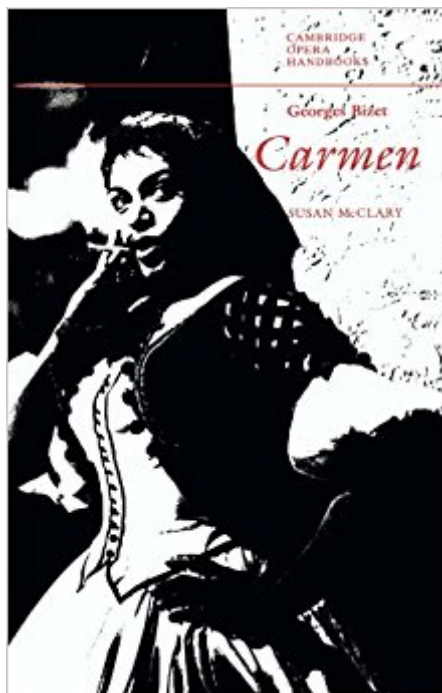


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Georges Bizet: Carmen (Cambridge Opera Handbooks)



Synopsis

Bizet's *Carmen* is probably the best known opera of the standard repertoire, yet its very familiarity often prevents us from approaching it with the seriousness it deserves. This Handbook explores the opera in a number of contexts, bringing to the surface the controversies over gender, race, class and musical propriety. After a study of Mérimée's story *Carmen* by Peter Robinson, Susan McClary examines the social tensions in nineteenth-century France that inform both that story and the opera, and traces the opera through its genesis and reception. The Handbook concludes with discussions of four films based on the opera. The volume contains a bibliography, music examples, and a synopsis and will be of interest to students, scholars, and operagoers.

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Customer Reviews

many audiences when viewing *Carmen* in various art forms (movies, TV, plays, opera) and in various settings. In order to understand what Bizet's *Carmen* was all about, we need to read and understand France's history toward its southern neighbors and the metropolises as well as its superiority and contempt the country have toward them, which continues today. *Carmen* has been called many things by many people. She's been called animalistic, loose woman, tramp, predator as well as worse things that I wouldn't say, read, or print. As for gender, French society in the 19th century experienced an upheaval in which women fought equal rights for themselves. That threatened middle class French men, who are already threatened by the demands of the working

and lower classes who only wanted to better themselves and to participate in French political and social life just like their upper class counterparts. Also, the influx of immigrants to France also upset many of its inhabitants, then and now. Carmen exemplifies all the social disorders French society wants to control through repressive laws and customs during the course of the nineteenth century. When the opera first premiered in 1875, it was denounced as immoral and superficial, not fit for women and families attending the opera. However, as decades have gone by, many people are attracted to the play and some artists were influenced by it. John Singer Sargent was one such person. His Spanish and flamenco paintings were partially influenced by the play. "Carmela Bertagna", "El Jaleo", and "The Spanish Dance" are such examples. Also, Carmen exudes strong sensuality, which was a no-no in French bourgeois society, which tried to assert itself by being the arbiter of morality.

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