Opera, City Lyric Opera, Opera Project Columbus, and the New Haven Symphony Orchestra.

His operatic repertoire includes leading and supporting roles such as Don Giovanni, Figaro and Conte Almaviva in “Le Nozze di Figaro,” Samuel in “Un Ballo in Maschera,” Howard in “Dog Days,” Nick Shadow in “The Rake’s Progress,” and Danilo in “The Merry Widow” showcasing his extensive range and depth as an artist.

## Artist Biography



### JUSTIN RAMM-DAMRON, ZUNIGA

**Sponsored by: Bob & Danielle Thames, Will Blanchard,  
Robert & Marcia Moffatt**

**Justin Ramm-Damron**, Bass-Baritone, is excited to be joining Shreveport Opera for their 2024-2025 season as a resident artist. Justin has performed roles with several notable opera companies across the United States such as Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Sarasota Opera, Central City Opera, Bronx Opera, Opera Magnifico, New Jersey Lyric Opera, Shakespeare Opera Theatre, and St. Petersburg Opera.

Most recently, he expanded his repertoire covering the role of Hagen in Wagner's *Gotterdammerung*, and Fafner in Wagner's *Das Rheingold* with TUNDI Productions in Vermont.



## Artist Biography



### GABRIELLE GILLIAM, FRASQUITA

#### Sponsored by: Marletta Eddy

Praised for her “beautifully resonant vocal quality” (Texas Classical), **Gabrielle Gilliam** returns to Shreveport Opera this year to sing the role of Frasquita in Bizet’s *Carmen*.

She was last seen at Shreveport Opera as Fiordiligi in Mozart’s *Così fan tutte*, after having won 3rd prize in the Mary Jacobs Smith Competition and performing the role of Mimì in Puccini’s *La Bohème*.

Last season she joined The Dallas Opera as Sandrine/Mercedes(cover) in the world premiere production of *The Diving Bell* and the *Butterfly* by Joby Talbot. She also joined Painted Sky Opera as Mimì in *La Bohème*.

In past seasons, Ms. Gilliam has worked extensively with Dallas Opera, Fort Worth Opera, Florentine Opera, Opera North, Shreveport Opera, Painted Sky Opera, and American Baroque Opera Company.

Some of Gabrielle’s other roles include Violetta (*La Traviata*), Mimì (*La Bohème*), Micaëla (*Carmen*), Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*), Contessa Almaviva (*Le nozze di Figaro*), and Antonia (*Les contes d’Hoffmann*).

## Artist Biography



### JONATHAN LAWLOR, MORALES & DANCAIRO

**Sponsored by: Mark & Shirlee Owen, Dale Bauman & Paula Leonard**

**Jonathan Lawlor** is a baritone whose love of vocal music from Baroque chamber music to experimental music informs his every performance.

He has experience both in early music, including well-known Baroque groups like Boston Baroque, Emmanuel Music, and Marsh Chapel, and in opera, including the young artist programs at Opera Maine, Music Academy of the West and Central City Opera.

Jonathan received his bachelor of music from the New England Conservatory and received his master's degree from Bard Conservatory's Vocal Artist Program. Recently, Jonathan, at Central City Opera, sang the role of Happy in *La Fanciulla del West*, and covered The Major General in *The Pirates of Penzance* and Harry Easter in *Street Scene*.

His next performance is in Central City Opera's *Once Upon a Mattress* as Sir Studley.

[Jonathanlawlor.com](http://Jonathanlawlor.com)

## Artist Biography



### CAMBRIA METZINGER, MERCEDES

**Sponsored by: Will Blanchard, Robert & Marcia Moffatt**

**Cambria Metzinger** is a mezzo-soprano originally from Santa Barbara, California. Hailed for her charming stage presence and wide stylistic range, Cambria is a versatile performer who draws from an extensive background in a variety of musical genres including jazz, musical theater, and opera.

A recent graduate of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music with a Master of Music in Vocal Performance under the tutelage of Cathy Cook, Ms. Metzinger was featured in numerous roles at SFCM, including Véronique in Bizet's *Le Docteur Miracle*, Teodata in *Handel's Flavio*, Le tasse chinoise/La libellule in Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, Taller Daughter in Mazzoli's *Proving Up* and Amastre in *Serse* by Handel.

Cambria is delighted to join Shreveport Opera as a Resident Artist for the 24/25 season, where she will perform the role of Mercedes in Bizet's *Carmen*.

## Artist Biography



### CONNER MCWHIRTER, REMENDADO

#### Sponsored by: Will Blanchard

**Conner McWhirter**, Tenor, is starting his 2024-2025 season as a resident Artist with Shreveport Opera.

He was most recently an apprentice artist with Sarasota Opera, where he coered Arturo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*. He received a performance diploma from Indiana University, where his performed both Tybalt, and Romeo, in Gounod's *Romeo et Juliette*, and the Torero in *Ainadamar*.

Additional roles include the Prince in *Russalka*, the Duke in *Rigoletto*, Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*, and Rinuccio in *Gianni Schicchi*.

He received his MM from SMU and BM from Eastman.

He is thrilled to be performing Remandado in *Carmen* (covering Don Jose) as well as Spoletta in *Tosca* during his residency with Shreveport Opera.

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2024-2025

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**In Honor of Stephen Roberts**

Lounelle Black

*Honoraria & Memorials*

GIFTS RECEIVED OCTOBER 1, 2024 - MARCH 15, 2025

*Memorials*

**In Memory of William Reyenga**

Steve & Janice Aiken

Ernest & LaWanda Blakeney

Kellie Holt

Cynthia Murray

Sybil Patten

Kathleen Plante

Robert & JoAnna Robinson

Steve & Cathey Sholar

**In Memory of Geoffrey Jenkins**

Elizabeth Beck

Ernest & LaWanda Blakeney

Patricia Chidlow

Steve & Cathey Sholar

**In Memory of Jasmine Egan**

David & Sandra Ginsburg

**In Memory of James Harvey Eddy, III**

Patricia Chidlow

**In Memory of Dr. Patrick Peavy**

Susan Berry

# *Special Thanks*

We express our grateful appreciation to the following individuals and businesses who provide in-kind, discounted or special services to Shreveport Opera throughout the year.

**Azalea Cleaners**  
**Basic Matrix**  
**The Catholic Diocese**  
**The City of Shreveport & SPAR**  
**Fairfield Studios**  
**First Presbyterian - Shreveport**  
**The Hertz Corporation**  
**The Hertz Investment Group (Regions Tower)**  
**Kilpatrick's Rose-Neath Funeral Homes**  
**Dr. Scott Mighell**  
**Northwest Louisiana Food Bank**  
**Red River Radio**  
**Shreveport-Bossier Opera Guild**  
**Stage Center**  
**Lory Tubbs**  
**YMCA of Northwest Louisiana**

Cast and Creative Team Housing Provided By

**Janice & Steve Aiken**  
**Marletta Eddy**  
**Darrell & Claire Rebouche**  
**Mark & Peggy Heacock**  
**Mark & Paula McCrocklin**  
**Sybil T. Patten**

If you're willing to host a cast member for 2-3 weeks prior to a production, please let us know and we'll add you to our list.



JOIN US FOR

# SEASON 76

FEATURING:

SEPTEMBER 21



OCTOBER 19



NOVEMBER 16



DECEMBER 21



JANUARY 25



FEBRUARY 15



MARCH 15



MAY 3



JANUARY 11



 SHREVEPORT  
SYMPHONY



SPONSORED BY   
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40th  
SEASON



2024 shows

LeAnn Rimes

FRIDAY, SEPT. 20, 2024 • 7:30 PM

Indigo Girls

SATURDAY, OCT. 12, 2024 • 7:30 PM

A Christmas Carol

SUNDAY, DEC. 8, 2024 • 2:00 PM

Ben Folds Paper

Airplane Request Tour

SUNDAY, DEC. 15, 2024 • 7:00 PM

2025 shows

The Black Jacket

Symphony Presents

Led Zeppelin IV

SATURDAY, APRIL 5, 2025 • 7:30 PM

The Addams Family:

A Musical Comedy

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25, 2025 • 7:00 PM

THE STRAND THEATRE (318) 226-8555 or [www.thestrandtheatre.com](http://www.thestrandtheatre.com)



COMING  
SOON

JOIN US FOR OUR  
77TH SEASON

2025-2026 SEASON

ANNOUNCEMENT  
COMING SOON



*Thank you  
for your support.*

*Enjoy the  
performance!*