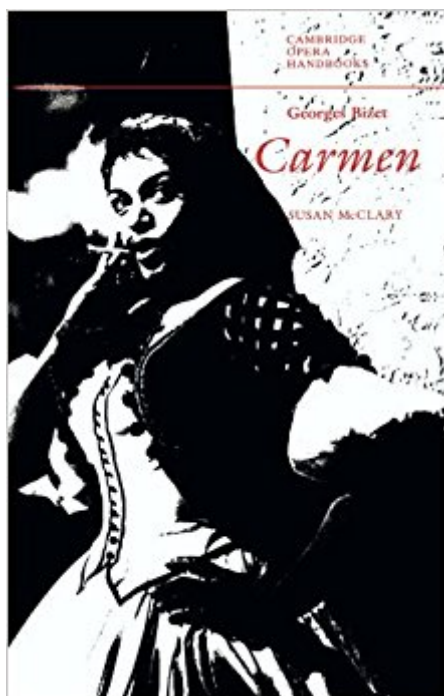


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# Georges Bizet: Carmen (Cambridge Opera Handbooks)



## Synopsis

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

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

These small-format volumes devoted to individual operas are the first in a projected 200-volume series (with approximately four titles to be added each month). An expansion of the "Opera Journeys Mini Guide" series that the publisher launched last year, they include a brief synopsis, a story narrative with very brief music examples, commentary and analysis, a libretto, a discography, a videography, and a dictionary of opera and musical terms. Students and opera goers may find them attractive because of their reasonable price, their e-book availability on netLibrary, and the insightful commentary and analysis by Fisher (lecturer, Florida Intl. Univ.). A list of source materials, however, would have been useful; in portions of the *Butterfly* and *Bohème* volumes, for example,

Fisher seems to have relied to some extent on Julian Budden's articles in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*. Also, the discographies are rife with problems. Neither record labels nor formats are given, the editing is sloppy, names are misspelled ("Tuckers" for Tucker), many dates are incorrect, and some recordings are listed twice with different dates. In one case, a recording made in 1912 with singers who are surely deceased is dated 2001. An entry for a recording of *Carmen* reverses the women's roles, listing Gheorghiu as Carmen and Larmore as Michaela. Attractive format and engaging commentary aside, these volumes are compromised by their inaccuracies. Not recommended. [The ISBNs for the e-books are the same as those for the print versions. Ed.] Kate McCaffrey, Onondaga Cty. P.L., Syracuse, N.- Kate McCaffrey, Onondaga Cty. P.L., Syracuse, NY Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"The book is a welcome resource for language teachers who wish to introduce the discussion of other art forms into the French literature class." Fred L. Toner, *The French Review*

This was delivered quickly and I am very pleased with the quality of the book. It is exactly what I wanted.

Extremely helpful as part of my research for my graduate thesis.

many audiences when viewing *Carmen* in various art forms(movies, TV,plays,opera) and in various settings. In order to understand what Bizet's *Carmen* was all about, we need to read and understand France's history toward its southern neighbors and the metropolises as well as its superiority and contempt the country have toward them, which continues today.*Carmen* has been called many things by many people. She's been called animalistic, loose woman, tramp, predator as well as worse things that I wouldn't say, read, or print.As for gender, French society in the 19th century experienced an upheaval in which women fought equal rights for themselves. That threatened middle class French men, who are already threatened by the demands of the working and lower classes who only wanted to better themselves and to participate in French political and social life just like their upper class counterparts.Also, the influx of immigrants to France also upset many of its inhabitants, then and now.*Carmen* exemplifies all the social disorders French society wants to control through repressive laws and customs during the course of the nineteenth century.When the opera first premiered in 1875, it was denounced as immoral and superficial, not fit for women and families attending the opera. However, as decades gone by, many people are

attracted to the play and some artists were influenced by it. John Singer Sargent was one such person. His Spanish and flamenco paintings were partially influenced by the plain. "Carmela Bertagna", "El Jaleo", and "The Spanish Dance" are such examples. Also, Carmen exudes strong sensuality, which was a no-no in French bourgeois society, which tried to assert itself by being the arbiter of morality. Case in point: The outrage over Manet's painting of a courtesan in 1865. Carmen elicit the same outrage in 1875 because of her strong sensuality and assertiveness. Even today, the double standard is still in operation, punishing women for being aggressive, while praising the same in men.

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