

Take your seat for  
The Quintessential Chair-ity Event!

## Eric Charman's 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday Ultimate Gala Celebration

Sunday, March 4, 5 pm  
McPherson Playhouse Theatre



For more than 50 years, Eric Charman has done stellar work raising funds on behalf of the arts in Victoria. Now it is time for Victoria to honour its greatest arts champion with a gala celebration of Eric's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday on March 4.

The event features a champagne reception, silent and live auctions, and a spectacular grazing supper prepared by the chefs of the Victoria Marriott Inner Harbour. There will also be a concert with the Victoria Symphony, conducted by Timothy Vernon, featuring outstanding musicians and soloists from Pacific Opera Victoria, the Victoria Conservatory of Music, and the Victoria Children's Choir

**And there's a fabulous twist!** To honour Chairman Charman, 15 prominent BC artists will create unique works of art, all made out of chairs, for auction at the event.

Proceeds of the gala will benefit the Victoria Symphony, the Victoria Conservatory of Music, and Pacific Opera Victoria.

**You can honour Eric's lifelong support of the arts** through your donation, your sponsorship, or your attendance at this event. Donors of \$500 or more may also extend a personal birthday greeting to Eric in the commemorative programme.

### To find out more

Visit [www.pov.bc.ca/fundraiser.html](http://www.pov.bc.ca/fundraiser.html)  
Email [charmanbirthday@gmail.com](mailto:charmanbirthday@gmail.com)  
Or phone 250-382-1641

## Jane Heffelfinger Legacy Campaign

Pacific Opera Victoria is dedicating the 2011/2012 opera season to the memory of our dearly loved Jane Heffelfinger, who died last June. POV was particularly close to Jane's heart. She had been at its centre for three decades, as a member of the Board, as a Board President, as a Chair of the POV Foundation, as an imaginative and determined volunteer fundraiser, and as an Honorary Life Member.

True to her lifetime devotion, Jane arranged for a \$52,000 insurance policy on her life, payable to Pacific Opera Victoria Foundation, to benefit Pacific Opera. She also specifically requested that those who wish to remember her should do so by supporting this Company that she so loved and nurtured. Many of the people who cared about her have answered that call with generous donations. We hope that Jane's request – and her example – will inspire you and others in the community to help match her bequest.

If you would like to give to the Jane Heffelfinger Legacy Campaign, you may do so:

By mail:

Pacific Opera Victoria Foundation  
500 - 1815 Blanshard Street  
Victoria, BC V8T 5A4

By phone: 250-382-1641

Online: <https://secure.pov.bc.ca/legacy.html>



Photo: Barbara Pedrick

## Events Calendar

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH EVENTS

#### INSIDE OPERA with Robert Holliston

Sunday, February 5

TWO SESSIONS: 10 am and noon

Phillip T. Young Recital Hall, University of Victoria.

Robert Holliston and guests present a guided tour of *Carmen*. Bring your friends. It's all free, including the parking. *Please reserve before noon February 3, specifying which session you plan to attend. Space is limited.*

Reserve at 250-382-1641 or [rsvp@pov.bc.ca](mailto:rsvp@pov.bc.ca)

#### Sense of Occasion

Thursday, February 16, 6:30 pm.

East Lobby, the Royal Theatre.

Pre-performance reception to celebrate the opening night of *Carmen*. Gourmet finger foods and wine. Space is limited. Dress is festive.

\$25 per person.

Reserve with payment: 250-382-1641.

#### Monday Masters

Monday, February 20, 7 pm

West Lobby, the Royal Theatre

Observe as Allyson McHardy (*Carmen*) coaches members of the POV chorus. Anna Cal accompanies on piano. Free of charge. *RSVP by noon, February 17 to 250-382-1641 or [rsvp@pov.bc.ca](mailto:rsvp@pov.bc.ca)*

#### CARMEN at the Royal Theatre

February 16, 18, 22, 24, 28, 8 pm

Matinée: Sunday, February 26, 2:30 pm

Pre-performance lobby lecture an hour before curtain

In French with English surtitles

#### DONOR RECOGNITION EVENTS

##### Gold Circle Soirée

Saturday, February 4

6:30 to 9:00 pm, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria

A wine and hors d'oeuvres reception with a private concert by the principal artists of *Carmen*.

*For President's Circle members at the Gold Circle (\$1500) level and above and all Impresario Circle Members. Invitations have been sent by mail.*

##### President's Circle Working

###### Rehearsal

Saturday, February 11, The Royal Theatre

1 pm Coffee and cookies

1:20 pm Discussion with Director Dennis Garnhum & Designer Bretta Gerecke

2 pm Sitzprobe begins

*For President's Circle Members and donors at the Conductor level (\$500). Invitations have been sent by mail.*

PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE & IMPRESARIO CIRCLE SPONSOR



OPENING THE WORLD OF OPERA TO PACIFIC OPERA VICTORIA SUBSCRIBERS JANUARY 2012

# Key Notes



## The Extraordinary Impact of Carmen

This is a true story... A woman was expecting a daughter whom she planned to name Genevieve. But the new baby was such a fiery, black-eyed bundle of attitude that any thought of the name Genevieve went out the window.

Although the mother hadn't paid much attention to opera when she was growing up, Bizet's tale of the factory girl who took no guff from anyone had stuck with her, and she recognized that fierce spirit when she saw it in her daughter. No other name would do for this girl but Carmen.

Now a beautiful, dynamic young woman, this Carmen will be in the audience at the Royal Theatre with her mom, watching the opera that so jolted Paris audiences 137 years ago.

Little did poor Bizet suspect, surveying the shambles of *Carmen's* 1875 première, that his work would become the great operatic blockbuster of all time, its heroine's name a household word. Three months after Carmen first danced onto the stage of the Opéra Comique, the 36-year-old composer died of a heart attack. Within a decade *Carmen* had become one of the world's most performed operas.

In the annals of opera, the première of *Carmen* is one of the better known fiascos. Reasons for its initial failure are many.

For one thing, Bizet was caught up in the Wagner Wars. *Carmen* didn't go far enough for proponents of Wagner's through-composed music dramas and fusion of song, orchestration, drama, and text. Other critics thought *Carmen* was too Wagnerian (and in a France fresh from defeat in the Franco-Prussian war, there was a strong political incentive to condemn anything that smacked of Germanism, making Wagner an easy target). Critic Paul de Saint-Victor complained: *M. Bizet ... belongs to that new sect that believes in vaporizing musical ideas ... For this school*

*of composition, of which Wagner is the high-priest, ... motif is old-fashioned, melody is superannuated; the voice is overpowered by the orchestra, leaving only a feeble echo. ... It is melody that is the design of music. If one takes that away, only educated noise is left.*

Although it's rather stunning that anyone could think this most tuneful of operas lacked melody, it is not surprising that the subject matter was controversial.

When the co-directors of the Opéra Comique, Adolphe de Leuven and Camille de Locle, commissioned Bizet to compose an opera, he chose as a subject Prosper Mérimée's scandalous novel *Carmen*. But at the time, the Opéra Comique specialized in light, sentimental entertainments with spoken dialogue; a show at the Comique came with a certain expectation of wholesome family entertainment.

One of *Carmen's* co-librettists, Ludovic Halévy, recalled de Leuven's take on the matter: *I went to see Leuven and he actually interrupted me after the first sentence. 'Carmen! Mérimée's Carmen! Isn't she killed by her lover? And these bandits, gypsies, and girls working in a cigar factory! At the Opéra-Comique! The family theatre, the theatre of wedding parties ... You'll frighten our audience away. That's impossible.' I insisted and explained to Mr. Leuven*

*that ours was a Carmen, to be sure, but a toned-down, softened Carmen, and that we had actually introduced some characters perfectly in keeping with the style of the opéra-comique, especially a young girl of great chastity and innocence ... And Carmen's death, the inevitable catastrophe at the end, would be sneaked in somehow at the conclusion ...*

*Mr. Leuven acquiesced, but after a prolonged struggle. And when I left his office, he said: 'Please try not to let her die. Death at the Opéra-Comique. That's never happened before, do you hear, never. Don't let her die, I implore you, my dear child.'*

But Bizet insisted on killing off his heroine, and de Leuven resigned in protest. Friction continued during rehearsals. The orchestra found the score difficult. The chorus rebelled at being asked to fight and smoke on stage instead of standing still, eyes fixed on the conductor, in conventional "park and bark" mode.

When the theatre management continued to demand that the work be Disneyfied, the singers playing Carmen and Don José supported Bizet, threatening to resign if changes were made. Management backed down, and the première took place on March 3, 1875.

Although today we might consider the most politically incorrect aspect of *Carmen* to be the bullfighting and the smoking, its lurid realism bewildered and shocked the opening night audience.

With a promiscuous – and unrepentant – heroine and a cast of low-class factory workers, smugglers, and thieves, *Carmen* was seen as sordid and violent. It introduced an unwelcome note of realism to the stage and in fact has been called the first *verismo* opera, pre-dating by 15 years the operas of Mascagni, Leoncavallo, and Puccini that define the gritty *verismo* style.

Despite all the brouhaha, *Carmen* had its early admirers. In 1876 alone, Brahms went to see it some twenty times. Tchaikovsky, himself no slouch at writing a good tune, loved it: within months of the première he was enthusiastically studying the piano-vocal score. On seeing *Carmen* in Paris in January 1876, he was blown away. He later wrote, *Carmen in my view is a chef d'oeuvre ... I am convinced that ten years hence Carmen will be the most popular opera in the world.*

Even someone as persnickety as the über-philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche took time from his fulminating against Wagner to praise Carmen:

*Yesterday I heard – would you believe it? – Bizet's masterpiece, for the twentieth time ... Really, every time I heard Carmen I seemed to myself more of a philosopher, a better philosopher, than I generally consider myself ...*

*The tone of Bizet's orchestra is almost the only one I can endure. That other orchestral tone which is now the fashion: Wagner's ... how harmful for me is this Wagnerian orchestral tone! ... I break out into a disagreeable sweat ...*

*This music seems perfect to me. It approaches lightly, supplely, politely. It is pleasant, it does not sweat ... this music treats the listener as intelligent, as if himself a musician – and is in this respect, too, the opposite of Wagner, who was ... the most impolite genius in the world ... I become a better human being when this Bizet speaks to me. Also a better musician, a better listener.*

Oddly enough, Wagner liked *Carmen* too, declaring: *At last. Someone with new ideas.*

Much later Richard Strauss advised young composers, *If you want to learn how to orchestrate, don't study Wagner's scores, study the score of Carmen. What wonderful economy, and how every note and every rest is in its proper place.*

*Carmen* fulfilled Tchaikovsky's prophecy in spades. Still outrageously popular, it remains a wonder – loved by the public, admired by musicians, embraced by singers (the title role is a boon for mezzo sopranos, who can strut their stuff physically and vocally rather than being relegated to the usual mezzo roles of *witches, bitches, and britches*).

Lucky you, if you are discovering for the first time Bizet's marvelous music and that provocative, headstrong, irresistible girl named Carmen. For those who have experienced the opera many times, how rewarding to listen with fresh ears to this amazing music – the sinuous smoky chorus of the cigarette girls; the sultry Habanera; the surprising little idyll of the entre'acte to Act 3; the soaring anguish of Micaëla's aria *Je dis que rien ne m'épouvante*. The ease, the perfect dramatic inevitability of the music never palls. And Carmen herself is never less than bewitching.

### The Structure

Following the tradition of opéra comique, *Carmen* in its original form combined spoken dialogue, written by Henri Meilhac, with ensembles and arias, the verses of which were written by Ludovic Halévy.

After Bizet's death, his friend Ernest Guiraud wrote recitatives to replace the dialogue and create a grand opera version, which premièred in Vienna in 1875. For decades this has been the version usually performed.

However, many feel that the grand opera version mars the pacing and balance of the work and omits much of the humour and subtlety of the opera. In recent years the dialogue version has been performed more and more, and it is the version Pacific Opera will be using.

### The Story

The opera opens on a square in Seville. Soldiers loiter about, people-watching and waiting for the girls in the cigarette factory to appear. Micaëla shyly approaches, looking for Don José, who is about to come on duty. The factory girls come out for a smoke break; among them is the gypsy Carmen, who entertains the men

with a sultry habanera. Don José pays no attention to her. Carmen tosses a flower at him, and the girls return to work.

Micaëla brings Don José a letter from his mother; Don José, who has fled his village after killing a man, is grateful that his mother has forgiven him and resolves to follow her advice and marry Micaëla – but he is already bewitched by Carmen.

A commotion breaks out in the factory. Carmen is accused of wounding one of the other girls and placed in Don José's custody. She flirts with him until he allows her to escape – for which crime he is sentenced to jail.

A month later, the gypsy girls and soldiers are at a tavern when the famous toreador Escamillo makes a grand entrance. He greets Carmen with surely the best pickup line in opera ... *Tell me your name, and the next time I kill a bull, yours will be the name that I say.* Carmen tells him that for the moment she is not available.

Two gypsy smugglers, Le Dancaïre and Le Remendado, ask Carmen and her friends, Frasquita and Mercédès, to join them in the mountains to help with a job. But Carmen wants to be with Don José, who has been released from jail. When Carmen urges Don José to desert the army and come to the mountains with her, he is torn, but says no. When his Lieutenant, Zuniga, arrives looking for Carmen, Don José jealously attacks him. The smugglers break up the fight, but Don José now has no choice. He must leave town with the smugglers and Carmen.

Before long Carmen tires of Don José's possessiveness. When Escamillo shows up at the smugglers' camp, confident that Carmen is now ready to become his lover, Don José picks a fight with him. Micaëla arrives to take Don José to his dying mother. As he departs, Don José promises Carmen they'll see one another again.

The day of Escamillo's great bullfight, the Seville crowd cheers as he arrives with Carmen by his side. Don José accosts Carmen and begs her to leave with him. When she tells him that Escamillo is now the one she loves, Don José stabs her to death.

*A man meets a woman. He finds her pretty. That's the first act. He loves her, she loves him. That's the second act. She doesn't love him anymore. That's the third act. He kills her. That's the fourth!*

*And you call that a play? It's a crime, do you hear me, a crime!*

Jean Henri Dupin to librettist Henri Meilhac the day after the première of *Carmen*

## FURTHER LEARNING ABOUT CARMEN

For musical excerpts, links, and more about the opera and artists, visit [www.pov.bc.ca](http://www.pov.bc.ca)

## Resident Artist Program

The cast of *Carmen* includes a quintet of rising young Canadian singers who are participating in POV's **Resident Artist Program**, our flagship artist training program.

Offering mainstage roles, performances, music coaching, and recording sessions, the program provides advanced training and performance opportunities to rising young professionals.

Past alumni of the program include Michèle Losier, who has been singing at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, the Salzburg Festival, the Metropolitan Opera, and Opera Australia; Lucia Cesaroni, who returned in 2009 for a wonderful performance as Anne Trulove in *The Rake's Progress*, and Betty Wayne Allison, who returned for the title role in our world première of *Mary's Wedding*.

This season's Resident Artists will be performing in free outreach concerts in Sidney and Nanaimo (which are now fully booked). They will also sing at the gala celebration of Eric Charman's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday on March 4<sup>th</sup> and, of course, in *Carmen*.

Baritone **Dominique Côté** (Sergeant Moralès) is a graduate of l'Atelier Lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal. He recently debuted at l'Opéra de Marseille in Offenbach's *La belle Hélène*. He has appeared on several French tv series and has been the voice of several cartoon characters.

Tenor **Riccardo Iannello** (the smuggler Le Remendado) is a graduate of the University of Toronto and the New England Conservatory of Music. He has performed at the Banff Centre and l'Opéra de Montréal in such roles as Tito in *La Clemenza di Tito*, Monostatos in *Die Zauberflöte*, and Don José in the adaptation *The Tragedy of Carmen*.

Baritone **Andrew Love** (the smuggler Le Dancaïre) has performed with Calgary Opera, Opera Hamilton, Saskatoon Opera, Highlands Opera Studio, Cowtown Opera Company, and at Avery Fisher Hall in the U.S. premiere of John Burge's *Mass for Prisoners of Conscience*.

As a cover at Glyndebourne for the past three summers, soprano **Miriam Khalil** (the gypsy Frasquita) stepped in for two performances – as Cleopatra in Handel's *Giulio Cesare* and Almirena in *Rinaldo*. Further credits include Mimi in *La Bohème* with Opera Hamilton, Musetta with Edmonton Opera, and Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro* with Opera Lyra Ottawa,

A graduate of the Manhattan School of Music and UBC, **Sylvia Szadovszki** (Mercédès) has performed in the Czech Republic, Italy, New York, Florida, Washington, and across Canada. Sylvia was a Northwest Region Finalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and was selected as a laureate of the Jeunes Ambassadeurs Lyriques in 2011.

## The Artists



POV's Founding Artistic Director, **Timothy Vernon** conducts the **Victoria Symphony** in this production. A recipient of the Order of Canada and Opera Canada's Ruby Award as Opera Builder, Timothy continues to bring to POV a unique vision that has engaged the community and made the company a nationally recognized symbol of artistic excitement and vitality.



Acclaimed mezzo soprano **Allyson McHardy** made her POV debut as Fenena in *Nabucco* in 2001. In a delightful coincidence, she joins us for her very first **Carmen** fresh from her debut at l'Opéra Comique – the very company that presented *Carmen's* controversial 1875 première! She has performed across Canada and internationally with such companies as l'Opéra National de Paris, Glyndebourne, New York City Opera, San Francisco Opera, and Chicago Opera Theater.



Tenor **Eric Fennell (Don José)** has sung six seasons and 13 roles with New York City Opera, including Rodolfo in *La Bohème* and Alfredo in *La traviata*. He has performed with opera companies and orchestras across the US, including Dallas Opera, San Francisco Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, Seattle Opera, and Washington Concert Opera. He has previously sung Don José for Arizona Opera. We welcome him in his POV debut.



Also making her POV debut is soprano **Leslie Ann Bradley** as **Micaëla**. A graduate of the University of Toronto's Opera Division and a winner in the New England Metropolitan Opera competition, she attended Tanglewood and the Académie Internationale de musique Maurice Ravel in France. She has appeared with symphonies across Canada, on BRAVO television, and with Saskatoon Opera and Opéra de Montréal.



Baritone **Étienne Dupuis** makes his POV debut as the bullfighter **Escamillo**. An alumnus of l'Atelier Lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal, he has performed across Canada and in Europe, including engagements with l'Opéra de Montréal, Hawaii Opera Theater, New Israeli Opera, l'Opéra de Marseille, l'Opéra de Paris, Monte-Carlo Opera, and Berlin Deutsche Oper.



Baritone **Andrew Greenwood** returns in the role of **Zuniga**. An old friend of POV, he has appeared as Monterone (*Rigoletto*), King Alonso (*The Tempest*), Douchol (*La traviata*), and the doctor (*Vanessa*), and was the cover for Flowerdew in *Mary's Wedding*. Employed as a full-time firefighter with the City of Vancouver, Andrew has performed in Germany, Spain, the Czech Republic, and Switzerland.



**Director Dennis Garnhum** made his POV debut and his professional opera directing debut with our 2009 production of *La traviata*. Dennis is currently Artistic Director of Theatre Calgary and has directed in New York and for most major theatre companies in Canada, including the Stratford Festival, the Shaw Festival, Tarragon Theatre, Neptune Theatre, and the Belfry Theatre. His concert versions of *Beethoven Lives Upstairs* and *Hallelujah Handel* have toured across North America.



New to POV is award winning **Set and Costume Designer Bretta Gerecke**. Resident designer of Edmonton's Catalyst Theatre, Bretta has also worked with the Citadel Theatre, Canadian Stage, Edmonton Opera, the Globe Theatre, and Calgary Opera. She has won 10 Elizabeth Sterling Haynes Awards and an Enbridge Award for best emerging artist. In 2007 she was nominated for the Siminovitch Prize in Theatre.

Also performing in *Carmen* are the **POV Chorus**, directed by Chorus Master **Giuseppe Pietrarola**, and the **Victoria Children's Choir**, directed by **Madeleine Humer**.