

Carmen Abroad

From the 'old world' to the 'new' and back again, this transnational history of the performance and reception of Bizet's *Carmen* – whose subject has become a modern myth and its heroine a symbol – provides new understanding of the opera's enduring yet ever-evolving and resituated presence and popularity. This book examines three stages of cultural transfer: the opera's establishment in the repertoire; its performance, translation, adaptation and appropriation in Europe, the Americas and Australia; and its cultural 'work' in Soviet Russia, in Japan in the era of Westernisation, in southern, regionalist France and in Carmen's 'homeland', Spain. As the volume reveals the ways in which Bizet's opera swiftly travelled the globe from its Parisian premiere, readers will understand how the story, the music, the staging and the singers appealed to audiences in diverse geographical, artistic and political contexts.

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Carmen Abroad

Bizet's Opera on the Global Stage

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Preface

This book was born out of a previous collaboration on *Carmen* between its two editors: their work on the Peters Edition of the opera. Styled as a 'Performance Urtext', this edition focused on bringing to the printed page not only the musical text but also many of the details of how *Carmen* was first performed. Both editors had thus gone through every bar of the opera with a fine toothcomb; some sort of follow-up seemed inevitable. The idea of a book on 'Carmen Abroad' was hatched, focused and refined. From the outset we were encouraged by the enthusiastic reception of the idea by Cambridge University Press, and we began to approach potential contributors. Then the project trifurcated: not only would we have a book, we would somehow bring together contributors in a conference, and we would also have a website. At first an international online video conference was envisaged but practicalities – not least of time zone differences – proved insurmountable. An International Initiatives Grant from Cardiff University and a Music and Letters Trust award provided the answer, by providing funding for a two-day academic conference, which would not have come into being without the energy, fruitful exchanges and support of all our collaborators.

Thus it was that our team first came together at Cardiff University in June 2017 for the conference 'Carmen Singer of the World', which took place in collaboration with the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World international singing competition. Alongside the academic conference there was an inspiring workshop with opera director Annabel Arden on her new production of *Carmen* for the Grange Festival, and an 'in conversation' event with Dame Kiri Te Kanawa talking to Clair Rowden, thus drawing in a substantial audience from the general public.

The academic conference elucidated the networks of exchange and influence in performances of Bizet's iconic opera, from its Parisian premiere in 1875 up until the Second World War. For all of us, it was an eye-opener. So many issues emerged during the various papers given, and still more in the fruitful discussions that followed, revealing a multitude of performance traditions, narratives and modes of storytelling for a single opera, situated in specific geographical, political, social and artistic

contexts, with all the adaptations, appropriations, reconfigurations and fulfilment of audience expectations that required. At the same time papers demonstrated how scores, singers, performers, sets, theatrical conventions and audience receptions crossed national boundaries.

Yet the boundless enthusiasm of the collaborators at the 2017 conference wanted to take the 'Carmen Abroad' idea still further forward. More than twenty academics pooled resources to create a global map and timeline of *Carmen* performances, making their research data readily available to a wide public in an appealing format that spoke not just about *Carmen* but also about the transnational journeys the opera made. Not only did this volume begin to take shape, but in addition the website carmenabroad.org – made possible originally through seedcorn funding from Cardiff University and the Royal College of Music – was launched during the summer of 2018. Following investment from the Leverhulme Trust in 2019, the website is now fully functional; continually growing and evolving, the site now holds records of over 900 'performance runs' of *Carmen*, in venues from Tokyo to Rio de Janeiro, from Helsinki to Melbourne, from Algiers to New Orleans; it provides multimedia supporting documents, an interactive map and a diachronic timeline of these performances.

But the convergence of diverse source materials brought with it a huge variety of data: the taxonomising, integration and clear representation of that thick data has been a truly daunting task, necessitating careful editorial and curatorial control by Clair Rowden. The ongoing nature of the data collection process has shaped the fundamental structure of the database that underpins the website, with an ever-evolving set of main categories uncovering new narratives and affording the site new potentialities with each addition. Currently the site is capable of displaying long-running productions in single locations as well as visualising the journeys of touring productions that never stayed still for long.

Following the 'spatial turn' in the digital humanities,¹ and widespread technological capabilities, the integrated map and timeline allow complex movement through the data in a way that takes advantage of the endless possibilities afforded to us by multidimensional digital space for the representation and analysis of the performance of *Carmen* over time, in both minute detail and vast breadth. In relation to flow maps, Thomas

¹ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 154; Edward W. Soja, 'Taking space personally', in Barney Warf and Santa Arias, eds., *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Abingdon: Routledge, London, 2009), 11–35.

Sutherland refers, however, to a move away from the representation of space towards the spatialisation of time.² Nonetheless, *carmenabroad.org* not only spatialises time but, very literally, theatricalises time, in a collision of time – what Barbara Adam has referred to as timing, tempo, duration and sequence – and physical performance spaces.³ Bringing together spatial-temporal narratives, visual design, embodied navigation and curatorial strategies, the website offers and will continue to offer new articulation and investigation of, and engagement with, the cultural and performance history of one opera during a seventy-year period.⁴ We hope readers will experiment with and enjoy the website alongside the current volume.

Although the website is a home for data and valuable resources, the current volume provides the interpretation and contextualisation of those sources: experts of operatic and artistic cultures in various points around the globe have selected performances of *Carmen* – often the first ones, but also other significant performances for a variety of reasons – in order to examine and analyse the ‘work’ the opera does, its mediation of numerous issues, whether social or political, of representation or identity. Thus, the book identifies the different ways in which the opera was performed, produced, disseminated and interpreted across the globe from 1875 until the Second World War, and follows a tripartite structure, examining first the processes of adaptation and embedment following the Parisian premiere; then the transnational journeys *Carmen* made from 1878 onwards; and, lastly, the opera’s instrumentalisation for the negotiation of specific meanings.

The first chapter, written by the co-editors, highlights the main sources, challenges the precepts of such a transnational history of opera and attempts to weave the individual chapters together and draw out where they overlap, challenge expected narratives, contradict one another – in short, synthesise the wonderful kaleidoscopic nature of the findings of all our collaborators. Individual bibliographies are given after each chapter for those readers who will pick and chose their geographical areas of

² Thomas Sutherland, ‘Mapping the space of flows: considerations and consequences’, in Sybille Lammes, Chris Perkins, Alex Gekker, Sam Hind, Clancy Wilmott and Daniel Evans, eds., *Time for Mapping: Cartographic Temporalities* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 175–96, p. 176.

³ Barbara Adam, ‘Of timescapes, futurescapes and timeprints’, talk presented at Lüneberg University, 17 June 2008; cited in Alex Gekker, Sam Hind, Sybille Lammes, Chris Perkins and Clancy Wilmott, ‘Introduction: Mapping times’, in Lammes *et al.*, *Time for Mapping*, 1–23, p. 5.

⁴ Todd Presner, David Shepard and Yoh Kawano, *HyperCities: Thick Mapping in the Digital Humanities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 53.

predilection from the texts proposed. The co-editors have provided a 'Select Bibliography' at the end, which brings together most of the main French and other crucial sources, and overarching secondary source material important throughout this study, and which includes any references used by two or more authors. With this new approach to the study of the performance of one opera across the globe, the book challenges ingrained Eurocentric paradigms of high-quality operatic performance versus decentralised and derivative productions and interpretations, and remodels operatic history as a global cultural phenomenon.

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First, thanks must go to Henry Morgan, who has accompanied this *Carmen* journey in all its different forms over the last couple of years. His support for [carmenabroad.org](#), for the ‘Musical Mapping’ conference, held at Cardiff University in June 2019 with support from the Leverhulme Trust, and for the many other public engagement events has been invaluable and inestimable. The moral and intellectual support of the ‘Mapping Music History’ network of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), led by Jonathan Hicks (University of Aberdeen) and Louis Epstein (St. Olaf College, Minnesota), in the construction of the website was also greatly appreciated. For the initial website design and its construction we are indebted to Tim Reader of Long White Digital, and for redevelopment to RJ Ramey of Auut Studio.

Throughout the project we have received support from our home institutions, from Cardiff University and from Richard Wistreich at the Royal College of Music. Particular encouragement has been received from several senior academics concerned with French opera and Bizet in particular, among them Katharine Ellis, Hugh Macdonald, Lesley Wright and the two anonymous readers who took the time to produce detailed suggestions before the book was commissioned. The team of contributors and their exchanges and interactions have been of incomparable value, and also enjoyment. In this sense, the book has become more than a multi-author book, more a result of collaboration and exchange, even though it has ended up in the format of separate chapters. Intense conversations in particular with Ulla-Britta Broman-Kananen, Matthew Franke, Bruno Forment, Laura Moeckli, Michela Niccolai and Lola San Martín Arbide have nourished our transnational journeys. We are particularly grateful to Naomi Matsumoto for suggesting the cover image: a sheet music illustration that distils what our book is about.

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RICHARD LANGHAM SMITH has published widely on French music. His edition of *Carmen* for Peters Edition was first published in 1999 and has subsequently been performed all over the world; a performance by Sir John Eliot Gardiner at the Opéra-Comique was subsequently issued as

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