

# Score Impact Survey: *Carmen* Peters Edition

## Introduction

In Autumn 2019 a survey was circulated to individuals from a variety of professional settings who had experience working with the Peters Edition score of *Carmen*. The survey was provided in both English and French translations.

In total we received nineteen responses to the survey – twelve in English and seven in French. The respondents fit into three general categories:

### Group 1: University Staff

- This group used the *Carmen* score during their research, or in a pedagogical capacity.

### Group 2: Students

- This group was mostly comprised of members of Cardiff University Opera Society (CUOS), which had made use of the score in a production of the opera in 2019.

### Group 3: Operatic Professionals

- This group was made up of industry professionals working with a variety of opera companies around Europe.

This report will first break down the survey into key question areas and provide an outline of feedback for each. In this section respondents will be referred to only by their group.

The second section links survey responses to two recent productions of *Carmen* in which the Peters Edition score was used. For each production, selected quotations from key respondents who worked on these productions are provided, demonstrating the international impact of the Peters Edition score on recent productions of *Carmen*.

The report concludes with a section demonstrating the impact of the event ‘*Carmen*: Performance, Performers and Production’ held by Cardiff University in Autumn 2019, in collaboration with Friends of Welsh National Opera.

## Survey Responses

Below is an overview of feedback and insight into the score's overall impact gained from each group of survey respondents.

### *Use alongside other editions*

- Among our respondents, **it is common to own multiple editions of the score**. The primary reason given for this is comparison.
- As one respondent from Group 1 says, 'each score brings insight to conception, realisation and various forms of *Carmen*'.

### *Online preface*

- **Just over half of our respondents** appear to have consulted the editors' preface on the Peters website, but all those who did so reported that it was highly informative.
- According to a respondent from Group 2, 'Through this we were able to provide a production that was innovative and true to Bizet's working methods. The urtext helped us to gain a real insight into the correct affect particularly as we were performing in English.'
- A respondent from Group 1 praised the preface as 'highly informative', and apparently has made it available to their students as well, demonstrating a combined pedagogical and research impact.

### *Shortened preface*

- This was **universally popular**, especially among Group 3 (Opera Professionals).
- 'It's always interesting to read up on the background of the piece and learn about things that you may not have picked up on before.' – a Group 3 respondent.
- Another member of Group 3 found that the shortened preface 'gives very interesting and valuable information about the work and its context... [it] also explains the approach that Peters Editions has taken.'

### *Additional online resources*

- Fewer respondents appear to have accessed the additional resources on the site.
- Some were unaware they were available.
- However, respondents from multiple groups rated these resources were 'Extremely Useful.'

### *Critical indications on the score*

- These received a **very positive response**, with 12 out of 17 respondents classing them as 5 out of 5 (or 'Extremely Useful').

- Just one respondent gave less than a 4 out of 5 for this question, awarding a 3.
- One **Opera Professional** remarked that the critical indications were 'Very helpful and informative, and with lots of useful information on the score pages, the kind of information which in some editions of operas is put in a small editorial volume of notes.' The same respondent also said of these indications 'It is helpful to see on the page where alternatives existed or were printed.'

### *Clarity of presentation*

- One **University Staff** respondent praised the 'Juxtaposition of citations from the mise en scène with the note material + text: the one does not obfuscate the other'
- Responses from **Opera Professionals** indicate that this group found the score to be very clear in presentation. As one respondent from this group put it: 'In general the typography is good and clear, and the translation of stage directions really helpful. It provides the singers and music staff using it with a very good score.'
- Another said 'all the pertinent information seems to be there in the piano part and the reduction is what I would expect.'
- The presentation of the preface was also praised.
- One respondent from Group 1 (**University Staff**) particularly liked the setting of the English Episode [Scène de l'Anglais'] (p. 20).
- One **Opera Professional** explained that as a performer they particularly appreciated musical detail found on 'Page 159, no. 2, bars 118 - 121. The detail provided in the score and musicality matched perfectly when learning it and provided ease when rehearsing the number. In addition, the spacing of the score aided phrasing and breathing structure.'

### *Libretto & translation*

- The prioritisation of French over the translation was popular, for both sung text and musical expression.
- One **University Staff** respondent praised the inclusion of the full/spoken text libretto, calling it 'highly useful for understanding the opéra comique and dialogue versions in comparison with the recitative versions.' [sic]
- Our **student** respondents appear to have particularly appreciated this too.
  - o One found it useful to help them to better 'understand the characters and their context.'
  - o Another **student** found that the inclusion of the spoken passages enabled them to 'figure out exactly where the dialogue fits in with the music', and to 'choose our own snippets of dialogue to use.'

- **Opera Professional** respondents appear to agree, as one explained: 'It's helpful because one is able to see the narrative and have more of a sense of direction throughout.'
- Another respondent from this group pointed out that 'it's always helpful to have the entire libretto and dialogue in one score, rather than having to refer to several copies. It helps to have a deeper understanding of the story and to see the development of the characters and plot, especially in the dialogue.'
- One **Opera Professional** explained the importance of the full text for a performer: 'When working on a character, one needs everything in order to build one's interpretation and understand the character, even though the final text (the one used during performances) always differs from the original one.'
- The translation of the spoken dialogue was also **universally popular**:
  - o One **University Staff** respondent found it 'very useful to have a reliable translation I could quote in my own work'
  - o According to one **Opera Professional** respondent 'It's always useful to have a translation which can also be used to sing in.'
  - o One **Opera Professional** respondent recalled that a colleague asked after the Peters Edition score specifically for this feature: 'A few days ago a singer from the Welsh National Opera saw me with the score and asked me where this edition came from because she had to sing a Carmen tune in English and was interested in the text.'
  - o The French respondents were all also appreciative of this translation for, as one French **University Staff** respondent put it, 'international understanding and dissemination.'
  - o However, one **Opera Professional** respondent noted that the translation might benefit from being more literal, as 'some phrases are not exact enough.'

#### *Overall reasons for choosing this edition*

- 'Outstanding quality', 'this one is new and offers much insight into matters formerly unresolved' – **University Staff** respondents.
- Several **Opera Professionals** agreed that the score's preface had transformed their understanding of Bizet's compositional practices, French opéra-comique working methods, and the score's editorial practices. As one put it, 'understanding Bizet's frame of mind and his compositional techniques were extremely useful to both musicians and non-musicians alike.'

## Impact Quotations – Welsh National Opera (WNO)

Below is a selection of direct quotations from survey respondents who worked on the 2019/20 Welsh National Opera production of *Carmen*.

### Quoted Respondents

- Chorus Master for WNO 2019/20 production (**hereafter 'CM'**)
- Pianist/vocal coach/repetiteur at Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama/WNO (**hereafter 'R'**)
- Actor, singer, dancer and vocal coach for WNO (**hereafter 'VC'**)
- Former Head of Music (**hereafter 'HM'**)

### *On the preface*

- **CM:** 'It's always interesting to read up on the background of the piece, and learn about things that you may not have picked up on before.'
- **R:** 'It's very informative and interesting. Nice to see it in 3 languages too.'
- **R:** 'Yes, I learnt a lot from reading it! It made me feel more informed.'
- **VC:** 'Je l'ai trouvé intéressante, parce qu'elle donne des informations très intéressantes et précieuses sur l'œuvre et son contexte. Elle explique aussi l'approche que les éditions Peters a prise.'
- **VC:** [Q.27 specifically] ' a) En comprenant mieux les méthodes de travail de Bizet cela permet d'avoir une meilleure compréhension de son œuvre.  
b) Oui, car je n'avais que peu de connaissances sur le fonctionnement de l'Opéra Comique! Vraiment très intéressant!  
c) Tout à fait car je connaissais très peu la pratique éditorial.'

### *On the score's critical indications and overall presentation*

- **CM:** 'interesting and useful'
- **CM:** 'There are so many editions and versions of Carmen that having a comparison within a vocal score is very useful.'
- **HM:** 'Very helpful and informative, and with lots of useful information on the score pages, the kind of information which in some editions of operas is put in a small editorial volume of notes.'
- **R:** 'They [the critical indications] are very informative and they give more knowledge to explore different ways of approaching the music and text.'
- **CM:** 'All of the necessary details are present throughout'
- **R:** 'The font is incredibly clear and easy to read. However, for me, the score that I have been looking at is on the small side for playing for 6 weeks of production rehearsals. There may be other sizes available though.'

- **R:** 'All of the musical details are very clear throughout and if there are other suggested tempi, they are written clearly in brackets afterwards.'
- **HM:** In general, the typography is good and clear, and the translation of stage directions really helpful. It provides the singers and music staff using it with a very good score'.
- **VC:** 'Sur un point de vu de la recherche sur l'oeuvre elles sont très intéressantes et apportent beaucoup.'
- **VC:** 'Elles sont surtout utiles pour la mise en scène et pour avoir une idée de l'atmosphère scénographie et l'atmosphère d'une scène.'

### *On the full libretto and translation*

- **CM:** 'It's great that French is clear and printed differently to the English underneath (Italics). All musical markings are very helpful.'
- **CM:** 'It's helpful because one is able to see the narrative and have more of a sense of direction throughout.'
- **CM:** 'It's always useful to have a translation which can also be used to sing in.'
- **HM:** 'Inclusion of full libretto and its translation, as well as that of stage directions really helpful.'
- **R:** 'It's always helpful to have the entire libretto and dialogue in one score, rather than having to refer to several copies. It helps to have a deeper understanding of the story and to see the development of the characters and plot, especially in the dialogue.'
- **R:** 'Always useful to have a good, up to date and clear translation to sing in English. I also don't speak french fluently so it's very helpful to have that!'
- **VC:** 'J'ai beaucoup apprécié la préface ('A New Carmen') que j'ai trouvée très instructive. Elle est bien présentée.'
- **VC** [Examples of a high level of musical detail]: 'N°16 par exemple: annotations musicales et scéniques précises. Page 292 Rit molto Bars 25-26 bien indiqué en bas de la page.'
- **VC:** 'Il est important que les expressions musicales soient aussi en français pour que l'on comprenne bien qu'elles soient de Bizet.'
- **VC** [on the English translation]: 'En tant que français elle n'est pas utile pour moi. Cependant si cette édition est pour un publique anglophone et non francophone la traduction est impérative.'
- **VC:** 'Elle est utile pour qu'un large publique non francophone puisse utiliser cette édition.'
- **HM** [on the helpfulness of the dialogue translation]: 'extremely, as is the translation of stage directions.'

## Impact Quotations – La Fabrique Opéra

Below is a selection of direct quotations from survey respondents who worked on the 2017 La Fabrique production of *Carmen* in Bordeaux.

### Quoted Respondents

- Conductor, Musical and Artistic Director 2017 production

#### *The preface*

- 'Cela m'a permis de mieux apprécier le travail de Bizet.'

#### *Critical indications and overall presentation*

- 'Très intéressant, on aimerait pouvoir avoir ce travail pour tous les opéras!'
- 'Elles favorisent une meilleure compréhension et appréciation du compositeur.'
- [I enjoyed] 'La possibilité de choisir entre la version originale et la version d'usage.'

#### *The full libretto and translation*

- [On the prioritisation of the French language]: 'Parfait!'
- 'Cela permet de mieux situer l'œuvre dans son contexte original.'
- [The translation for the full spoken text is useful] 'Pour les non Français afin de mieux comprendre l'œuvre en s'attardant sur le texte et non la musique seule.'

## *'Carmen: Performance, Performers and Production'.* – Event Impact

On 15 September 2019, Cardiff University School of Music hosted an event in collaboration with Friends of Welsh National Opera: *'Carmen: Performance, Performers and Production'*.

On leaving the event, guests were asked: **'What one thing today has transformed your understanding of *Carmen*?'** The following is a selection from the responses.

### *The Opera's Continued Relevance*

Several respondents expressed new understanding of various themes and the continued social relevance of Bizet's opera:

- 'Thinking about why we still perform it / see it today - the issues are not new but can be adapted to suit modern issues that modern audiences feel is relatable. Learning about what makes each production relevant to its time of performance.'
- 'Carmen and domestic violence - how relatable the story STILL IS in a modern context, in terms of its depiction of violence against women.'
- "'Oh, *another* Carmen" - my initial reaction to WNO Autumn 2019. But now, excited to see this Carmen and reminded by the panel that great art is only great when it's directed with the intention to connect to today's audiences.'
- 'How contemporary society and more affects her interpretation and understanding of character.'
- 'The different depths of the aspects of the opera - political etc. Will see it in a new light and be more open to different productions.'
- 'Themes of sexuality, gender, military, politics, society, EVERYTHING.'

### *Carmen Herself*

Some spoke of a transformation in their understanding of Carmen the character, and the ways in which she can be interpreted:

- 'Understanding different ways in which the character of Carmen can be portrayed - much more nuanced than might appear on the surface.'
- 'Who does Carmen stand for? Who does she represent? All women? Western ideals of women? Anti-establishment? Victims? Spanish culture? Does she represent anyone except herself?'
- 'How open the opera is to so many interpretations. The question I'm left with is why does Carmen not defend herself (usually)?'

- 'That not all Carmens were fierce and bold like most modern productions, some were more restrained.'
- 'The understanding that Carmen is misrepresented as to her background and where she came from in society and geographically.'

### *Carmen and Place*

Many respondents were particularly interested in the geographical aspect of the event, and the complexities of adapting and interpreting the opera (which is already regionally charged) in different parts of the world:

- 'I like the maps: the map of Spain brought home the 'distance' in all senses between the setting of Carmen in Andalucía and the Basque country - to a large extent a foreign country. Also the effort of Michaela in travelling hundreds of miles across Spain to reclaim Don Jose. Have to admit to being a Michaela fan. My mother sang Michaela in the 1949 performances in the Empire and Prince of Wales. Thank you.'
- 'The Basque - Andalusian antagonism.'
- 'The variation of interpretations was dependant on where in the world it was staged!'
- 'The non-Spanish aspects!'
- 'Hearing about the ways the Spanish themes were interpreted and portrayed differently in different cultures.'
- 'I found it surprising and really interesting that Carmen had been adapted by Russian directors, one being Stanislavski, and that the presence of the working class had been highlighted within the opera.'
- 'Carmen is not a Spanish opera - it is a French opera.'