



# CARMEN

Curtis Tucker | Conductor  
Mark Freiman | Stage Director

December 31 · January 2 · January 4  
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## From the President



George Bizet's *Carmen* is one of the world's greatest and most popular operas. It continues to be performed at opera venues throughout the world. In addition, there are dozens of film adaptations, ranging from silent films and traditional opera versions to modern musical adaptations. It with pleasure, pride, and great excitement that First Coast Opera presents it for you.

Set in Seville, Spain, the opera tells the story of the gypsy Carmen. Although first performed in 1875, *Carmen* appears to be more of a 21st century woman: independent and strong willed, with a mind of her own. The music contains some of the most memorable music in all of opera, including the Habanera and the Toreador song.

This production of *Carmen* brings principal singers from all across the country, with adult and children choruses of local singers. *Carmen* contains music the cast loves to sing; and you will love to hear.

On March 20th and 21st, we will present *The Mikado*, another satirical masterpiece by Gilbert and Sullivan. In English, with both spoken and sung dialogue, this operetta shows how well their humor and wit from 1885 transfers to modern times.

Opera is the most expensive of the performing arts. If we sold every seat for every performance, we would still fall short of meeting production costs. So please consider making a donation to support these performances at [firstcoastopera.com](http://firstcoastopera.com). Thank you, and enjoy *Carmen*.

*Steven Rich*

Steven Rich, President



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- **WHEN:** Saturday, September 20th from 10:00am to 1:00pm
- **WHERE:** Grace United Methodist Church, 8 Carrera Street in St. Augustine.
- **WHAT TO PREPARE:** Auditioners should prepare a song of their choice in any language, such as a folk tune, Disney selection, hymn, patriotic piece, etc. Please bring sheet music, a pianist will be provided for accompaniment.

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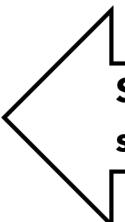
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# CARMEN

Music by Georges Bizet

Libretto by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy

Premiered March 3, 1875, at the Opéra-Comique in Paris

## Cast

Carmen .....	Sarah Nordin
Don José .....	Matt Morgan
Micaëla .....	McKenna Slack
Escamillo .....	Luis Orozco
Zuniga .....	Mark Freiman
Moralès .....	Jacob Pence
Frasquita .....	Elena Galván
Mercédès .....	Katherine Kincaid
El Dancairo .....	John Daugherty
El Remendado .....	Daniel Bates
Cigarette Girl #1.....	Caragh Zeigler
Cigarette Girl #2.....	Haley Kirk
Lillas Pastia .....	Charles Ross

Chorus of Soldiers, Townspeople, Cigarette Girls, Gypsies, and Smugglers

## Artistic Team

Conductor .....	Curtis Tucker
Stage Director .....	Mark Freiman
Set Designer and Technical Director .....	Valeriya Nedviga
Costumes, Hair & Makeup Designer .....	Gina Makarova
Lighting Designer .....	Patrick Mathis
Stage Manager .....	Emily Ann Fluchel

Pre-Opera Talk ..... Curtis Tucker, General and Artistic Director

There will be a simulated gun shot in Act 3.  
The intermission will be between Acts 2 and 3

# Synopsis

## Act 1 – A public square in Seville

A company of dragoons is lounging in the plaza. The officer on guard, Moralès, flirts with Micaela, a country girl who has arrived looking for the brigadier Don José. Intimidated, Micaela leaves before José arrives. Girls from the cigarette factory come out for their noon break, followed by the gypsy Carmen. To the admiring men, she sings about the fickleness and danger of love. Piqued by José's indifference, she throws a flower at him, taunting him. Micaela returns to give José a message and letter from his mother, then she modestly withdraws. An uproar in the factory leads to accusations that Carmen injured another worker. Zuniga, José's captain, charges José to guard Carmen before she goes to prison. She promises José a passionate rendezvous at Lillas Pastia's inn outside Seville if he lets her go. José is torn, but ultimately agrees to free her. He is demoted and imprisoned for his action.

## Act 2 – The Inn of Lillas Pastia

Carmen and her friends Frasquita and Mercédès dance and revel in their gypsy life. The bullfighter Escamillo arrives, recounts his adventures in the bullring, and becomes enamored of Carmen. All leave except the three women who remain to plot a smuggling expedition with Remendado and Dancairo; except that Carmen refuses to go, citing her newfound affection for José, who arrives having been released from prison. Carmen dances for him but, when José insists he must return to camp, she questions his love. José counters that his passion for her survived his prison stay, producing the dried flower she once threw at him. Carmen insists that he prove his love by joining their band of smugglers. He refuses, but when Zuniga arrives hoping for a tryst with Carmen, the two men fight. The gypsies disarm the situation, but José's only option is now to desert the army and join the gypsies.

## INTERMISSION

## Act 3 – A mountain pass

The smugglers and gypsies have set up camp. José still adores Carmen but has grown jealous of her, and she is tiring of him. Frasquita and Mercédès read their happy fortunes in the cards, but when Carmen deals, she reads only death. The band sets off for a smuggling expedition, leaving José to

guard the camp. Micaela approaches in search of José, but hides when Escamillo arrives looking for Carmen. Escamillo and José duel, but are interrupted by Carmen and the returning smugglers. The bullfighter leaves after issuing an invitation to the bullfight in Seville, and the others are about to resume their activities when Micaela is discovered. She reveals to José that his mother is dying, and he leaves with her after warning Carmen that they will meet again.

### **Act 4 – Outside the bullring in Seville**

Spectators anticipate the bullfight. Escamillo arrives with Carmen, and the two vow their love to each other. Carmen's friends warn her that José lurks about, but she shows no fear. As all retreat inside the bullfighting ring, a disheveled and agitated José confronts Carmen, pleading her to return to him. She refuses. As Escamillo's triumph is heard in the bullring, Carmen's demise comes at José's hands.

## **Principal Artists**



### **Sarah Nordin (Carmen)**

Mezzo-soprano Sarah Nordin returns to First Coast Opera as Carmen, following standout performances as Rosina (*The Barber of Seville*, 2025) and Ruth (*The Pirates of Penzance*, 2024). Praised by *Opera News* for the “clear beauty” of her voice, she appears this season with Redlands Symphony, St. Petersburg Opera, and Gulfshore Opera. A noted interpreter of Rossini, Mozart, and Bizet heroines, she has performed *Carmen* with Bel Cantanti Opera and the Missouri Symphony. Also a choreographer and advocate for new works, Sarah enjoys teaching, dancing, and exploring Florida’s coastal trails with her family.



### **Matt Morgan (Don José)**

Tenor Matt Morgan returns to First Coast Opera as Don José after prior appearances as Alfred (*Die Fledermaus*) and in *Bernstein's Broadway*. He made debuts at three Lincoln Center theaters and at the Kennedy Center, later appearing on PBS broadcasts and world premieres including *Sister Carrie* (*Opera News*’ “Top Five New Works of 2018”). Upcoming performances include Eisenstein with Opera

Theater of Connecticut and *Magnificat* with Music at Holy Trinity. A passionate mentor, Matt also coaches young singers and enjoys exploring Florida's coastal communities with his family.

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### **McKenna Slack (Micaëla)**

Soprano McKenna Slack returns to First Coast Opera after performances as Musetta (*La Bohème*, 2023) and Pamina (*The Magic Flute*, 2025). A graduate of Point Loma Nazarene University and the University of North Florida, she is a two-time NATS winner and Metropolitan Opera Encouragement Award recipient. Her operatic credits include Susanna, Fiordiligi, and Rosalinde. McKenna teaches voice and aural theory at Florida State College at Jacksonville and enjoys collecting vintage vinyl and exploring Florida's trails.

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### **Luis Alejandro Orozco (Escamillo)**

Making his First Coast Opera debut, baritone Luis Alejandro Orozco's recent roles include Moncada in *Zorro* (Pacific Opera Project), Silvio in *Pagliacci* (Opera San José), and Marcello in *La Bohème* (Knoxville and Nashville Opera). He has appeared with The Metropolitan Opera, Opera Omaha, Madison Opera, and Gulfshore Opera. Orozco is internationally recognized for his portrayal of El Payador in Piazzolla's *María de Buenos Aires*, performed with Opéra de Lyon, Florida Grand Opera, and Arizona Opera.

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### **Mark Freiman (Zuniga / Stage Director)**

Baritone and stage director Mark Freiman returns after directing *The Barber of Seville*. A former Metropolitan Opera Children's Chorus member, he has sung Zuniga with Virginia Opera and Escamillo with New York's Amato Opera. His directing credits include *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Sarasota Opera), *Carmen* and *Salomé* (Union Avenue Opera), and *Rigoletto* (Indianapolis Opera). Recipient of the Richard F. Gold Career Grant, Mark has performed with major companies nationwide and appears on the Sony recording of *The Ballad of Baby Doe*.

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### **Jacob Pence (Moralès)**

Baritone Jacob Pence returns to First Coast Opera after *The Stranger's Tale* and *The Tender Land* (2024). Recent roles include Judge Turpin (*Sweeney Todd*), the Slave (*Candide*), and Franz/Dennis (*Sunday in the Park with George*). He has performed with Opera Tampa, Opera Orlando, and the Space Coast Symphony Orchestra, and previously with Kentucky and Indianapolis Opera. Away from the stage, Jacob enjoys woodworking and cheering for the Kentucky Wildcats.



### **Elena Galván (Frasquita)**

Soprano Elena Galván returns to First Coast Opera following *Pagliacci* (2018) and concert appearances. This season she sings Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*, Winter Opera St. Louis), Miss Lightfoot (*Fellow Travelers*, Opera Parallèle), and performs with Anchorage Opera. She has sung Susanna with multiple U.S. companies and held Young Artist residencies with Des Moines Metro Opera and Opera Saratoga. A graduate of Ithaca College and the San Francisco Conservatory, Elena enjoys exploring local cafés and sharing her journey at [elenagalvan.com](http://elenagalvan.com).



### **Katherine Kincaid (Mercédès)**

Jacksonville native Katherine Kincaid joins *Carmen* as Mercédès after prior First Coast Opera performances and singing the same role with the Jacksonville Symphony. A recent Resident Artist with Nashville Opera, she has appeared with Indianapolis, Toledo, and Florida State Opera, and internationally with Oberlin in Italy. Also a pianist and songwriter, Katherine runs a private studio teaching piano, voice, and guitar, and performs original music regionally. Learn more at [katherinekincaid.com](http://katherinekincaid.com).



### **John Daugherty (Dancairo)**

Baritone John Daugherty returns to First Coast Opera following *The Stranger's Tale*. Director of the Opera Program at the University of North Florida, he has appeared as Count Almaviva, Joseph de Rocher, and Mercutio, and in concert with the Albany and Detroit Symphonies. His recital credits include Mahler's *Lieder*

eines fahrenden Gesellen, Barber's *Dover Beach*, and Brahms' *Die schöne Magelone*. Upcoming: Marcello in *La Bohème* at the Oslo Operaball.

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### **Daniel Bates (Remendado)**

Tenor Daniel Bates returns to First Coast Opera following *Pagliacci* and *Trial by Jury/The Trial of B.B. Wolf*. A Grammy-nominated artist, he has performed with Santa Fe Opera, Florida Grand Opera, and Anchorage Opera. Daniel is Artistic Director of Florida Singing Sons and teaches at American Heritage Schools. A past winner in the National Society of Arts and Letters Voice Competition and a Metropolitan Opera Regional Finalist, he continues to champion arts education throughout Florida.

## **Artistic Team**



### **Curtis Tucker (General & Artistic Director / Conductor)**

Now in his twelfth season as General and Artistic Director of First Coast Opera, Curtis Tucker continues to lead both from the podium and stage. This season, he conducts *Carmen* and plays Ko Ko in *The Mikado*. A Kansas City native, Tucker previously served as General Director of Opera Saratoga in New York and has composed several original works, including *The Stranger's Tale*, recently performed in St. Augustine, Jacksonville, and Mount Dora.

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### **Valeriya Nedviga (Set Designer)**

Valeriya Nedviga is an Assistant Professor of Practice in Technical Direction at Southern Illinois University Carbondale and a drama teacher at Douglas Anderson School of the Arts in Florida. She holds an MFA in Scenic Design from Indiana University and advanced degrees in violin performance and string pedagogy from The Ohio State University. Her design credits span theatre and opera nationwide, with work in Indiana, New York, Chicago, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and beyond.

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### **Gina Makarova (Hair & Makeup Designer)**

Gina Makarova returns for her third season with First Coast Opera, having previously designed *La Bohème*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, and *The Magic Flute*. Based in Orlando, she works full time with Orlando Ballet's wardrobe department and has designed for Opera Orlando productions including *Carmen*, *Rigoletto*, *Die Fledermaus*, *The Secret River*, and *The Juniper Tree*. Also a performer, she appears with Phantasmagoria Orlando as an actor and dancer. Gina brings creative flair and theatrical precision to every production.



### **Patrick W. Mathis (Lighting Designer)**

Patrick Mathis holds an MFA in Theatre Design and Technologies from Utah State University and a BS in Information Science and Technology from Mercer University. His professional career spans theatre and live entertainment across the U.S. and abroad, specializing in lighting and media design. Patrick is a proud member of CITT/ICTS, USITT, and Actors' Equity Association. He currently serves as Assistant Professor of Design and Technology at Flagler College, where he mentors the next generation of theatre artists.



### **Emily Ann Fluchel (Stage Manager)**

Emily Ann Fluchel is a freelance stage manager originally from St. Louis, Missouri. Now based in the Boston area, she works nationwide in technical theater and stage management. Her credits include productions with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Union Avenue Opera, the Southern Illinois Music Festival, Buck's Rock Creative and Performing Arts Camp, Black Hills Playhouse, and the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center. Carmen marks her First Coast Opera debut, and she is delighted to collaborate with such a talented company of artists.

# Chorus

Keith Teepen, Director

David Abraham  
Shannon Acevedo  
Jessica Bergstol  
Clare Bowen  
Evan Bowen  
Noah Cummings  
Greyson Dickason

Haley Kirk  
Mary-Camila Klotz  
Tamara Law  
Ginger Lindberg  
Wyatt Matlock  
Jacob Pence  
Helena Peterson

Steven Rich  
Aaron Snodgrass  
Ryan Stark  
Laura Weiss  
Caragh Zeigler  
Camille Zeigler

# Children's Chorus

Kerry Fradley, Director

Carmen Arena  
Mabel Kirk  
Pauline Putnam

Lydia Ruffino  
Ava Santini  
Rosalie Sills

Della vonWerssowetz  
Adriana Watkins

# Orchestra

AJ Pullium, Concertmaster

## Flute/Piccolo

Susan Magg  
Don Gottlieb

## Horn

Sean Morgan  
Matt Monroe

## Violin

AJ Pullium  
Katie Smedley  
Leila Neyens  
Jessye Russom  
Ty Russom

## Oboe/English Horn

Kristin Kusic

## Trumpet

David O'Toole

## Clarinet

John Mula  
James Hall

## Trombone

Charlie Propper

## Viola

Breanna Lang  
Armando Atanda

## Bassoon

Lee Goodhew

## Percussion

Bill Cain

## Cello

Ian Rivera-Rosario  
Nolan Haupt

## Harp

Isabelle Scott

## Double Bass

Aaron Kinman

Orchestral edition by Bryan Higgins, by arrangement with  
Motet Music Publishing Company.

## Production Staff

Artistic Director .....	Curtis Tucker
Stage Director .....	Mark Freiman
Stage Manager .....	Emily Ann Fluchel
Rehearsal Accompanist .....	Yelena Kurdina
Chorus Master .....	Keith Teepen
Children's Chorus Master .....	Kerry Fradley
Orchestra Contractor .....	Music by Pegge, LLC
Property Master .....	Nancy Perry
Props Crew .....	Kathy Schirmacher, Jean Rahner
Assistant Stage Manager .....	Annika Klee
Supertitle Operator .....	Katie Merrill
Wardrobe, Hair & Makeup .....	Rachel Cravener, Elijah Babel, Deborah Smith
Carpenter .....	Alexander Davis

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Robert Samuels

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## Hosts and Drivers

John Bova and Chong Ae Whang

Fred and Edna Pytlak

Sandra Murphree

Steven Rich

Margaret Nicholson



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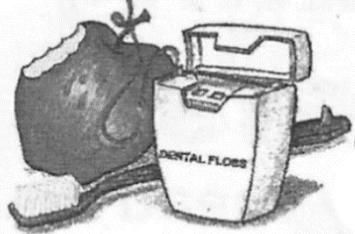
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### **Sips & Serenades**

**February 14**

A valentine's opera salon & fundraiser

### **THE MIKADO**

**March 20 - 7:30pm**

**March 21 - 4:00pm**

Gilbert & Sullivan's topsy-turvy operetta

### **Take Me Out to the Ball Game**

**May 8**

Romanza Festivale of Music & The Arts

### **Yankee Doodle Dandy, Songs from America's Past**

**July 2**

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