

Carmen: a preface to the vocal score

by Richard Langham Smith

URTEXT IN CONTEXT

Why a new edition of *Carmen*, an opera that has surely suffered the fate of its eponymous heroine: it has been done to death? In short, the present edition takes a different slant from other *Urtexts* primarily because it aims to capture the idea of the opera as a staged spectacle as well as that of a musical text: hence its designation as a 'Performance Urtext'. Notwithstanding this dual purpose, its approach to the musical text remains founded on the 'Urtextual' principles largely established by German editions of the mid- and late-twentieth century, not least by the Urtext publications of Peters Edition, in this case its London operation which has provided the fundamental impetus for producing this new edition.

Yet at the root of these German Urtexts is the notion of somehow carrying forward the 'pure blue flame' of composer-intention as set down in a final manuscript, or a submitted and proof-read score. Against this notion, however, a fundamental question must be asked: is Opera really like that? In the mounting of an operatic performance, many more people are involved than in the performance of a symphony: the scene-painters; the costume designers; the lighting crew and above all the director, *metteur-en-scène* or in the case of French opera, the all-important role of the *régisseur*. There was also the complex infrastructure behind, as it was then (and now): those responsible for the finances; for drumming up press attendance and audiences; producing the programmes and in France particularly, ensuring that the catering is up to scratch and that the restaurants around the venue are ready to serve the pre-performance *entrée*, the main course in the first interval, and the dessert in the second. Opera is a team effort.

If the lack of this wider context is a shortcoming which has pervaded many Germanic Urtexts since their inception: their ignoring—and ignorance—of historical Performance Practices is surely another. While early on they established the principle of presenting the various sources, they frequently tell their audience little, if anything, about the performance of the works they contain. This was true, for example, of the Breitkopf Bach *Urtext* of the French and English Suites in the *Clavierwerke* (1881), where the sources were listed and given sigla: a pseudo-scientific procedure followed by almost every *Urtext* since, including the present edition.¹ The scores themselves were frequently covered with a host of anachronistic performance directions and tempos which were totally at odds with the characters of the dance movements even in the limited knowledge of such things as they were known then. This curious rift between a scientific presentation of sources and an eschewing of performance knowledge lasted through the twentieth century and can still be perceived in present-day publications. It is a rift which the present edition above all aims to bridge.

Its continuance may be noticed in Fritz Oeser's 1960s Alkor/Bärenreiter edition of *Carmen*, to be discussed in some detail later in this preface. This somewhat blandly calls

¹ Bach: Keyboard Suites, *Clavierwerke* ed. Hans Bischoff, Breitkopf & Härtel, Berlin, 1881

itself a ‘Critical New Edition after the sources’ (‘Kritische Neuauflage nach den Quellen’) and like the old Breitkopf Bach editions cited as a model for subsequent Urtexts, it silently modernises many features of the original orchestration and the vocal distribution. Just as the early Bach editions told us nothing about the nature of a Sarabande or a Louré, Oeser’s *Carmen* edition has nothing to say about either a Pasodoble, a Habanera or a Polo. The present edition is based on a conviction that such things should be right there on the score.

All this is not to underestimate the importance of those established ‘Urtextual principles’, but the way they are applied is of paramount importance. These days, issues of historically informed performance must be borne in mind. While providing a score which retains, for example, the *cornets à pistons*, the present edition restores the horns to their original transpositions—both features obliterated, incidentally, by Oeser’s orchestral score. Perhaps in the 1960s it could not be envisaged that within fifty years the historical performance movement would have extended its territories as far as Bizet, and even beyond, as far as Stravinsky and Poulenc. The rare, first-published vocal score corrected by the composer himself, has provided some significant details in the vocal parts.

THE PERFORMANCE URTEXT

Apart from the musical text, the present edition also highlights many aspects of the spectacle as it evolved through the first stagings: not a static, but a developing show.² It is founded on the belief that the original staging strategy and the music are worth drawing together, providing a basis for reconstructing this opéra-comique as it was originally done (and as it changed a bit) in its first run. It takes the view that the best editors of *Carmen* were its authors Georges Bizet and Ludovic Halévy who were present during the rehearsals and early performances of this first run at the Opéra-Comique where it was first given on 3rd March 1875. To present information about the staging, scenery and costume, this edition interrogates materials from various staging books (‘mises-en-scène’ and ‘livrets de mise-en-scène’) now in the collection of the *Association de la Régie théâtrale*³ alongside varying performance-indications in the musical sources themselves (for example, stage-directions, and ‘mood-words’ attached to the vocal parts of the principal characters). These are the sources which bring us closest to the original spectacle.

Note the avoidance of the word ‘production’ in the above commentary. ‘Production’, in the present-day sense of a ‘concept’ involving elements which were not in the original staging: for example a new setting—changes in time or place—or the reinterpretation of characters, were unimaginable in presentations of French operas in Bizet’s day. Thus, for the vocabulary describing the process of putting the opera on stage, the original French terms may provide the best framework: behind the whole production there was a *régisseur*, and the *responsable* for putting the work on stage was the *metteur-en-scène*.

The importance of the *régisseur* in the mounting of French operas has already been mentioned, as well as the dossier on *Carmen* in the collection of its association.⁴ An entry on the role in the *Grand Dictionnaire Larousse* details the responsibilities of this appointment as a co-ordinator of everyone concerned with the mounting of a staged spectacle. The anonymous author first points out that there are habitually three *régisseurs*

² See list of URLs for a link to an online scan of this source.

³ This is held by the Bibliothèque Historique de la ville de Paris, (BHVP).

⁴ Although the association was not founded until 1911, its rich collection contains materials from well back into the nineteenth century. For a history of the association, and on the role of the *régisseur* see: Françoise Pélisson-Karro : *L’Association des régisseurs de théâtre 1911–1939*, Villeneuve d’Ascq, 2014. For details of the materials on *Carmen* see H. R. Cohen and M.-O. Gigou : *Cent ans de Mise en scène lyrique en France (env. 1830–1930)*, New York, 1986

in any theatre: the *régisseur général*; the *régisseur chargé de la mise en scène*, known as the *metteur en scène*, and a *sous-régisseur*, popularly known as the *régisseur des bouts de la chandelle* (meaning the *régisseur* with responsibility for all the menial tasks).

After stressing how the tasks of the *régisseur général* are often misunderstood and underestimated, the article lists the important tasks of this ‘alter ego’ to the overall director of the theatre who essentially has to be consulted on all matters.

[He] organises in collaboration with the Director [of the theatre] and the authors, the cast of all new works; he is responsible for modification to the spectacles when obstacles occur; he decides when runs will be terminated; [he deals with] the indisposition or refusal of actors to perform this or that work; maintains relations with the censors and the Ministry, and it is he who supervises all rehearsals and ensures that performances are up to standard. [...]

The *régisseur* responsible for the *mise-en-scène* (or the *metteur en scène*) has special responsibilities. While the *régisseur général* exerts authority over the entire theatre and all the staff [...] the *metteur en scène* has sole charge over the stage on which the spectacle is to be mounted and on this stage his authority is complete and absolute. It is he who puts the works on stage, it is he who oversees the work as it progresses and guides the rehearsals, taking charge of the changes of scene, indicating to each actor the his or her exact position on the stage, the door or part of the stage by which he should enter or exit, how the chorus should be grouped and how the non-speaking characters and extras should place themselves. It is he who, through his talents, is ultimately responsible for the good performance of the pieces and for their successful interpretation. You can see that his is no light task.⁵

EDITORIAL PRINCIPLES

To understand the complexities of editing *Carmen* one essential fact needs to be reiterated at the outset: the death of the composer on 3rd June 1875, exactly three months after its premiere. Here is not the place to go into the controversies about why Bizet died at such an early age: he was thirty six. Suffice to remark that the early biographies which claimed that he died of a broken heart at the ‘failure’ of *Carmen* were entirely off the mark. His death was in fact the result of swimming in the Seine at Bougival—now a suburb of Paris but then a country town outside—after a period of illness.⁶ Added to this

⁵ Pierre Larousse : Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX^e siècle, Paris 1875, entry on ‘Régisseur’. ‘Le régisseur général organise, avec le directeur et les auteurs, la distribution des pièces nouvelles ; c’est lui qui d’ordinaire arrête le répertoire modifie les spectacles selon tel ou tel empêchement, l’indisposition ou le refus de tel ou tel acteur vient s’opposer à la représentation de tel ou tel ouvrage ; c’est lui qui reçoit toutes les réclamations relatives au service intérieur du théâtre et qui en tient compte ; c’est lui qui entretient les relations avec le ministère et avec la commission de censure ; c’est lui qui surveille les répétitions, organise tout le travail et, le soir, surveille aussi le spectacle pour voir si tout va bien. Le régisseur chargé de la mise en scène qui reçoit souvent le nom de *metteur en scène*, assume des fonctions toutes spéciales. Tandis que l’autorité du *régisseur général* s’exerce en tout temps sur l’ensemble du théâtre, sur tout le personnel, et qu’il a tous les chefs de service sous ses ordres immédiats, le metteur en scène voit la sienne circonscrite sur le plancher même de la scène, mais là elle est complète et absolue. C’est le metteur en scène qui monte les ouvrages, c’est-à-dire qui en surveille et en guide les études, qui en règle la marche scénique, qui indique à chaque acteur la place qu’il doit occuper, la porte ou le coté du théâtre par lequel il doit faire telle entrée ou telle sortie, qui groupe les masses de choristes, des figurants et des comparses, qui donne aux artistes les conseils, les indications, les avis dont ceux-ci peuvent avoir besoin ; c’est enfin à lui, à son talent, que l’on est redevable de la bonne exécution des ouvrages, de leur heureuse interprétation. On voit que tout cela ne constitue pas une mince besogne.’

⁶ Various sources indicate angina, breathing difficulties, palpitations and a rheumatism which increasingly affected his mobility. Ernest Guiraud also reported that on the eve of what was to be his last departure to

tragedy, for any editor interested in the evolution of the opera, was the destruction of any records of its rehearsal period by its main librettist Ludovic Halévy who, although he kept daily diaries, saw fit to tear out or obliterate any details of the rehearsal period of the opera in these for reasons still unknown.⁷

Out of a welter of extant materials (see Table 1, p. 000), four principal sources have been drawn upon for the present edition, whose primary aim is to produce an *Urtext* reflecting the first performances. Supreme among these is the first edition of the vocal score (*piano-chant*) published by Choudens at the time of the first performance.⁸ The few surviving pages with added markings in Bizet's hand suggest that he carefully corrected the proofs of this, and this vocal score was the musical text used by the singers in the first Opéra-Comique performances.⁹ It contains invaluable metronome marks and is the main source used for details of the vocal parts. It does not tally exactly with either the original manuscript orchestral parts (the *matériel*), nor with the two manuscript orchestral scores both of which contained music for the melodramas, where dialogue was spoken over music whereas the Vocal Scores do not contain these.

As was contemporary practice for opéras-comiques with their essential blend of speech and sung numbers, the scores omitted the spoken material, retaining only a cue, (marked with 'rép', an abbreviation for 'réplique') printed at the beginning of each musical number. For the full text, the printed libretto—the second major source—must be read alongside. Dating from roughly the same time, this *livret* was published by a literary rather than a musical publisher who participated in substantial rights if the work proved successful.¹⁰

On account of its aim as a 'performance Urtext', the present edition favours the manuscript (but not autograph) conducting score used for many years for the Opéra-Comique productions in conjunction with the set of manuscript orchestral parts derived

the country home at Bougival, 27 May, Bizet had gone deaf in one ear and that he 'was no longer the friend full of lifeblood and youth' and that he had 'a striking unhealthy and suffering air about him' (ce n'était plus Bizet, l'ami plein de sève et de jeunesse que j'avais toujours connu ; il avait en ce moment un air maladif, un aspect souffreteux qui m'impressionna). These accounts are taken from Pigot, the closest biography to Bizet's death: Charles Pigot: *Bizet et son œuvre*, Paris, Dentu, 1886, (2nd edition, Paris, Delagrave, 1911). After bathing in the Seine on 29 May, Bizet's rheumatism, which had temporarily ameliorated, returned acutely, accompanied by a fever. Again he recovered somewhat, only to suffer another attack on 2 June: this time mortal. Halévy noted in his *Journal* that Bizet died at one o'clock in the morning on 3 June.

⁷ For detail on Halévy's destruction of materials pertinent to the creation of *Carmen* see Rémy Stricker: *Georges Bizet*, Paris, Gallimard, 1999. Particularly Chapter 9 'Carmen sur le vif', p. 217 et seq.

⁸ Allocated the sigla **ChPC1** in the present edition, this is the undated vocal score announced in the Paris revue *La Ménestrel* on 14th March 1875. Its accession date at the Bibliothèque Nationale was 18th March. Both dates suggest that the score was not ready for sale at the time of the premiere on 3rd March. Some twenty pages of the proofs for this score are extant in the collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Rés. 2694). The majority of the page-plates for this edition were re-used for the second edition, (**ChPC2**) in which the recitatives by Guiraud were incorporated, necessitating some page replacements and renumbering. For further details see Hugh Macdonald's online catalogue of Bizet's works <http://digital.wustl.edu/bizet/ref/>. For online access to the complete score see <http://imslp.org/>. See also the Table of Sources, Figure 1 p. 000.

⁹ *Carmen* : Partition chant et piano. Fragments d'épreuves corrigées par l'auteur. *Pn* (Musique). Fonds du conservatoire Rés 2694.

¹⁰ Allocated the sigla **L** in the present edition, this is the first edition of the libretto entitled 'Carmen, Opéra-Comique en quatre actes tiré de la nouvelle de Prosper Mérimée par Henry Meilhac et Ludovic Halévy. Musique de Georges Bizet. Mise-en-scène de M. Charles Ponchard, Paris, Michel Lévy Frères, Éditeurs. 1875.

from it—the performing ‘matériel’.¹¹ These sources tell us what was done and, if the original layers are separated from subsequent accretions, what was therefore approved (and improved) by Bizet as rehearsals developed and as the final staged opera took shape.

Also consulted for detail — of course — is what remains of Bizet’s autograph score, in a sorry state because it has been mercilessly adapted for later performances which cut out the opéra-comique dialogue in favour of the recitatives composed by Bizet’s friend Ernest Guiraud. These were bound into the manuscript which emerges as a curiously hybrid source whose first layer represents Bizet’s first intentions but which in its altered form represents a version which leapfrogs the opéra-comique rendering and represents the fully ‘operatic’ version in which the present edition has only a little interest.¹² Its state of deterioration suggests that it was for a long time used as a conducting score.¹³

Unique to the present edition, and last but not least, are two production sources preserved in the collection of the *Association de la Régie théâtrale*. Since the printed preface to the present edition was written, it has been discovered that only one of these sources is clearly from the time of the first production: the printed *Mise-en-scène* itself. This source illuminates in some detail the action of the opera as it was done during its first run and provides some delicious production effects. In one case—that of the *Scène de l’anglais* (no. 00 in Act I)—it is the sole source which tells us what this particular scene is all about.¹⁴

¹¹ Allocated the sigla **B** in the present edition, this score is entitled the ‘Grande Partition’ and was clearly the working score used at the Opéra-Comique for many years. Bound in three volumes it was housed in Po at the time of consultation and is allocated the call-mark Rés. 2222. It is catalogued under the title ‘Partition ayant servi à la première représentation’. It contains many ossia and other remarks added to the original layer which is in the hand of a professional copyist. The manuscript orchestral parts deriving from this score are assigned the sigla **C** and are catalogued under the call-mark F. 221. The later printed parts are allocated the call-mark F. 310.

¹² It was not transferred to the Paris Opéra until 10th November 1959 when the performance was succinctly described by one of Bizet’s major (and most amusing) biographers in the following terms: ‘... with the solemnity of an act of national policy, *Carmen* was translated to the Opéra in a bloated and spectacular production involving an enormous cast, human and animal (horses, donkeys, dogs and a monkey), most of Guiraud’s recitatives and the attendance of President Charles de Gaulle.

¹³ Allocated the sigla **A** in the present edition, this first manuscript score has been considerably tampered with. Firstly the first 26 pages have been replaced in a copyist’s hand, presumably because the score had deteriorated through use, inserted into the pages in Bizet’s hand which remain are 68 pages in Guiraud’s hand, inserting the recitatives he added for performance outside the Opéra-Comique. The complete score is now accessible through Gallica, the online resource of the Bibliothèque nationale de France. (Gallica.bnf.fr)

¹⁴ These two sources are in the collection of the Association de la Régie Théâtrale housed in the Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris and described in some detail in H. Robert Cohen and Marie-Odile Gigou: *Cent ans de Mise en scène lyrique en France 1830–1930*, New York, Pendragon Press, 1986 and in Evan Baker: ‘The Scene Designs for the First Performance of Bizet’s *Carmen*, *19th Century Music*, 1990 pp. 230–242. The old reference mark of the reproduced *Mise-en-scène*, as in the collection of the A.R.T., was **ART C27 IV** but in a recent recataloguing, the call-mark is now 4 TMS 03741 (Rés). The collection also contains two manuscript copies of this (C27 III and C27 V respectively —now 4 TMS 03740 and 8 TMS 02793). The printed version reproduces the 26 pages of manuscript very clearly and it is bound with an ornate cover indicating that it was printed by the impr. Arouy. A reproduction of this cover can be found in the present edition of the Vocal Score, Plate 2 on page xxxi. Further reproductions can be found in Baker’s article cited above. A second source, previously thought to have been a recopied version of a ‘livret de mise-en-scène’ dating from the time of the first staging, may now be dated to 1938. It does, however distinguish between a staging which does not tally with the details of the original, but rather with the second Vocal Score (with the Guiraud recitatives), and sections in red ink which purport to describe the details of an ‘ancienne mise-en-scène’. This includes the abandoned pantomime from Act I which it indicates as the ‘Scène de l’anglais’. Despite the late date of its copying—clearly by a professional copyist—it is possible, though not certain, that it may refer to the original staging since it the only source, apart from the *Mise-en-scène* itself, to detail the actions of the abandoned ‘Scène de l’anglais’. It consists of a notebook in which detached pages from the libretto (source **L**) have been interleaved with diagrams and elucidations about the staging. This format, which contains far more detailed instructions and diagrams of stage-

CARMEN TEXTS AND URTEXTS

Justification for the theatrical emphasis of the present edition leads us into philosophical questions about the nature of opera, and of the so-called Urtext in relation to opera in general: what should a score represent; the Music only, or some sense of the original staging, before there was any concept of a ‘production’? These are questions which will be returned to later but prior to this it is perhaps useful to position the present approach within the three broad types of edition to which *Carmen* has been subjected.

1. OPÉRA-COMIQUE EDITIONS

The only modern edition which solely follows the Opéra-Comique version, eschewing Guiraud’s recitatives, is by Robert Didion.¹⁵ This restores the dialogue by combining the published libretto with the first published piano vocal score, and in its orchestral version, material from the two orchestral manuscripts and the manuscript parts, especially the melodramas. Its principal language is French with German underlay underneath. Didion’s aims are clearly stated in his preface to the Vocal Score:

The aim of this new edition [...] is to present a correct text of the work, corresponding to the state of completion at which the work had arrived during its first staging: the only state at which it was sanctioned by the authors, that is to the composer and the librettists. This text is confirmed in the manuscript sources and above all in the editions printed under the control of the authors: the libretto and the first vocal score.¹⁶

These are the admirable aims: the only quibble that could be raised is his use of the word ‘correct’. What is a ‘correct’ text, in terms of an opera? His use of the word ‘arrived’ also allies his approach to a common principle of twentieth-century scholarly editions: that of allegiance to a composer’s ‘last thoughts’, the *Fassung letzter Hand*. Winton Dean raised this issue in his previously cited criticisms of the Oeser edition. Can it really be asserted that suddenly at the moment of Bizet’s death, the ‘true’ *Carmen* was at once set in stone? On the other hand, Dean’s objections stressing the editor’s need to ‘determine the composer’s intentions and wishes on every point’—a cornerstone of modern ‘scholarly’ editing—require some qualification in the case of *Carmen*.

2. OPERATIC EDITIONS

These are versions which expunge spoken dialogue, and reference to the printed libretto, in favour of Ernest Guiraud’s recitatives. The first Choudens fully-operatic edition includes both Guiraud’s récits and the cues, whether out of laziness or because it

movements, is known as a ‘livret de mise-en-scène’ to distinguish it from the prose mise-en-scène. It was originally the first item in the *Carmen* dossier in the A.R.T.—another factor suggesting an early dating—with the old reference mark **ART C27 I**, now updated to 4TMS 03738. A copy exists, less securely bound and without the cover page of the libretto at **ART C27 II**, updated to 4 TMS 03739. For what it is worth, my view of this source is that is the only document which, though recopied at a far later date, containing the original staging of the abandoned Act I Scène et Pantomime. I have found no evidence that this scene was ever revived between its abandonment in the immediate wake of Bizet’s death and the date that this document was recopied.

¹⁵ See list of sources for details.

¹⁶ L’objectif de cette nouvelle édition de *Carmen* est de présenter un texte correct de l’œuvre, correspondant au stade d’achèvement auquel l’opéra est parvenu au cours de sa première mise à l’épreuve sur scène, et la seule sanctionnée par les auteurs, à savoir le compositeur et les librettistes. Ce texte est attesté dans les sources manuscrites et, surtout, dans les éditions imprimées parues sous le contrôle des auteurs : le livret et la partition chant et piano.

was considered apt to include the *répliques* to the Opéra-Comique version is unclear.¹⁷ Whatever the case, it represents the fully operatic version in Ernest Guiraud's adaptation which was completed by September 1875 and made ready for export in a vocal score (**ChPC2**) in which Guiraud's recitatives made the Opéra-Comique spoken text redundant. This was followed by an expanded (and it might be said corrupted) orchestral score where several cuts were also made as well as some modifications to Bizet's orchestration.¹⁸ Most importantly, added in this orchestral score was a ballet formed of music from *L'Arlesienne* and *La jolie Fille de Perth*: a commercially opportunist reworking which catered to houses which eschewed spoken dialogue but demanded ballet. There is little doubt that Bizet might have carried out such a task himself, had he survived, because the traditions of the Paris Opéra-Comique which demanded an alternation of spoken drama and musical numbers, were not suitable for the international operatic world. Whether he would have made alterations to his orchestration is doubtful but what he would have done about the ballet demanded by many opera houses is tantalising to muse upon.¹⁹ We can be sure that he would not have re-used music from previous works, as Guiraud did, but it can be imagined that he would have done a Spanish ballet very well. After all, Act II is shot through with dance, particularly in the 'Chanson bohème', a gypsy tableau where, already in the first production, a flamenco dancer had been employed. In later productions still more flamenco dancers were used.

3. COMPOSITE EDITIONS

A third category of edition tries to present both the Opéra-Comique version and the fully operatic version in one printing. Several popular twentieth-century editions attempt to do this to some extent,²⁰ but most notable is Fritz Oeser's previously mentioned Bärenreiter edition, its attendant vocal score and its separate Critical Commentary which contains all kinds of discarded passages, going under the title of a *Vorlagsbericht*.²¹ In many ways it is an admirable piece of scholarly work, unparalleled one might say. But for the performer it leaves too much to the interpreters to decide—a 'do-it-yourself' edition—which is not to my mind what an edition should be. It loses credibility on several counts, not least because it highlights a German translation with the original French given as secondary, but despite this, it is at once the most impressive, the most controversial and the most unperformable of modern scholarly editions and is a useful yardstick by which to measure other approaches, not least because of the reflection his edition provoked, above all from the Bizet scholar Winton Dean.²²

One might have forgiven Oeser in 1964 for failing to anticipate the historical performance tradition: he transposes all the horns into F, entirely masking the purposeful use of different crooks which Bizet so carefully and skilfully thought out, as well as the use of stopped and open notes for appropriate timbre. Similarly, he modernised the *cornets à pistons* by assigning them to B flat trumpets. In addition, the convention of a

¹⁷ Given the sigla ChPC2 in the present edition, this edition is readily distinguishable from the first edition—and far more common—as it contains 363 pages as opposed to the 351 of the Opéra-Comique edition.

¹⁸ This has been given the sigla ChOS in the present edition.

¹⁹ According to Dean, there is an undated letter from Henri Meilhac to Bizet's wife Geneviève announcing that the Opéra wished to take over *Carmen* implying that the composer had no objection. Winton Dean: *Bizet, The Master Musicians*, London 1948, revised 1978 p. 222.

²⁰ For example, the Cramer edition (in English) with the translation by Herman Klein and Henry Hersee, copyrighted in 1913 and altered in several subsequent editions.

²¹ It is under the imprint of Alkor-edition, a subsidiary of Bärenreiter.

²² Winton Dean: 'The true *Carmen*' *Musical Times*, November 1965, pp. 846–855, reprinted in amended form in Winton Dean: *Essays on Opera*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990, pp. 281–300.

chorus with 1st and 2nd Sopranos, whatever their tessitura, has been brought into line with Northern European convention by converting the Second Sopranos into Altos: an important point in terms of timbre for the SATB chorus was not the norm on the nineteenth-century operatic stage in France. In *Carmen*, in particular, Bizet favours a chorus whose two *dessus*—and also the tenors—favour a high tessitura and thus produce a deliberately bright sound.

Dean, who was one of Oeser's most detailed and virulent critics, to my mind does not always chastise him for the right reasons. For example, he admonishes him for getting the distribution of Carmen and her accomplices' parts (Frasquita and Mercedes) 'wrong', basing his argument on written sources. Here more modern scholarship may part company from Dean for it seems, from comparing these various sources, that there were several possibilities ultimately dictated by the statutes—or what we might nowadays call the 'mission-statements' of the Opéra-Comique, one of whose imperatives was to provide a platform for young French singers. The parts of Carmen's accomplices were nicely interchangeable as secondary display-roles: one approach would have been to share the display passages between two sopranos of equal tessitura, another would have been to allot the high display passages to the singer who could do them best. The disparities between the different scores suggest these possibilities: pragmatism in response to the sopranos available. 'Right' and 'wrong' don't really come into it: opera (and particularly *le donne*) are *mobile*.

Similarly the 'last thoughts' approach is too rigid when it comes to opera: perhaps even the concept of an Urtext is fundamentally unsuited to the nature of opera which is a continually evolving process where, especially in first runs, improvements are made as the work is put to the test. Certainly that's what Bizet did at rehearsals as is clear from alterations to the original manuscript parts, particularly in his several attempts at repositioning the eventually abandoned Act I 'Scène et Pantomime'. Unlike a symphonic score, the relationship between staging and music may necessitate changes: a point of which, as a seasoned operatic composer—if not a terribly successful one—Bizet would have been fully aware. Second, the view that somehow composer-intention is crystallised at the point of death is perhaps a somewhat romantic view. Bizet's overriding wish was surely that *Carmen* should succeed, not least to make him a lot of money.²³ He would doubtless have expected tightenings to have been made, and perhaps a few bars repeated here and there. To search for an *Urtext* by damming the ever-flowing stream of an opera's evolution is surely absurd and to isolate the composer's death as a turning point over-privileges his status amongst the three collaborators. Although nowadays we tend to speak of the composer first in relation to an opera, this has not always been the case: sometimes the librettists' names preceded that of the composer, for example on posters—in this respect *Carmen* was no exception. (See Fig. 000). More important—and here we must again lament the destruction of Halévy's evidently copious chronicle of the rehearsal process of the opera—the librettists were on hand to advise. Changes for the better were clearly made, and the recopied *Livret de mise en scène*—whatever its date—which refers back to an 'original version' from which the mature production evolved, gives some insight into this process.

Oeser is also attacked by Dean for including music which may not have been by Bizet—although this is not proven—particularly the long orchestral section which

²³ He was not well off, and an injection of cash might have spared him from receiving an endless stream of pupils during the day, while (if we are to believe Mario Bois's dramatised version of his daily life) his wife Geneviève had sex with a plumber in the kitchen. See Mario Bois: *Comment Carmen tua Bizet*, Séguier, Paris, 2013, p. 17. The biography of Mina Curtiss goes into detail about Bizet's financial struggles. (See bibliography).

follows the throwing of the flower which Dean considers ‘Wagnerian’: some might disagree. Overall, Oeser’s fundamental mistake was to provide too much choice, and too much music which Bizet clearly replaced. Essentially he relinquishes his own responsibility as an editor in favour of giving the inexperienced interpreter free rein. Whoever uses his edition will need to choose a route through; to make legion cuts; and have a large box of paperclips to hand, most likely making a version which had nothing to do with any of the original performances let alone with any notion of composer-intention, rather defeating all the pretence at any notion of authenticity or of the rigorous musicology which the presentation of Oeser’s edition seems to exude, resting on the laurels of German ‘Urtextuality’ going back to the early aforementioned Bach example.

THE PRESENT EDITION

The present edition falls unequivocally within the first abovementioned category, aiming to present a critical text of the opera which places it back within the conventions of the first run at the Opéra-Comique, and mostly discarding Guiraud’s recitatives. There is one notable exception: just one element of the operatic version has been borrowed for the present edition. This is Guiraud’s recitative for Micaëla when she braves the mountains in Act III. This was adopted at the Opéra-Comique, probably in the 1883 revival, and has been included as an option, not least because it has some advantages, speeding up the overall trajectory which moves from an alternation of music and speech to a goal-oriented projection of the drama through seamless, unencumbered music.²⁴

By including some of the production details of the first two runs the present edition hopes to have lifted the curtain on one or two of the opera’s mysteries and revealed some hitherto forgotten meanings, germane to what the opera is. In short, the present edition is founded on the belief that the early production of a stage work *may* contain elements immanent in the opera itself which are preserved in neither scores or librettos. To sum up, the main production source to have enriched the present edition is the earliest *mise-en-scène* which outlined the movements used in the first production and was hired to opera-houses throughout the world so that the staging could be replicated.

As has been pointed out, ‘Production’, as we know it, had not yet evolved as a concept, so there is a case to be made for asserting that the staging was a part of this intangible thing we call the ‘opera’. Moving from the borders of philosophical debates about the ontology of opera to more vivid examples, several of the features of the first stagings tell us something about *Carmen* found nowhere else.

THE CAST

The preferred source for the vocal parts is the first vocal score. A character soon eliminated was a soldier called Andrès who is present in what is left of Bizet’s MS score, and also in the working score used at the Opéra-Comique. He didn’t make it into the 1875 vocal score and his lines were subsumed into those of other soldiers. Several of the scores have *ossias*, especially for the part of Carmen many of whose interpreters could not produce the lower notes of her tessitura with sufficient power. Some of these *ossias* which became regular enough to be included in the second Choudens vocal score have been signalled in the present edition. One of the major differences between the early sources is the distribution of the roles of Mercédès and Frasquita: this edition follows the vocal score in this respect although—as has been mentioned—it may well be that in the first run the distribution of parts in the duet varied from this.

²⁴ The Schirmer edition, with an English translation by Dr. Th. Baker falls into this category. This first appeared in New York in 1895.

THE ORCHESTRA

From a *carnet* in the Bibliothèque de l'Opéra in Paris we are able exactly to ascertain the distribution of the orchestra which premiered *Carmen*. It consisted of

9 1^{ers} violons, 6 Altos, 7 contrebasses
3 hautbois, 3 bassons, 10 2^e violons
3 flutes, 3 clarinettes, 6 cors, 7 v'celles
3 trompettes, 4 trombones, 1 harpe,
1 tambour, 1 timbale, 1 grosse caisse

Ce qui fait 68 executants sans compter M. Adolphe Deloffre, chef d'orchestre [...] il touche 5000F par an. MM. Ferroud et Schulz, sous-chefs d'orchestre.²⁵

[9 first violins, 6 violas, 7 double-basses. 3 oboes, 3 bassoons, 10 2nd violins, 3 flutes, 3 clarinets, 6 horns, 7 cellos, 3 trumpets, 4 trombones, 1 harp, 1 tambour, 1 timpani, 1 bass drum]

That makes 68 players without counting M. Adolphe Deloffre, the leader [...] he earns 5000F a year. MM. Ferroud and Schulz, are the deputy leaders.

Most remarkable about this distribution is the strong bass section, with a total of fourteen bass strings supporting a comparatively small number of violas.²⁶

THE CHORUS

The present edition respects the conventions of early- to mid-nineteenth-century French scores which were variously written but often had no contralto parts. Sometimes presented on three staves, they either indicated 1^{iers} et 2^e Sopranos or simply 'Dessus' often written on one staff with stems up and down to delineate the two parts. The two tenor parts were often similarly printed.

This was not, however, merely a question of notation but signified the typical timbre of a French chorus, characterised by high tenors and sopranos. The *dessus* parts seldom go very low in tessitura and are more within a soprano range. It is well known that the Chorus of the Opéra-Comique struggled with the execution of the choruses, particularly those of the Cigarreras' choruses in the first act, and the adventurous chromatic harmony of the choral-writing in the trek across the mountains. Bizet had to press the administration for funds to reinforce the sopranos to enable an adequate rendering of these sections.

The recording made in 1911 with the cast of the Paris Opéra-Comique is a source well worth taking into account for its illumination of performance practices, even if caution has to be exercised. Features of this are remarked upon in the 'Number by number' (Critical notes) commentary, especially where tempi or other details differ from the markings in the various early scores. See also a table of comparative metronome marks.²⁷

²⁵ From a manuscript notebook in the Paris Opéra library (Réserve pièce 40): 'Programmes et distributions des spectacles donnés au Théâtre de l'opéra-comique, 1866–1889'. p. 122 (beginning of 1875)

²⁶ See the Critical Notes: 'Number by Number' for commentary on some orchestral details.

REFLECTIONS ON THE TWO VERSIONS

Reflection on the work's transfer from an opéra-comique to an 'opéra' proper deserves a little more attention, though fashions have swung between the recitative version and the original during the twentieth century, with a preference, nowadays, for the opéra-comique version, but with the dialogue substantially cut. On the one hand, had Guiraud not launched the opera worldwide through his modifications, *Carmen* might not have achieved its phenomenal success by the end of the nineteenth century (and beyond).²⁸ On the other would Bizet have revised the opera in a similar way, had he not died so soon? Hervé Lacombe has discussed these questions in detail in his study of the composer²⁹ stressing Bizet's subtle manipulation of the Opéra-Comique traditions by smoothing the transitions between spoken drama and musical numbers through the use of melodramas.

Lacombe also points out that Guiraud eliminates some two hundred bars of Bizet's Opéra-Comique score (adding six hundred of his own), though it is by no means inconceivable that, had he not suffered his untimely death, Bizet would have himself excised some of his own bars. There were, after all, commercial considerations to be reckoned with: to have *Carmen* available for performance in places which would not have been able to muster a French-speaking cast capable of acting the spoken sections would have been an enticement as much for Bizet as it must have been for Guiraud.

Be this as it may, in terms of the spectacle the losses incurred in the reduction of the spoken dialogue to recitative are enormous: so much significant detail is lost—and for Mérimée significant, realistic detail was one of his principal literary techniques, especially as he first published the novella in a *Revue*—the *Revue des deux Mondes*—('The revue of the two worlds' i.e. the Americas and Europe) whose primary aim coincided with many other reviews in evoking the detailed realities of distant places to a French readership.

Leslie Wright's compilation of press reviews of the opera confirm that however much the opera was a box-office flop its reception in certain quarters could hardly have been more vibrant. It caused certain critics to call into question the repertoire and traditions of the Opéra-Comique and to remark upon the policies of the institution: although it had perfected its combination of speech and song there were suggestions that it had become stultified. Some reviews also gave advice as to what might be done in the future. Others suggested that *Carmen* was a step forward in this process, but perhaps a bit premature.³⁰ The nature of these critics is all important: some were literary hacks—jobbing journalists—but others were distinguished literary figures with a perceptive overview of artistic trends in Paris. One such was Théodore de Banville whose highly perceptive and provocative review discussed in detail the ways in which *Carmen* was ahead of its time.³¹

²⁸ See Stéphane Wolff: *Un demi-siècle d'Opéra-Comique (1900–1950)*, Paris, André Bonne, 1953. His calculations give the 100th performance at the Opéra-Comique as taking place on the 22nd December 1883, the 500th on the 21st October 1891 and the 1000th on 23 December 1904. A gala performance on 30th April 1923 was the opera's 1700th performance in the theatre and the 2000th took place on 29 June 1930.

²⁹ Hervé Lacombe: *Georges Bizet*, Paris, Fayard, 2000. See particularly p. 674 et seq.

³⁰ See Leslie Wright ed. "Carmen" *Dossier de presse parisienne (1875): (Critiques de l'opéra français du XIX^{ème} siècle*, Weinsberg, Musik-Edition Lucie Galland, 2001. This is the most complete reprint of the first reviews of *Carmen*. Particularly interesting are the reviews of Théodore de Banville, François Pougin and Victorin Joncières but the whole collection makes fascinating reading from writers unconcerned with the ultimate box-office receipts.

³¹ Théodore de Banville : (Review of *Carmen*), *Le National*, (Revue musicale), 8 March 1875, p. 1. Reprinted *Carmen : Dossier de presse parisienne*, ed. Leslie Wright, Musik-Edition Lucie Galland, Weinsburg, 2001 pp, 49–54. English translation on Peters website. Wright's invaluable collection of reviews is also available on the Francophone Music Criticism site of the School of Advanced Studies, University of London. http://sas-space.sas.ac.uk/2842/1/Le_National_8mars1875.pdf

STAGING SOURCES

One example of radical changes as regards the staging of the opera is preserved in the plan (*plantation*) for what seems to be the original version of the *mise-en-scène* where the factory was backstage and centre-stage was the ubiquitous fountain so omnipresent in settings in Southern Europe. (See Vocal Score: Plate 1) This was evidently soon abandoned perhaps for two reasons: first that a central fountain was a clumsy encumbrance to movement across the stage and second that to foreground the factory girls and their controllers, the Corps de Garde, on opposite sides at the front of the scene strengthened the essential conflict of the soldiers and the gypsies—order versus unrulyness— which is the one of the central themes instigated in the First Act.

PATHS THROUGH

These days conductors and producers on the whole find their own paths through the opera, cutting a little or a lot, depending on the production, forces available, aptitude of the cast for delivering the spoken sections etc. etc. Nonetheless a few points may be made regarding particularly vulnerable material. The present edition gives some idea of cuts made early in the history of the work's performances and cuts between the first and second vocal scores can easily be compared from these two scores.

I THE 'SCÈNE DE L'ANGLAIS: arguments for and against its inclusion

Most notable among the original sources is the 'Scène et pantomime' following the Introduction in Act I where Moralès invites the audience to watch a scene with an old man whose young wife is passed a *billet-doux* by an attractive young Spaniard. It was presented in detail in the first vocal score, the conducting score and the orchestral parts showing that it was performed at the outset. Oeser asserts that Bizet composed it because Duvernoy, cast to play Moralès, demanded another scene, and Didion follows this assertion.³²

An elderly man leads his young wife onstage with the intention of visiting the Tobacco Factory. He seems anxious to walk on, but she is hesitant as if waiting for someone. The copious stage direction indicates that she looks to the right and the left and doesn't want to leave the square. To augment the idea that the audience are silent witnesses the libretto cleverly begins with an imperative 'Taisons-nous!', as if the audience are about to see something they shouldn't. The libretto is skilful in transferring the attention of the audience (and passers-by) to the physical movements of the mime. They are asked to notice his 'suspicious look' (*œil soupçonneux*) and 'jealous gait' (*mine jaloux*). When Moralès remarks that 'the lover can't be far away' ('L'amant, sans doute, n'est pas loin !') the soldiers gleefully repeat his phrase, winding up expectation of what is to come. Bizet gives the orchestra time for the lover's entrance at which a similar formula is repeated: Moralès laughs first, and the soldiers echo him. Then comes the centrepiece of the scene: while the young Spaniard mimes a conversation with the elderly man, Moralès not only imitates their every gesture but mouths words for each of them, alternately mimicking them. A promenade around the square gives the Spaniard the chance to pass a note of assignation to the young woman and the next phase of the scene begins: Moralès tells the soldiers (and audience) that the deed is done—the woman has accepted the *billet-doux*! Very quietly everyone wonders what's going to happen (*On voit comment ça tournera !*) We never know, but we have had a laugh, no doubt a louder one because of costume and exaggerated gesture mimicking the Englishman's dress and gait.

³² See Oeser, *Vorlagensbericht* p. 721 and Didion Vocal Score p. 13. Poupet and Lacombe cite these sources as well as Dean, who is only repeating Oeser. I have yet to find a root source for this assertion.

(See Vocal Score: Plate 3) Suffice to say that the scene was regarded by some as charming but irrelevant, prolonging an already over-long act. Before further comment we must go back to the origins of the scene which involves going back to the opera itself.

First, it must be stressed, there was a passion for Spanish themes (not to mention the exotic in general) in French artistic ventures in the middle of the nineteenth century, starting around 1830 there was a growing passion for Spain and its customs: a *hispanomanie*. This was in part catalysed by the number of Spanish intellectuals, musicians and artists forced to move north to settle in France—particularly Paris—after expulsion from Spain after the defeat of Napoleon, as a result of their perceived collaboration. Second, there was a passion for travel to Spain among French writers, most notable among whom was Mérimée himself, who had already visited Spain in the 1830s and left memoirs as a testimony. He returned in the 1840s just before he wrote *Carmen*. Another crucial visitor had been Théophile Gautier whose letters from Spain had in turn inspired Mérimée.

Added to all this was the healthy but unique situation of French literary publishing in the 1830s and particularly the early 1840s when Mérimée first published his *Carmen*. The format was the monthly (or bi-monthly) revue. A predominant theme was that these publications should bring the outside world to their readership: they should be ‘mondiale’. Apart from the *Revue des deux mondes* in which Mérimée first published his *Carmen* before its success ensured publication in book form; there was also *Le Tour du monde* in which Gustave Doré published over 350 engravings of life in Spain, in the period between the publication of Mérimée’s novella and the composition of Bizet’s opera. On the operatic stage, too, *Carmen* was not without Spanish-themed precedents: Adam’s *Le Toréador* was one such but there are in fact a host of precedents.³³

Within this climate of popularity for hispanic themes it is hardly surprising on the one hand—and surprising on another—that Mérimée’s *Carmen* should have been considered for operatic transfer. Surprising because of its racy, scabrous nature: entirely in conflict with the norms of the Opéra-comique in particular. Surprising, too, because of a reference to the idea of turning *Carmen* into an opera, in the memoirs of a rival professional librettist of the nineteenth century, Louis Gallet. The reminiscence dates back to 1867 when it was decided, at ministry level, to hold a competition for ‘poetry and music, just as one has an exhibition of paintings or manufactured goods’. Gallet and his co-librettist Edouard Blau won the competition and after the announcement of their success Gallet recounts the following anecdote:

Would you like me to recommend a subject, remarked one of the judges to me: I’ll give it to you for I’m only a critic myself. It’s *Carmen*, for there you have an opera in the same genre as *Fra Diavolo* with a part for an Englishman, think about it!

Just think, we could have done this *Carmen* without ever having foreseen the other. And despite our own preoccupations, in deference to our advisor, there could have been a role for an Englishman, just as in *Fra Diavolo*.³⁴

³³ The growth of Spanish-style music in France has been dealt with to some extent by Hervé Lacombe in ‘L’Espagne à Paris au milieu du XIX^e siècle (1847–57) : l’influence d’artistes espagnols sur l’imaginaire parisien et la constitution d’une “hispanicité”’, *Revue de musicologie*, Vol. 88 No. 2, 2002, pp. 389–431, and by Gerhard Steingress, ... y *Carmen se fue a París*, Almuzara, Córdoba, 2006.

³⁴ ‘La vérité toute simple est que lorsque le ministère eut l’idée, en 1867, d’exposer de la poésie et de la musique, comme on exposait de la peinture et des produits manufacturés, nous n’avions, Edouard Blau et moi, aucunement idée de prendre part à cette épreuve [...]’

The anonymous jurist's recommendation clearly stems from the various references in Mérimée's *Carmen* which concern the English. Without going into detail, the presence of the English in one form or another is felt throughout the novella which is written in the manner of a double-narration, first by a learned archaeologist and then by Don José who tells him his story. When the first narrator meets Carmen, she mistakes him for an Englishman.³⁵ More centrally, the scene in the Mountains which forms Act III of the opera, is concerned with robbing 'two English milords' who were known to be travelling from Gibraltar to Granada and whom the gypsies and smugglers waylaid en route for their 'good guineas'. Further encounters—at which Carmen pronounces herself to be well experienced—are with English soldiers in Gibraltar. Once again to stress how well known they are, Mérimée introduces a footnote to inform the reader that such soldiers, who wore red uniforms and had plumed headgear, were popularly known as 'crayfish' (*écrevisses*). Chapter three of the novella develops the scenario of Carmen duping English soldiers with sexual promises but trapping them with her companions and robbing them.

Hardly anything of this was transferred from the novella into Meilhac and Halévy's libretto. But the interception and robbery of the English, reworked from the novella, is to be found in Act II Scene 4 in an interchange among the gypsies:

FRASQUITA

Eh bien, les nouvelles ?

LE DANCAÏRE

Pas trop mauvaises les nouvelles, nous arrivons de Gibraltar...

LE REMENDADO

Jolie ville, Gibraltar !... on y voit des Anglais, beaucoup d'Anglais, de jolis hommes les Anglais : un peu froids, mais distingués.

LE DANCAÏRE

Remendado !..

LE REMENDADO

Patron.

LE DANCAÏRE *mettant la main sur son couteau*

Vous comprenez ?

— Voulez-vous que je vous donne un sujet ? me proposait un de nos juges : je vous le donne ; je ne fait plus de la critique, moi. C'est *Carmen* ; il y a là un opéra dans le genre de *Fra Diavolo* avec un rôle d'Anglais. Songez-y !

Et dire que nous aurions pu faire cette *Carmen* sans prévoir l'autre ! Et que peut-être, malgré nos tendances, il y aurait eu, par déférence pour notre conseiller, un rôle d'Anglais ... comme dans *Fra Diavolo*. Louis Gallet: *Notes d'un librettiste: Musique contemporaine*, Paris, Calmann Lévy, 1891, pp. 265–267.

³⁵ To stress the accuracy of his account of Andalucía and the learned quality of his narrator, as well as to translate certain Romany terms, Mérimée adds footnotes to the novella. At the point where Carmen suggests that the narrator is English he adds the footnote 'Every traveller in Spain who does not carry about samples of calicoes and silks is taken for an Englishman (*inglesito*). It is the same thing in the East. At Chalcis I had the honour of being announced as a [Greek text to be inserted here]'. 'En Espagne, tout voyageur qui ne porte pas avec lui des échantillons de calicot ou des soieries passe pour un Anglais, *Inglesito*. Il en est de même en Orient. A Chalcis, j'ai eu l'honneur d'être annoncé comme un [Greek text to be inserted here]'

LE REMENDADO

Parfaitement, patron...

LE DANCAÏRE

Taisez-vous alors. Nous arrivons de Gibraltar, nous avons arrangé avec un patron de navire l'embarquement de marchandises anglaises. Nous irons les attendre près de la côte, nous en cacherons une partie dans la montagne et nous ferons passer le reste. Tous nos camarades ont été prévenus... ils sont ici, cachés, mais c'est de vous trois surtout que nous avons besoin... vous allez partir avec nous...³⁶

This is not merely a 'softened' version of an event from the novella, but one which, like many other aspects of the libretto, has been informed by actuality: wreckers really did target English ships and intercept contraband on the Western coast of Andalusia which had a busy trade with England, particularly with regard to Sherry and Tobacco whose centre of trade was Bristol. Earlier on in the same scene comes a more conventional joke at the English stereotype being 'cold but distinguished' deriving from the overall incorporation of Gibraltar into the novella.³⁷ The seeds of a more extended joke at the expense of the English were thus ready to be exploited when Bizet was faced with the task of providing an extra scene for Moralès.

Jokes of a similar kind must have been what Gallet's anonymous jurist had in mind when he recommended *Carmen* as potential operatic fodder with the added bonus of an English role. A glance at the highly successful opéra-comique *Fra Diavolo*, to a libretto by Scribe with music by Auber, clarifies his thoughts. First performed in 1830, the piece celebrated its 500th performance at the Opéra-Comique in 1863. It concerns an English milord, Cockburn and his pretty young wife Pamela who, like Mérimée's English milords, are victims of latin brigands, though this time in Italy. Cockburn (Lord Kokbourg in the *distribution* but merely marked 'Milord' in the text), is a figure of fun

³⁶

FRASQUITA

So what's the news?

LE DANCAÏRE

Not bad, we've just come back from Gibraltar...

LE REMENDADO

Nice town, Gibraltar! You see the English there, lots of them. Nice fellows the English: a bit cold, but distinguished.

LE DANCAÏRE

Remendado!..

LE REMENDADO

Boss?

LE DANCAÏRE (*putting his hand on his knife*)

Understand?

LE REMENDADO

Perfectly, boss...

LE DANCAÏRE

Well then, listen. We've just come back from Gibraltar, we've arranged with a ship's captain to unload some English goods. We're going to wait for them by the coast and hide some in the mountains and bring the rest through. All our comrades have been warned... they're here, hidden, but it's three we need... so you're going to come with us...

³⁷ The reader is strongly recommended to listen to this piece of dialogue in the extant recording of 1911. *Carmen* (Opéra-comique version). Marguerite Mérentié (Carmen); Agustarello Affre (Don José – sung sections). Orchestre of the Opéra-Comique conducted by François Ruhlmann. Originally recorded in 54 parts by French Pathé for a cycle of operas entitled 'Le Théâtre chez toi'. Reissued 1999 by Marston in 'The Pathé Opera Series' Volume 3. Marston, USE, 52019-2. The way the dialogue is spoken plays to the gallery to underline the humour of the passage.

from the outset, as is clear from the printed French libretto where his dialogue is turned into a parody of an English couple speaking French³⁸:

MILORD

Je h'avais l'honneur d'être Anglais ; je h'avais enlevé, selon l'usage, miss Pamela, une riche héritière que je h'avais épousée par inclination.

PAMÉLA, (*soupirant*)

Oh oui ! A Gretna Green !³⁹

In a subsequent scene Cockburn is angry that Pamela has been willingly receiving the attentions of an elegant cavalier and he has taken a detour to try and shake him off.

PAMÉLA

Je ne pouvais pas empêcher lui de faire le même route.

MILORD

Vous pouvez empêcher vous de la regarder et de chanter, comme hier au soir, ce petit barcarolle qui amusait pas moi de tout.

PAMÉLA (*avec humeur*)

On peut pas faire la musique ?

MILORD

Vous faisiez pas la musique, vous faisiez la coquetterie avec lui.

PAMÉLA

Moi, la coquetterie ?

MILORD

Yes, milady ; je l'avais vu, et je déclare ici que je ne voulais pas.⁴⁰

³⁸ Eugène Scribe: *Fra Diavolo*, in 'La France Dramatique au dix-neuvième siècle: choix de pièces modernes', Paris, N. Tresse, 1847 pp. 3–4.

³⁹

MILORD

I have the honour to be English: I have, as is the custom, brought with me Miss Pamela, a rich widow whom I married out of love.

PAMELA, (*sighing*)

Yes but only at Gretna Green! Libretto, *ibid*, p.3

⁴⁰

PAMÉLA

I couldn't stop him taking the same route as us.

MILORD

You could have prevented him looking at you and singing, like last night: that little barcarolle didn't amuse me one little bit!

PAMÉLA (*wittily*)

Aren't we allowed to make music ?

MILORD

You weren't making music you were flirting with him.

PAMÉLA

Me, flirting?

MILORD

Yes, milady! I saw you and I must tell you I wish I hadn't. Libretto *op.cit.* p. 4.

Bizet's librettists may well have had this scene in mind when, sometime before both the production and the publication of the first Choudens vocal score, they wrote the 'Scène and Pantomime' which similarly exploits the idea of an elderly Englishman being duped by his young attractive wife who has fallen for the attentions of the crunchy young Spaniard. Although the meaning of the number seems to have been quickly forgotten, it was mentioned by one critic of the first performance, Jules Guillemot, who took time to admire the 'pantomime' in a review for *Le Soleil*, significantly a theatre magazine:

You should particularly look out for a meaningful pantomime between an old husband, a young wife and a lover, commented upon by the brigadier Moralès who whispers the words spoken by the miming characters behind which we do not hear: it's an original and witty idea and its performance brought this out well.⁴¹

In addition, the two cited production sources both confirm that it was indeed a re-run of a similar scenario to that of *Fra Diavolo* in that it concerned an Englishman. Especially interesting is the puzzling Livret de mise-en-scène which weaves the English couple into the action, and also has some fun at the old man's expense because the street urchins knock him over on the steps. In addition, some purpose as to his presence is made clear: he has come to visit the factory, no doubt one of the frequent English *negociants* to visit it for business purposes. Furthermore, in a later stage-direction in the same source, he comes out of the factory, before the chorus of cigar girls, and exits. We cannot be sure that this was how it was originally done, but this *livret* may well be the only source to preserve its original staging.

Much speculation has taken place about the fate of the scene and how long it was retained in the first run, in some attempt to find out whether Bizet himself sanctioned its excision.⁴² The orchestral parts clearly show that there was some attempt to reposition it (before the Entry of Micaëla) and there are several versions which do not match that of the first vocal score nor the conducting score. The version in these sources is preferred by the present edition not only because it is tighter and better developed, but also because it coincides with the score that the composer so carefully proof-read where it takes its place directly after the Introduction.

So much for the arguments for its inclusion. Pressures to withdraw the scene clearly came from several quarters and one claim was that it was irrelevant to the action in an already over-long first act. As the above arguments illustrate, its theme was by no means irrelevant, quite the reverse, for it reinstigated the English theme rather downplayed in the libretto thus far. The account given in the first edition of Charles Pigot's study of Bizet is typical of the counter-arguments. Even he, writing a decade after Bizet's death, gives no indication of its appellation as the 'Scène de l'Anglais', though he rehearses the arguments for cutting it, suggesting that it had been a matter of dispute for some time.

⁴¹ Jules Guillemot: *Le Soleil* « Revue dramatique », 9 mars 1875, pp. 1–2. In Wright, op. cit. pp. 90–91.

'Remarquez particulièrement une pantomime significative entre un vieux mari, une jeune femme et un amant, commenté par le brigadier Moralès, qui prête à chacun des personnages les paroles que nous n'entendons pas : l'idée est originale et spirituelle, l'exécution n'est pas en reste avec elle.'

⁴² See Michel Poupet: 'A propos de deux fragments de la partition originale de *Carmen*' in 'Mélanges, *Revue de Musicologie*, 1976, pp. 139–141. Poupet's aim, in relation to respecting the last wishes of the composer, is to prove that the scene was withdrawn by Bizet before his death. He lays emphasis on the entries in the *Livre de bord*, especially an entry of 25 May 1875 (the date of the 31st performance), where it is stated that 'M. Duvernoy n'a pas chanté les couplets'. On two subsequent performances Duvernoy was indisposed but Poupet claims he was present on the 25th but fails to suggest that though present, he might have been in poor voice and thus omitted the couplets. So what? More important questions seem to me worth examining, primarily driven by the meaning of the scene of which Poupet and all other commentators seem to have been entirely unaware.

While acknowledging that it is ‘fine descriptive music’ and that it gives ‘a pleasant monologue to Moralès’ he continues:

Bizet, despite his profound understanding of the demands of the theatre, didn’t have the heart to cut this useless scene while it was still being played. Admirable symphonist as he was, he had seen a pretext for a sparkling musical tableau, rich in colour. So he kept the scene, trying to make it lively and as vivid as possible in terms of the scenic aspect. And he succeeded for the little tableau is full of charm and movement thanks to Moralès’s monologue which accompanies and emphasises it. But despite all this it remains peripheral to the plot relegating it to the position of a brilliant hors-d’oeuvre. His most serious error was to throw the audience entirely off course, to set them on a false trail by fixing their attention on passing, secondary characters who for the most part will never reappear in the drama, while the main characters are as yet entirely unknown. [...] M. Carvalho, a ruthless stage director, suppressed the *Pantomime* for Bizet’s lovely music found no favour with him. Despite our profound respect for every detail of the composer’s intentions and our admiration for this lively scene, we are forced to admit that the first act, without this over-long and completely useless scene, gains both pace and vigour.⁴³

Pigot’s reference to Carvalho refers to his having taken over the directorship of the Opéra-Comique in 1876 and presided over the revival of *Carmen* in 1883.

Reaction to the scene during the first run was minimal. Among the welter of criticism only one critic (already cited) mentions the episode and his lone voice can hardly be held up as signifying universal approval of the scene. There are, however, several arguments supporting its inclusion, above all its complementing of the understated English themes inherent in the *Carmen* story; its parody of stereotypical English attributes; its introduction of an entirely novel operatic format bridging the Opéra-Comique divide between words and music; and its clever use of laughter as a prelude to tragedy: as wise dramatists know, an audience who have laughed will find the twist of the knife all the more intense. Furthermore it is a scene—as Pigot conceded—with excellent musical interest.⁴⁴

⁴³ Pigot (1886) op. Cit pp. 238–239: ‘Bizet, malgré son sens profond des exigences scéniques, n’eut sans doute pas la force de faire disparaître cette scène inutile, de couper dans le vif. Symphoniste admirable, il vit là un prétexte à tableau musical chatoyant, riche en couleur ; il conserva donc cette scène, essaya de l’animer, de la rendre intéressante scéniquement, et il réussit, car ce petit tableau musical est plein de charme et de mouvement grâce au spirituel monologue de Moralès qui l’accompagne et le souligne ; mais malgré tout, il reste en dehors de l’action et ne constitue qu’un brillant hors-d’œuvre. Son tort le plus grave est de dérouter complètement le spectateur, de le mettre sur une fausse voie, de lui donner le change en attirant et fixant son attention sur des personnages épisodiques très secondaires, dont la plupart ne reparaitront pas dans l’action, tandis que les personnages principaux, les acteurs du drame, sont encore complètement inconnus. [...] M. Carvalho, en impitoyable metteur en scène, a supprimé la *Pantomime* ; la musique savoureuse de Bizet n’a pas trouvé grâce devant lui. Malgré notre respect profond pour les moindres intentions du Maître et notre admiration pour cette page si alerte, nous sommes forcé d’avouer que le premier acte, dégagé de cette scène un peu longue et complètement inutile, a beaucoup gagné en rapidité et en vigueur.

⁴⁴ I have not been able to uncover any costume designs for the Englishman. No doubt he was parodied to the full, with red hair, freckles perhaps, what the French call ‘le teint anglais’ (a ruddy complexion), check trousers (too short), lorgnettes perhaps, and a bowler hat and the ubiquitous umbrella. The stereotype can be seen in a cartoon by the celebrated satirist Cham, in a collection of a thousand of his cartoons assembled by none other than *Carmen*’s librettist Halévy who wrote a preface to the collection. See Vocal Score: Plate 3, from *Douze années comiques, 1868–1879: 1000 dessins par Cham. Introduction par Ludovic Halévy*, Paris, Calmann, Lévy, 1880, p. 93 (année 1871).

ASPECTS OF PERFORMANCE PRACTICE IN *CARMEN*

One of the most notable features of *Carmen*, as in no previous opera, is its use of a distinct variety of musical languages. The recognition of these and the adoption of an appropriate interpretation for each is surely essential to its performance. While this is especially true for the Spanish numbers (for which the term ‘pastiche’ is an oversimplification) the other styles also need to be carefully distinguished. Broadly speaking, four over-arching styles in the opera may be identified, to some extent independent of each other.

These genres might be separated out as follows:

- Standard Opéra-Comique formulaic numbers: arias, ensembles and choruses
- Sung dialogue and ensemble, more through-composed and advancing the status quo of such scenes in previous opéras-comiques.
- ‘Pastiches’ of Spanish music, in part drawn from the imitation of Spanish models.
- ‘Gypsy’ music.

While it would be tempting to begin with the Spanish elements, it is surely more important to begin with the musical language which is the *lingua franca* of the genre of *Carmen* itself: the received musical language of the Opéra-Comique at the time that *Carmen* was first performed.

Distinguishable from recent premieres at the highly important Théâtre Lyrique, an important and innovative theatre founded in 1851 and managed by the important Theatre Director Léon Carvalho over two periods: 1856–60 and 1862–68, the Opéra-Comique adhered to its long-established tradition of demanding that its spectacles employed a combination of spoken drama and musical numbers. *Carmen* was composed within these requirements laid down by its statutes and was lavishly resourced, possibly because it was staged only a few months after the opening of the Palais Garnier, on 5 January 1875.

From the point of view of a developing genre *Carmen* is of considerable interest and merits much discussion beyond the interest of this preface. However a few remarks on the performance of the spoken dialogue, and of the nature of the singers/actors required for the repertoire of the Opéra-Comique might be usefully offered. In short, such performers had to act well, speak well and sing well: no mean demand! The above-mentioned 1911 recording is an illuminating source giving us some sense of how the spoken dialogues and ensembles were done.⁴⁵ To summarise, the singers had to be able to act through a wide range of emotional states: from angry dialogue to irony and flippancy, and sometimes be downright funny. Those in the 1911 recording characterise strongly, with a tendency towards ‘ham’. Particularly striking are the strident spoken voices of the smugglers. The source is without equal: essential listening, however impossible it would be to emulate in the modern world of international casts where an all-Francophone *Carmen* would be a nigh impossibility.

It is well known that Bizet and his librettists met with forceful initial resistance from the directors of the Opéra-Comique when they first mooted the idea of *Carmen* as a subject for an opéra comique. An often-quoted memoir of Halévy, written many years later, recalled the moment where they first suggested the idea. De Leuven, one of the directors, interrupted their proposal:

‘*Carmen?* Mérimée’s *Carmen?* Isn’t it her who’s killed by her lover? And amongst thieves, Gypsies and cigar-girls? At the Opéra-Comique, the family opera, the theatre for

⁴⁵ See note 18 above.

marriage interviews! We reserve five or six boxes hired especially for these? You'll drive the public away ... it's impossible!⁴⁶

There can be no doubt that to some extent the librettists and composer responded to the directors' demands that the opera should comply with the expectations of the Opéra-Comique audience and the conventions of the house, though there was clearly a degree of compromise on both sides: they did not, for example, follow the suggestion that the opera should be given a happy ending! Important among the modifications to Mérimée's tale was the introduction of the characters of Micaëla and Escamillo, although these are to some degree developed from brief mentions of other characters in the novella. And as one critic succinctly remarked: José is given a mother.

In addition to the librettists' ability to shape the spectacle into an alternation of dialogue and number, Bizet was well able to write the conventional style of aria popular in the Opéra-Comique at the time: winningly formulaic musical numbers not too distant from the style of Gounod, his mentor of a generation earlier. Bizet's relationship with Gounod—a story in itself—need only be summarised here.

Anti-clerical and eschewing Religious music—one of the big differences between Bizet and his older mentor—was that Gounod exploited both worlds: of opera and religious music (from which he made a fortune, particularly in England) whereas Bizet was largely focussed only on Opera. While Gounod was occupied in England (with his mistress Georgina Weldon as well as with lucrative inroads into choral and religious music), Bizet acted as 'caretaker' for the Paris performances of his *Roméo et Juliette*. It has often been remarked that the anti-clerical Bizet, in contrast to Gounod (once appropriately described by Turgenev as having 'the ooze of an erotic priest'⁴⁷), eschewed religion, but in *Carmen* Bizet does have a moment to exploit a moment of religious fervour—and employ a Gounod-inspired voice—in the passage where Micaëla tells José about her going to church with his mother, and in the subsequent aria which, accompanied by harp which is in a style which has been dubbed the 'Style Saint-Sulpicien', referring to the style of somewhat operatic vocal music used in the most fashionable of Paris churches for wealthy ceremonies, such as weddings and funerals. The prominent harp accompaniment is typical, but the passage where Micaëla sings of going to church with José's mother is also set by Bizet as if it was accompanied by an organ playing in an old-fashioned, somewhat Palestrinian, contrapuntal style. The aria itself has many features which follow the formulaic Opéra-Comique style for intimate arias and duets: an easy melody supported by a lightish and distinctly-coloured texture (in this case strings and harp); an immediate pull to the dominant, in this case a rather continuous sharpwards pull, the high note to be dwelt on, at the approach to the cadence of the first melodic strain. In addition, Bizet—for the only time in the score—writes long slurs over each phrase, clearly indicating legato and continuity of phrase-shape rather than articulation. (See pp. 000 in the Orchestral Score). The number is in many ways the opposite of *Carmen*'s entry number, the Habanera, with its continuous downwards pull and refusal to modulate except to the tonic major and back.

⁴⁶ (*Carmen*! ... La *Carmen* de Mérimée! ... Est-ce qu'elle n'est pas assassinée par son amant? ... Et ce milieu de voleurs, de bohémiennes, de cigarières! ... À l'Opéra-Comique! Le théâtre des familles! ... Le théâtre des entrevues de mariages! ... Nous avons, tous les soirs, cinq ou six loges louées pour ces entrevues ... Vous allez mettre notre public en fuite ... C'est impossible!) Ludovic Halévy: 'La millième représentation de *Carmen*',

⁴⁷ Turgenev, *Nouvelle correspondance inédite*, I, Paris, 1971, p. 121. 'L'homme me déplaît plus que jamais. Il m'est entouré maintenant d'une atmosphère aussi impénétrable à la vérité que l'est celle qui entoure les rois, et puis cette vase de prêtre érotique qui remonte à la surface'. The excellent translation comes from Steven Huebner: *The Operas of Charles Gounod*, Oxford, 1990.

The Act III aria with the quartet of horns is another formulaic Opéra-Comique show-stopper. If we are to believe a memoir of the then fourteen-year old Jacques-Émile Blanche who later became a society portrait painter (as well as an irrepressible gossip) the piece was considered more than merely Gounodesque. At that time a protégé of Gounod—Blanche had run away from home—he had attended the premiere of *Carmen* with him. Evidently several among *Carmen*'s first audiences found some of the numbers distinctly reminiscent of Gounod and Blanche remarks 'if a friend told Gounod that a number of the themes, indeed the best pieces in the score, had been stolen from his works, or from the works of Wagner, or were merely 'Spanish', Gounod would protest, but only weakly'. Blanche also recalled, having sat in Gounod's box:

Micaëla sang her now well-known air, which the public encored. Gounod leaned forward in his box and applauded enthusiastically so all could see. Then he took his seat again and sighed, 'That melody is mine! Georges has robbed me; take out the Spanish airs and mine out of the score, and there remains nothing to Bizet's credit than the sauce that masks the fish'.⁴⁸

We should remember that unusual accompaniments for such arias were all the rage in the 1870s: Ambroise Thomas had used saxophones, and Gounod also used unusual combinations of instrumental colour. Bizet's four horns, or rather two groups of two horns in different keys, were thus not so unusual, more a following of current trends. Certainly the piece sounds considerably different when the pairs of horns in the original keys are used, rather than a quartet of horns in F. But here we stray into 'historical performance' territory which will be the subject of a later section below.

It is mostly in the final Act that Bizet subverts the conventions of the Opéra-Comique by adopting a through-composed style, mainly driven by dialogue, but initiated by a chorus and interrupted (and intensified) by the idea of witnessing the final stages of a bullfight from outside the ring: essentially another imaginative use of the tradition of the *coulisses*. The effect here, where we have the reality onstage, and the dialogue foregrounded, is a brilliant exploitation of that tradition which had been an essential component of the Opéra-Comique for many years.

Already, in Opéra-Comique practice, the negative effect of spoken dialogue interrupting the trajectory towards the dénouement of the action had been recognised in the house's adoption of the recitative version of the lead-up to Micaëla's aria in Act III. In Act IV no such dialogue was ever introduced in performances there. Bizet skilfully introduces an orchestral way of accelerating the piece towards the terrible *dénouement*.

His introduction of Spanish music into *Carmen* has been examined by many writers. None of them have said the last word, some have gone off on false trails, but the subject remains a crucial aspect which deeply affects the way the opera, including musically, is interpreted. The subject is best approached via a series of questions, the first being: 'Why did Bizet decide to introduce Spanish 'authenticity' into the opera?'

How could he not have done? He had already dealt with several exotic subjects in other operas, portrayed gypsies in *La jolie Fille de Perth*; a pseudo-Ceylonese orientalism in

⁴⁸ The two quotations are from Jacques-Émile Blanche: *La pêche aux souvenirs*, Paris, 1949 and *More portraits of a lifetime*, London, 1939 respectively. 'Mais si un ami observe que bien des thèmes, comme les plus heureux morceaux de la partition sont "pillés" dans des ouvrages, dans Wagner, ou simplement espagnols, Gounod proteste mollement.' Après l'air de Micaëla au troisième acte, Gounod 'se pencha en avant et applaudit de manière que tous puissent le voir, puis se rassit et soupira: "Cette mélodie est de moi! Georges m'a dévalisé. Si l'on retire les airs espagnols et les miens de la partition, il ne reste rien à mettre au compte de Bizet que la sauce qui fait passer le poisson'.

Les Pêcheurs de perles; and explored Spanish pastiche in both the Symphonic Ode *Vasco da Gama* and in more than one of his mélodies. Julien Tiersot estimated that his incidental music for Daudet's play *L'Arlésienne* was 'thoroughly provençal' and that 'this result is not due solely to the fact that the theme of an ancient Noël and the melody of a dance from the time of King René were utilised, for there exudes from the work as a whole a savour of the soil that emanates from each of its parts'.⁴⁹ The Spanish music in *Carmen* needs to be seen against this background of experience for it goes far deeper than a surface sense of local colour: it is embedded into the very veins of the opera itself, and it imbues its protagonists, especially Carmen and Escamillo, with a visceral quality unprecedented not only in the Opéra-Comique, but in the operatic repertoire in general.

Seen against the history of these previous attempts at local colour, which will be examined one by one, the Spanish music of *Carmen* emerges less as pastiche than as a subtle crafting of numbers closely wedded to character and drama, and sometimes masking any sense of the picturesque and the pastiche with suppressions and deviations, as well as with injections of flamenco procedures which Bizet had clearly studied.

Tiersot has presented one piece of evidence (or rather a memoir) signalling Bizet's interest in researching Spanish music: an application-slip to the librarian of the Paris Conservatoire requesting 'a list of the collections of Spanish songs in the possession of the library'.⁵⁰ He perhaps underestimates the amount of music that Bizet might have fed upon, concentrating on only one collection entitled *Echos d'Espagne* which the composer had in his own collection of music.⁵¹ While this is an interesting collection, widely disseminated, it does not tell the full story: Bizet was surely able to have access to Spanish musical sources through many other contacts and in any case because Paris had been flooded with Spanish music—often dual-language French and Spanish—since the French had caught a severe dose of seemingly incurable Spanish fever in the 1830s.⁵²

As a student it should not be forgotten that he was a rising star as a pianist alongside the virtuoso Spanish violinist Pablo de Sarasate (1844–1908) who was also a composer intimately familiar with the Spanish style. We have little record of the relationship between either the two students or the two men as they matured but it is clear that they kept in touch. In 1863 we have a record of Bizet approaching Sarasate to ask him to participate in a *soirée musicale*, and ten years later in 1873, he accompanied the celebrated violinist in a performance of Edouard Lalo's Op. 12 violin sonata. Although it was not until after Bizet's death that Sarasate published most of his Spanish pieces having concentrated on virtuosic fantasies on themes from popular operas (as was the fashion), he published in 1874 a series of 'Airs Espagnols pour violon avec accompagnement de piano', in exactly the year Bizet was working on *Carmen*.

Besides this, private access was hardly necessary since Spanish music of one sort or another permeated every genre, and was seen in every Parisian musical venue from the private salon, through the Theatre, to Opera, Ballet and, of course, Zarzuela.⁵³ Paris was full of Spanish customs and the community even held bullfights in the Bois de Boulogne. The heyday of its popularity had been in the 1860s when Spanish spectacles of one sort or another were mounted there. One particularly celebrated flamenco dancer, Petra Cámara, was several times captured by the artist Théodore Chasseriau who specialised

⁴⁹ Julien Tiersot: 'Bizet and Spanish Music', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 13, 1927 pp. 566–581.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Echos d'Espagne*, ed. P. Lacombe and J. Puig y Alsubide, Paris, 1872

⁵² Many other commentators have addressed this question in various ways. Among others, chronologically, may be listed the following in addition to the Tiersot articles cited above: Raoul Laparra: *Bizet et l'Espagne*, Paris, 1935; Theodore S. Beardsley: 'The Spanish Musical Sources of Bizet's *Carmen*', *Inter-American Music Review*, 1989, 143–146.

⁵³ See Gerhard Steingress: *..... y Carmen se fue a París*, Córdoba, 2006

mainly in Oriental themes.⁵⁴ She had first appeared in Paris in 1851 with her own troupe and was promoted as a fashion model for genuine Spanish costumes: her reputation in Spain was that she had not only preserved authentic Spanish dances but also authentic dress attire. The dates of her ‘come back’ in the 1860s are crucial for it was at this time that Bizet was growing into adulthood. This significant return to the Paris stage took place in 1865 when she performed at the *Théâtre des Variétés* and was reviewed copiously in the press. Among musical reviews was an article in the long-running periodical *L’Art musical* dealing with the Spanish troupe in which she participated. Typically such performances would include songs, solo dances, dances from the *corps de ballet*, and zarzuela.

One reviewer of her 1865 spectacle, writing under the pseudonym Ralph, gives some insight into the vogue not only for authentic Spanish music, but also into the fashion for French composers to imitate it, often with texts only in French. After enthusing about the excellent playing, singing and dancing, the columnist suggests that ‘it is the Spanish themselves who will cure us of our mania for Spanish-style songs. Real Spanish music will silence those who imitate it.’⁵⁵ Performances of *Saynètes* and *Zarzuelas* were the most spectacular shows often involving dancing and music alongside theatre and sometimes equestrian displays.

Another artist captivated by the vogue for Spanish spectacle exactly at this time, and who also visited Spain for inspiration, was Édouard Manet. His interest was in Spanish customs and costumes both in Paris and on his visit to Spain. In particular he captured the action of Flamenco dance in several paintings, as well as full-length costume paintings of both the celebrated female dancer Lola de Valence (Lola de Valencia). There are also musical portraits of guitarists and gypsy dancing. All this pictorial, musical, spectacular and choreographic interest confirms the 1860s—the years preceding the gestation of *Carmen* as a period of intense Spanish activity in Paris.

More important than speculating on direct influences was what Bizet did with the ‘raw’ Spanish music he found. One of his first attempts at Spanish pastiche was the song ‘La marguerite a fermé sa corolle’ (‘The marguerite has closed her petals’) in his Symphonic Ode *Vasco da Gama*, to a poem by Louis Delâtre, later published as a song ‘Ouvre ton cœur’. The piece is entitled ‘Boléro’ in the Ode and the song is subtitled ‘Sérénade Espagnol’. In the ode it is sung by a tenor and there are choral interjections by the basses, but the song would equally well suit a soprano. It is very typical of the Boleros in this genre published during the period leading up to *Carmen*. It has one phrase which has been highlighted by some commentators to claim it as the original version of the Act II ‘Chanson Bohème’ in the opera:

⁵⁴ See Marc Sandoz: *Théodore Chasserian, Catalogue raisonné*, Paris, 1974

⁵⁵ ‘Cette fois, ce sont les Espagnols eux-mêmes qui nous guérissent de l’hispanomanie lyrique. La vraie musique espagnole fera taire l’imitation’: Ralph (several suggestions have been made for the real identity of this columnist among them Achille de Lauzières-Thémines, Léon Escudier and Gustave Chouquet. *L’Art musical*, 29 June 1865, pp. 244–245

Example 1. Bizet: *Vasco de Gama*, N° 3, 'Bolero'. Note phrase beginning on upbeat to second bar of each system in the RH of the piano reduction which is identical to the main theme of the 'Chanson bohème' in *Carmen*

In fact it is an example of the way much Spanish music was performed with an intimate rather than a raucous way. Many examples of Spanish dances from French collections—and often with French texts—carry directions as to their mood of interpretation, and one ('L'Éventail' by the prolific composer Soriano Fuertes, published c. 1870) has a carefully-notated part for a fan. Fuertes, incidentally, was a major composer of pieces in the Spanish style and had many pieces exported to France. Interestingly in 1750 he staged a Zarzuela (one of many) entitled *La fábrica de tabacos de Sevilla* ('The tobacco factory in Seville') in that city.

In support of a tradition of intimacy in the performance of some of the Spanish repertoire, may be cited the French edition owned by Bizet of Manuel Garcia the elder's celebrated Polo 'Cuerpo bueno, alma divina', translated into French as 'Tu dors la belle amoureuse'. It is preceded by the following performance indication which is somewhat revealing: 'This fine serenade is very popular in all the South of Spain where the clement skies and the balmy nights still allow amorous pastimes. It should be sung in a half-tint, and with a tremulous voice'.⁵⁶ Intimacy is certainly one element implied by certain numbers in *Carmen*—we may think of Carmen's song as she dances the 'Romalis' for Don José in Act II—while the excitement of Spanish (and Gypsy) spectacle is another, as can be seen in Bizet's transformation of Garcia's polo into the Entr'acte between Acts III and IV of *Carmen*. (see below).

The entry of Mab's gypsies in *La jolie Fille de Perth* is similarly revealing in its subtlety. The gypsies here draw from Bizet an ostinato, but not one which is harmonically as static as that in *Carmen*. There are some slightly strange harmonies, with a hint of tritonal inflexion, and the melody itself includes twisting ornaments which might be considered

⁵⁶ 'Cette belle sérénade est très populaire dans tout le sud de l'Espagne où la clémence du ciel et des nuits discrètes permettent encore cet amoureux passé-temps. Elle doit se chanter en demi-teinte, et d'une voix tremblotante.'

to signify gypsies or orientals, but the effect is not overt. Most noticeable, as if a signifier of gypsy dance-songs, is the quiet seductiveness, enhanced by ululation. Bizet clearly aimed at gypsy otherness in this number, but it was in no way Spanish, and essentially still rooted in Western tonality, with only a nod towards awkwardnesses which might signify the undeveloped nature of another culture.

Both *Djamileh* and *Les Pêcheurs de perles* are bolder in their portrayal of foreign cultures, though neither of them are hispanic. Both of these manage to fuse (or sometimes juxtapose) a kind of all-purpose exoticism (or even orientalism) with the *lingua franca* of the Opéra-Comique.⁵⁷ But the exotic musical language in both cases is pushed further away from Western convention than in his previous works. In particular, Bizet begins to experiment with ‘other’ scales and with harmonic procedures that distance themselves more from common practice in the music of his own heritage. Musical features which he had clearly used to evoke exotic contexts are, however, accruing: chromatic acciaccature; pedal points; parallel harmonies and exotic scales or synthetic modes. By the time of *Carmen* Bizet had built up a wide vocabulary of imitative techniques to approach the composition of exotic music.

EXOTICISM AND THE CONVENTIONAL IN *CARMEN*’S NUMBERS: CONTEXT AND HISTORICAL PERFORMANCE

The section which follows is built upon several assumptions. To understand the exoticism, or in this case Spanishness, of the opera the genres underlying Bizet’s ‘Spanish’ numbers in the opera need to be understood in terms of their performance and of their associations. Pre-empting a little the conclusions of a detailed study of each of these numbers, it may be suggested that where in the previous exotic numbers discussed above there was often open pastiche, this is more masked in *Carmen* where the Spanish numbers are founded upon the models Bizet saw, but that these were more combined with, than juxtaposed with, more conventional Opéra-Comique traditions.

The adoption and adaptation of traditional Spanish forms, mainly because of their recognisable rhythms, was not the only way in which Bizet maintained a feeling of place throughout the opera. There were also several hallmarks of Spanish music, both harmonic and melodic, with which the composer recurrently infused the music of the opera. Most notable among these was the related harmonic device of the stereotypical Spanish tetrachord, a descending four-note pattern falling by a semitone to a note which may or not be a tonic, and may be more like a dominant. Its characteristic is therefore the use of a flattened supertonic. This pattern, common in much Spanish music but often particularly associated with Flamenco, is found many times throughout the opera, and first heard in the Prélude. (For example bars 25–31)

In this case the C sharp to which the motive descends, stressed by repetition, is the dominant of the relative minor, but the pattern, as will be shown, occurs in relation to many scale-steps. Analysts of Spanish music have expressed this device in different ways, but it is essentially a confusion between tonic and dominant as ‘dual tonicity’. As will be seen, it is at its most obvious in Bizet’s Entr’acte to the final Act.

For study of the performance style as it had evolved at the Opéra-Comique the 1911 recording of the opera conducted by Ruhlmann is, with certain reservations, a revelation.⁵⁸ There are cuts, probably to facilitate the fitting of sections on to 78 rpm discs; there are re-orchestrations, riding a coach and four through Bizet’s intentions; and the dialogue is far from complete. However, there are certain elements which give

⁵⁷ *Les Pêcheurs de perles* was originally to be set in Mexico: one wonders whether Bizet would have adopted a different ‘exotic’ musical style to evoke this topos.

⁵⁸ See footnote 18.

considerable insight into the performance practices pertinent to the piece as it was done at the Opéra-Comique, looking back to its premiere there. In this respect the manner of delivery of the spoken dialogue has already been mentioned, as each number is examined, further insights will come to light.

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