



## Opera Hong Kong kicks off 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary programme with *Carmen*

*Bizet's tale of desire and revenge presented by OHK and Le French May*



Caption: Rendering of rotating set for *Carmen*, designed by Bruno de Lavenère, courtesy of Opera Hong Kong

(Hong Kong, 27 March 2018) – Opera Hong Kong proudly kicks off its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary programme with a production of Georges Bizet's *Carmen*, jointly presented with Le French May between 16 – 20 May at the Grand Theatre at Hong Kong Cultural Centre. Widely considered as one of the most popular operas of all time, this production of *Carmen*, a tale of love, lust and revenge, will feature exceptional talent, both international and from Hong Kong and will be performed on a set that rotates during each performance.

*Carmen* will be conducted by the notable Yves Abel, Chief Conductor of the Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie, Germany, known internationally for leading at the Royal Opera House, La Scala and the Metropolitan Opera. With French director Jean-Romain Vesperini also taking the helm, this new production from Opera Hong Kong propels *Carmen* into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with an innovative nested rotating set and features renowned artists who have performed in leading opera houses around the world; Varduhi Abrahamyan and Marie Karall as Carmen; Jean-François Borrás and Giancarlo Monsalve as Don José; and Vittorio Vitelli and Jean-Kristof Bouton as Escamillo. Joining them will be Colette Lam and Li Yang, participants of the Jockey Club Opera Hong Kong Young Artist Development Programme.

Set in Seville around 1830, Georges Bizet's *Carmen* is a gypsy cigarette factory worker who persuades a soldier Don José to release her from custody through cunning manipulation. For her, he gives up everything, abandoning his post, career, family and childhood sweetheart Micaëla, only to be rebuffed when she makes clear her preference for bull-fighter Escamillo. Unable to cope with this rejection and Carmen's refusal to comply with societal norms, Don José's jealousy consumes him, and he stabs her to death in the final scene. Written in 1875, the opera was panned by critics and many believe the terrible response contributed to Bizet's early death. The raw sexual connotations and lack of morality on display proved far too-high-a-dose of realism for French audiences, and the opera did not gain true acceptance until far after the composer's lifetime. Today, it remains one of, if not the, most performed operas of all time, featuring one of the world's best-known arias: Habanera, which has been featured countless times in popular culture, from a Doritos' Super Bowl advert to Pixar's *Up*.

Carmen's character and her absolute belief in her right to liberty in her life and love choices has made her character increasingly relatable and heroic with time. While the set and costumes will remain period in feel and intention, the direction of all the singers and the set design will be completely contemporary, allowing the audience to completely immerse themselves in harshness of the Sevillian environment and the huge variety of characters on stage.

Producer and OHK Artistic Director, Warren Mok, said, "*Carmen's* popularity as an opera has grown exponentially in the last 100 years, and with the global popularity of its arias like Habanera and the Toreador song, its gritty realism and insistence on love, violence, sex, it's the ideal opera, not just for opera-lovers, but for those looking to experience the art form for the first time. We have a truly exceptional and talented team, from the singers to the designers, and believe the production will mark the beginning of OHK's 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a bang."

Julien-Loic Garin, CEO of Le French May Arts Festival said "*Carmen* is the most appreciated opera across the globe and it is our great pleasure to co-present it with Opera Hong Kong in the frame of Le French May 2018. As the first production of their 15th anniversary, Georges Bizet's masterpiece will surely be a success with its star-studded cast and set design."

Limited tickets are available for this run of *Carmen*. For ticket details, please visit: [operahongkong.org/carmen](http://operahongkong.org/carmen)

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**Event Details:**

**Bizet's *Carmen*** – An Opera in 4 Acts

Performed in French with Chinese and English Surtitles

**Date:** 16 - 20 May 2018

**Venue:** Grand Theatre, Hong Kong Cultural Centre

**Ticket Price:** \$1080, \$880, \$680, \$420, \$300, \$150

**Early Bird Discount:** 20% Off (on or before 18 April 2018)

**Images**



Caption: Opera Hong Kong kicks off 15th Anniversary programme with *Carmen*.



Caption: Portrait of Yves Abel  
(Photo Credit: Marco Borggreve)



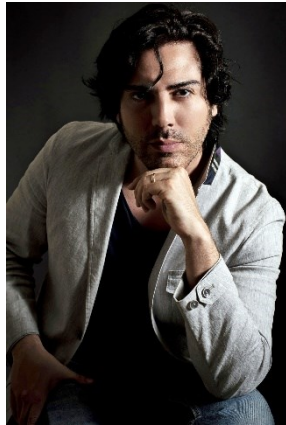
Caption: Costume sketch of Escamillo,  
courtesy of Opera Hong Kong and  
Thibaut Welchlin



Caption: Portrait of Varduhi Abrahamyan,  
participating singer as Carmen



Caption: Portrait of Marie Karall,  
participating singer as Carmen  
(Photo Credit: Dietmar Scholtz)



Caption: Portrait of Giancarlo Monsalve,  
participating singer as Don José



Caption: Portrait of Jean-François Borrás,  
participating singer as Don José  
(Photo Credit: Youness Taouil)



Caption: Portrait of Colette Lam, participating  
singer as Micaëla



Caption: Portrait of Li Yang, participating  
singer as Micaëla

**High-resolution images can be downloaded here:**

Link: [gallery.sinclaircomms.com](http://gallery.sinclaircomms.com)

Password: talkoffthetown

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**About Opera Hong Kong**

Opera Hong Kong is the first opera company to have been established in Hong Kong. The company was formed in July 2003 as a non-profit organisation. Since its inception, Opera Hong Kong has become a firmly established part of Hong Kong's cultural scene. The artistic director of Opera Hong Kong is Warren Mok and productions to date include *The Barber of Seville*, *Otello*, *Tosca*, *La traviata*, *Turandot*, *Carmen*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Roméo et Juliette*, *Aïda*, *Werther*, *Don Carlo*, *The Magic Flute*, *Poet Li Bai*, *Manon*, *La Bohème* and many others.

Opera Hong Kong (OHK) is committed to the mission of enhancing the appreciation of the art of opera in Hong Kong and promoting local musical talents. In 2015, OHK has launched *The Jockey Club Opera Hong Kong Young Artist Development Programme* (the Programme), a 3-year opera training programme funded by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, to nurture ten professional young local artists. The Programme is the first-ever intensive professional opera training project in Hong Kong accompanied by a series of outreach activities. Mr. Gong Dongjian, a famous bass and an experienced vocal coach, is the Programme Director of the Programme.

In addition to staging operas and concerts, opera school tours, summer camps and master classes are held regularly to reach the young population. Opera Hong Kong Chorus and Opera Hong Kong Children Chorus were established in 2004 and 2008 respectively and are becoming recognised forces in the local choral scene.

**About Le French May**

Established in 1993, Le French May is one of the largest cultural events in Asia. With more than 120 programmes presented across two months, it has become an iconic part of Hong Kong's cultural scene that reach out over 1 million visitors each year. The objectives of Le French May are to touch everything, to be everywhere and for everyone. To touch everything by showcasing the most diversified art forms: from heritage and contemporary arts, paintings and design, to classical music and hip hop dance, cinema and circus. To be everywhere by bringing performances to various venues and districts,

including the unusual and unexpected: from cultural centres and shopping malls, to public spaces, the racecourse and Victoria Harbour. For everyone because the Festival aims to reach out to the entire community by developing educational programmes, talks, guided tours, workshops and masterclasses, including those that directly benefit the young and less-privileged. For 26 years, Le French May has been both truly international and distinctly local and wishes to contribute to the unique appeal of Asia's World City. Le French May received the "Gold Award for Arts Promotion 2008" from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council.