

The world's favourite opera

How do you go about casting *Carmen*? Simple: start by asking one of the world's finest exponents of the title role if she'll sing it for your company, wait for her to say, 'Yes!', then look for the rest of the cast.



When Dorset Opera's Artistic Director, Roderick Kennedy, proposed *Carmen* as this year's production, he was adamant that it should only go ahead if he could persuade one very special mezzo-soprano to come to Dorset. A mezzo with whom he has worked, and who was rightly described by the head of Washington Opera as, 'The definitive *Carmen*.'

That singer is the great American diva, Denyce Graves, of whom the Wall Street Journal said: 'She is the hottest *Carmen* on the opera circuit today.' And yes, she is coming to Dorset to appear in what has become her 'signature role.'

Miss Graves made her Metropolitan Opera debut in the role of *Carmen* in 1995, and she has since had productions mounted specifically for her all over the world, including those at the Met and at the Royal Opera House – in both cases opposite the Don José of Plácido Domingo.

Denyce sings *Carmen* on Thursday 29 July and Saturday 31 July (evening). If you don't have tickets for those performances, beg, borrow, or steal to get one. Otherwise, you will be missing one of the greatest *Carmen*'s of all time, in a once-in-a-lifetime event that will go down as one of the pivotal moments in the history of Dorset Opera.



Jeremy Carnall
Conductor

Franco Pomponi
Escamillo

Christine Arand
Micaëla

Joining the DO Family

We are delighted to welcome several newcomers to the Dorset Opera family this year.



Carmen is being directed by Paul Higgins, who has a wealth of directing experience – across all genres – behind him. He is founding Artistic Director of the award-winning *Theatre 503* in London. He has worked as an associate director on shows in the West End and for the RSC, and has been Assistant Director for such well-known films as *The Madness of King George*, *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace*, *Jane Eyre*, *Enigma* and *Incognito*. He has

worked for Glyndebourne, and now directs at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. He is currently working on a new production of Massenet's *Manon* with Anna Netrebko.

Louie Whitmore is no stranger to Dorset Opera having assisted Cordelia Chisholm for many years. In 2010 however, Louie steps up to the plate, and is designing *Carmen* for us. She is a graduate of the renowned Motley Design School – where the greatest design talents have been nurtured for many decades. Louie has worked on set and costume projects in opera (and straight theatre) everywhere from Glyndebourne to Grange Park, for directors such as David Freeman and Sir Peter Hall.

Costume Designer and Wardrobe Supervisor Kate Lane, is another newcomer to Dorset Opera. She and Louie have worked on several productions together. Kate graduated in 2008 with an MA in Costume Design for Performance from the London College of Fashion, where she won the MA Centenary Award for Costume. She has already worked on countless projects in theatre, dance, film and opera, including *Child of Zion* which won a BAFTA award.



John Hudson
Don José

Anna Gregory
Frasquita

Leonardo Capalbo
Don José



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The Dorset Connection

This year, five of our professional team are Dorset born or based. Director Paul Higgins has a home in Lyme Regis; tenor John Hudson (who is singing Don José) moved to Dorset after appearing in *Cavalleria rusticana* last year; Anna Gregory – who sings Frasquita – has lived in the Shaftesbury area for many years; our Remendado, tenor Colin Judson, lives just the other side of Christchurch; and mezzo-soprano Emma Watkinson, who is understudying the role of Mercedes, is a resident of Tisbury.

Sung recitative or dialogue?

Bizet wrote *Carmen* for the Opéra-Comique in Paris. He died at the age of just 35 – the same age as Mozart – believing that *Carmen* had been a disaster. There is not a great deal of ‘comedy’ in the opera, although the smugglers can appear quite amusing. But to qualify for performance at the Opéra-Comique, the opera had to include spoken dialogue.

Later, when it became staple repertoire in the great opera houses of the world, the dialogue was considered out of place, and sung recitative was substituted. This is the version we are performing.

Recitative enables the story to flow more smoothly, and helps to alleviate the anguish of dialogue coaches (and French speakers) having to listen to French pronunciation tinged with strange accents from far-flung nations!

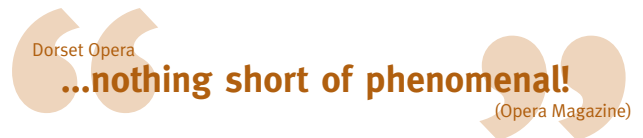
Cheaper Tickets at DO

Tickets for *Carmen* are selling fast. With two months still to go before the actual performances, we have already sold more tickets than the whole of last year! However, as we go to press, tickets are still available for all performances.

Let us firmly dispel the idea that tickets to Dorset Opera are expensive.

- Longborough charges £35-80 for midweek performances; £50-£110 for Fridays & Saturdays (and £70-145 for its Ring Cycle performances)
- Iford tickets are £93 and £97 each
- Garsington charges £85-£155 per ticket
- Grange Park in Hampshire charges £110+ (£75 for seats with a restricted view)
- Glyndebourne tickets are from £35 to £200 each
- Dorset Opera charges from £20 to £55

Bearing in mind that we have a reputation for being, “*Top of the tree in the regional opera scene*” (according to the world’s leading opera magazine, *Opera Now*), you will no doubt agree that our tickets really do represent excellent value for money.



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Our most expensive production to date

Dorset Opera is a non-profit-making charitable organization working to an extremely tightly-balanced budget, run entirely by volunteers. The world-famous professionals that come to Dorset to give our youngsters the opportunity to observe and learn in a permanent masterclass situation, do so for fees that are well below the norm. Even so, with a cast of 15 principals, a chorus in excess of 70, and an orchestra of 50, *Carmen* is certainly going to be an expensive production.

If you or your company are able to offer financial support in these difficult times, we have several specific initiatives that might interest you. We would like to be able to offer discounted tickets to young people and students, and our *Opera-in-Education* arm (where we take the joys of opera into Dorset schools) awaits much-needed funding. Call us on 01258 840000 or e-mail the Artistic Director on ad@dorsetopera.com

Win tickets for the Royal Opera or Glyndebourne

In the past we have offered two seats for English National Opera or Welsh National Opera performances as raffle prizes at each of our performances. This year, we hope you will agree we are doing even better. Through the generosity of contacts at Glyndebourne and the Royal Opera House, we are able to offer two tickets for a performance of your choice in their 2011 seasons. So for your chance to win, please look out for our raffle ticket sellers at your chosen performance. (Seats are subject to availability, and the offer does not cover the cost of transport to and from the venue, food and drink or overnight accommodation.)

Surtitles

In recent years, the colour of the diodes used in our surtitle screens has been causing difficulties for some of our patrons. The number of characters per line (just 32) has also been giving our translator considerable angst as he attempts to cram operatic exclamations and librettists' intentions into impossibly short sentences.

This year, we hope to offer audience-goers a new type of screen. It is similar to that used by other companies (WNO in particular), and consists of fully-formed white letters on a black background. The font size is larger than before, and the contrast is much higher without the screen intruding into the stage picture. We hope this improvement will be welcomed by all our patrons.



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DiDO - how you can help

The take-up for our fundraising initiative – *Dine-in for Dorset Opera* (with the acronym DiDO) has been rather disappointing. The basic concept invites you to host a dinner party (or perhaps a tea party or coffee morning), where your friends are respectfully requested to ‘pay for their meal’, by making a donation to Dorset Opera! The average to date is almost £50 per head – but it can be anything your guests can afford. We provide printed envelopes into which your guests can place their cheque, and which sport a GiftAid form – enabling us to recoup a further 25% tax from the government. If you could help us raise funds in this way, please do not hesitate to contact the Dorset Opera office on 01258 840000.

Royal Mail Problems

We have received more reports of mail not getting to you, than at any time in our history. Several members of the Friends of Dorset Opera failed to get their priority booking details, and others did not receive invitations to our recent *Insight Evenings*. We can only apologise for this and point the finger at the Royal Mail which maintains that 2% of mail posted gets lost or mislaid.

Bearing in mind the numbers to whom we mail, that figure is not insignificant. We would therefore urge our readers to check with their friends and if possible, keep an eye on our website for regularly updated information. Otherwise, if you haven’t already done so, please supply us with your e-mail address. If you think you might have missed a communication from us, please call the DO office.



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English Touring Opera presents The Duenna FRI 1 & SAT 2 OCT

English Touring Opera presents a new production of Richard Brinsley Sheridan’s comic play with songs composed by the Linleys of Bath. Michael Barker Caven’s new production showcases the comic talents of Richard Suart, Nuala Willis and Adrian Thompson, alongside a clutch of young singers. The period orchestra is directed by Joseph McHardy, in his opera debut.



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Our first Carmen (in 1976)...

Dorset Opera has mounted two previous productions of *Carmen* – one in 1976, the other in 1992. Our founder, Patrick Shelley, reputedly sold his house to cover the costs of the company's first production of *Carmen* – and that wasn't without incident. Read on, as we reproduce part of a review which appears to have come from the *Western Gazette*:

'Surely one of the most stimulating events in the recent life of Sherborne, was the Dorset Opera Group's production of Bizet's *Carmen* in the BSR at Sherborne School...The principal solo parts are sung by professional opera singers, and the professional orchestra – this time the English National Orchestra – is engaged... This was indeed a brave and worthwhile adventure of outstanding harmony and enjoyment – a spirit into which the professionals appreciated, and into which they entered fully.

The young and enthusiastic chorus of 120 (!) was trained by Miss Augusta Miller, Director of Music at Sherborne School for Girls, whose keenness and musicianship were reflected in the outstanding results of her coaching...

The imagination and ability of the producer Robert Glen, must have been exploited to the full in manipulating such a vast cast on a very limited stage that has no 'wing space.'

The principals were all of great concert and operatic experience, two being from the present Covent Garden season. There was a last-minute production drama – Mary Hamilton who was to have

sung *Carmen*, was taken ill, and literally at the dress rehearsal, Sally Present who was contracted to sing Mercedes, took over the part of *Carmen*, and Ann Pashley came down from London to sing Mercedes just before the first performance...

But the ultimate success of this event depended on the direction of the conductor Patrick Shelley...He is an outstanding musician, and a man of enthusiastic ideas, and his excellence as a conductor was proved by the masterly control of the very large English National Orchestra.

The whole basic concept sprang from his idea of using local schools with professional soloists, which had its fruition in the *Bartered Bride* in 1974. This year's *Carmen* was the greater development of that original concept.'

Dorset Opera

...consistently on a par with the UK's
five main opera companies

(Opera Now)

"Live from the Met" Season

Many Dorset Opera supporters have enjoyed the *Live from the Met* experiences in HD format at cinemas around the region. Next season's broadcasts have now been announced, and the list can be viewed online. Your nearest location is the Regent Centre in Christchurch. www.regentcentre.co.uk

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The Serenata Festival - 10% Discount for DO Supporters

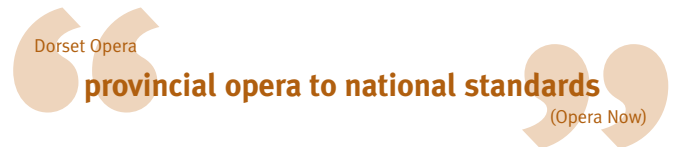
The Serenata Classical Music Festival is taking place from 26-28 August at Kimmeridge, Dorset. Set on the stunning Jurassic coast, the Festival is the first of its kind, and Dorset Opera has negotiated a 10% early-booking discount for its supporters if they book tickets before 9 July. Just mention 'Dorset Opera' when contacting the Serenata box office.

Confirmed acts include Katherine Jenkins, Russell Watson, Ruth Palmer and Emma Johnson amongst many others, but the Festival is also about developing emerging talent and there will be competitions for musicians and singers aged 16-25, with a total prize fund of £10,000.

Serenata combines inspirational music with all the elements of a festival, including an art fair, great locally-sourced food and drink, a champagne and oyster bar, and on-site babysitting provided by Boutique Babysitters. Children get to have a ball with their own programme of music and entertainment, provided by the Pleasance Theatre Group's, 'Kidzone.' To complete the scene, three options of camping are on offer from traditional camping to a Hotel Bell Tent, or camping in the Serenata Boutique Camp (complete with butlers and baths!) www.serenatafestival.com

The Friends' Column

With the postal system in apparent disarray, the Friends' secretary, Celia Harvey, would like to keep in touch with you through as many different means as possible. If you have an e-mail address, would you be kind enough to simply send a blank e-mail to Celia at celia.harvey@tiscali.co.uk



Useful DO addresses:

Friends' Secretary: Mrs Celia Harvey, Eldersfield House, Ryalls Lane, Bishops Caundle, Sherborne DT9 5NG 01963 23114 celia.harvey@tiscali.co.uk

Patrons' Secretary: Mrs Elspeth Brown, 3 Salisbury Street, Cranborne, BH21 5PU 0207 631 0900 (weekdays) 01725 517581 (weekends) dkbrown@ukonline.co.uk

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Ensure your visit to Dorset Opera goes smoothly

Bryanston grounds: The Bryanston campus is private, but it will be open to the public from 5.00pm on performance days (12.30pm for the Saturday matinee.) You and your guests are most welcome to wander round the glorious grounds.

Start Times: Evening performances will start at 7.00pm. The Saturday Matinee starts at 2.00pm.

Running Times: *Carmen* will be approximately 170 minutes long.

Interval: The interval will last approximately 40 minutes.

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Saturday performances: We would respectfully ask Saturday matinee audience-goers to leave the campus shortly after the performance in order to make way for evening patrons.

Picnicking: Many Dorset Opera-goers now bring picnics to eat before the performance or during the interval. In the twilight, Bryanston's lawns look resplendent dotted with tables sporting glittering lights and in some cases, candelabra! Tables and chairs are available for picnickers on the Beechwood Lawn, and inside the NFU Mutual marquee. For those who don't want to go to the trouble of preparing food, mini picnic boxes are available to order for collection at the performance of your choice. For those who prefer to take pot luck, sandwiches can be purchased 'on the night'. Wines, soft drinks and hot beverages are also available from the marquee bar.

Afternoon Tea: At the matinee, we offer a full afternoon tea with a selection of finger sandwiches, scones with clotted cream and preserves, and cakes, with your choice of tea or coffee. This has proved extremely popular, but you will need to pre-order.

Four-course fine dining: For those who prefer a more complete, fine dining experience, Dorset Opera offers a full 4-course promotional opera dinner in one of the grand staterooms of Bryanston House, at each of the evening performances. Take two courses before the opera, and return to your tables for the rest of the meal during the Long Interval. Wines included. Further information, menus and food order forms can be found on the Box Office page of our website. Alternatively, please call Dorset Opera on 01258 840000.

Car Parking: Please drive with care on the Bryanston campus and park as indicated by the attendants. If you or one of your guests is disabled, there are parking spaces nearer the entrance to the Coade Theatre. Please display your disabled permit and ask the attendants to guide you to designated parking. We would ask you to take extra care when driving on grass in the car park areas – especially if it has been raining.

Wheelchair access: Limited facilities do exist for wheelchair users. Hopefully, patrons will have informed the Box Office of their need for a wheelchair space when booking tickets. For any other requirements please telephone 01258 840000 in advance of your visit.

In the event of rain: In the unlikely event of rain, picnickers are welcome to take their food into the marquee, or into Bryanston House itself. Rain or shine, one of the staterooms is always available for those preferring to picnic indoors.

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