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Opera Colorado Closes its 2021-22 Season with a Grand Production of Bizet's *Carmen*

Tickets are selling fast for this tale of seduction, obsession, and murder featuring some of
opera's most well-known music

Performances run May 7 - 21 at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House, including an abridged
Student Matinee on May 12

Denver, CO (April 8, 2022)—Opera Colorado closes its triumphant 2022-23 Season with a lavish production of Bizet's *Carmen*, one of the most popular operas of all time. *Carmen* opens Saturday, May 7 at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House, with additional performances on May 10, 13, 15, 19, and 21, along with a Student Matinee on May 12.

Carmen transports audiences to Sevilla, Spain in the 1820s, where the strong-willed title character works as a cigarette girl. No man can resist Carmen's charm, but she cannot be tied down, claiming, "love is a rebellious bird that none can tame." She seduces corporal Don José to escape prison, and he abandons the army to be with her. She then sets her sights on the glamorous bullfighter Escamillo. Obsession, passion, and the search for freedom come together in this story of a deadly love triangle.

"There is no better way to end Opera Colorado's 2021-22 Season than with a grand, classic production of *Carmen*. We have assembled some of the finest talent to bring this familiar story and music to life for our audience. **This will be a true celebration of our return to the stage** that will resonate with both opera aficionados and those experiencing opera for the first time," says Greg Carpenter, General & Artistic Director.

Hailed by the *San Francisco Sentinel* as "the *Carmen* of this generation," mezzo-soprano **Kate Aldrich (Carmen)** leads a star-studded cast that includes soprano **Susannah Biller (Micaëla)**, returning to Opera Colorado after portraying Nanetta in *Falstaff* (2018); tenor **Bruce Sledge (Don José)** making his role debut; and Grammy Award-winning baritone **Nmon Ford (Escamillo)**, returning to Opera Colorado after our digital program, *The Promise of Living* (2021).

Carmen will also welcome several special collaborators from the Denver community to the stage, including members of the **Colorado Children's Chorale**, who are featured in act one, and **dancers from ArtistiCO**, who will add lively and authentic flamenco choreography to the production.

On May 12 at 10:00 a.m., we present a **special, abridged performance for students** featuring the 2021-22 Artists in Residence in the leading roles alongside the Opera Colorado Chorus and Orchestra, followed by an interactive talk-back with the cast and crew. Teachers can contact education@operacolorado.org or call 303.778.7350 to reserve Student Matinee tickets, which are \$12 per student and \$15 per adult chaperone. The *Carmen* Student Matinee is sponsored by Genesee Mountain Foundation.

Tickets for the full production, ranging from \$35-\$209, are available at operacolorado.org/carmen. For more information about current and future programming at Opera Colorado, contact Jennifer Colgan at jcolgan@operacolorado.org.



CARMEN

Music by Georges Bizet
Libretto by Ludovic Halévy and Henri Meilhac

May 7, 10, 13, 15, 19, 21

May 12 – Student Matinee

Ellie Caulkins Opera House at the Denver Performing Arts Complex
Performed in French, with English and Spanish subtitles at every seat and English projected above the stage.

Seduction—Obsession—Murder

We conclude Opera Colorado's grandest season to date with Bizet's smoldering drama, *Carmen*, filled with some of opera's most iconic melodies—including Carmen's "Habanera" and the rousing Toreador song. Not a soul can resist Carmen's seductive charm, not even the naïve Don José. But when she leaves him for a charismatic bullfighter, Don José's infatuation turns obsessive. What fate, or choice, waits for the woman no man can tame?

Cast

Carmen | Kate Aldrich
Don José | Bruce Sledge
Micaëla | Susannah Biller
Escamillo | Nmon Ford
Colorado Children's Chorale
Dancers from ArtistiCO
Opera Colorado Chorus
Opera Colorado Orchestra

Creative Team

Conductor | Ari Pelto

Chorus Master & Assistant Conductor | Sahar Nouri

Director | Keturah Stickann

Scenic Design | Allen Charles Klein

Costume Design | James Schuette and Heidi Zamora

Lighting Design | J. Isadora Krech

Scenery courtesy of Lyric Opera of Kansas City

Costumes courtesy of Seattle Opera

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Kate Aldrich (Carmen) has performed the title role in Bizet's opera to much critical acclaim in such theaters as the Bayerische Staatsoper in Munich, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Metropolitan Opera, Opernhaus Zürich and Arena di Verona. Commanding a wide repertoire which also includes the title role in *La Cenerentola*, Adalgisa in *Norma*, Charlotte in *Werther*, and Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier*, Aldrich has performed in other leading theaters throughout the world, including the Gran Teatre de Liceu in Barcelona, Teatro Colon de Buenos Aires, Staatsoper Hamburg, Teatro Comunale di Bologna, Teatro Regio di Torino, Washington

National Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Theatre du Capitole de Toulouse, Opera de Marseille, Opera de Montpellier, Opera de Montreal, and Teatro Sao Carlos in Lisbon, as well as at the Salzburg Festival and Rossini Festival in Pesaro. Recently, Aldrich had her role and house debut as the Foreign Princess in *Rusalka* at the Theater an der Wien, and then as Princess Eboli in *Don Carlos* at the Opéra Royal de Wallonie in Liège.



Bruce Sledge (Don José) is one of today's most in-demand lyric tenors and sings a wide variety of repertoire with many international houses. Recently, Mr. Sledge appeared as Paolo Erisso in *Maometto Secondo* with Washington Concert Opera. In the 2019-2020 season, Mr. Sledge made his role debut as Pinkerton in *Madame Butterfly* in a Metropolitan Opera's "Live in HD" transmission and Contareno in a new production of Rossini's *Bianca e Falliero* in Frankfurt. He was also seen at UCLA's Royce Hall as a tenor soloist in Rachel Fuller's *Animal Requiem*. Other performances include Jean in *Le Prophète* with Deutsche Oper Berlin, Lord Percy in

Anna Bolena with the Canadian Opera Company, Bacchus in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Santa Fe Opera, the title role in *Rigoletto* with Vancouver Opera, Lorenzo in *The Merchant of Venice*, and Macduff in *Macbeth* with Welsh National Opera. Mr. Sledge was a finalist in the 2002 World Voice Masters Competition in Monte Carlo, a finalist in Placido Domingo's Operalia 2000 World Opera Contest and a national finalist in the 2000 Loren L. Zachary Vocal Competition. In 1998, he was a Western Regional Finalist in the Metropolitan Opera Auditions and was awarded first place in the Los Angeles Chapter of the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) Competition.



Susannah Biller (Micaëla) was a member of the prestigious Adler Fellowship Program with San Francisco Opera. While in San Francisco, she was seen as Frasquita in *Carmen*, Lolita in the world premiere of John Harbison's *Heart of a Soldier*, Kristina in *The Makropoulos Case*, and Madame Herz in *Der Schauspieldirektor*. Additional productions with San Francisco Opera include *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, *Seerse*, and *Werther*. She recently debuted with Madison Opera as Amalia Balash in *She Loves Me*. She returns to Opera Colorado for the first time since she played Nanetta in *Falstaff* in 2018. Other engagements include the

Countess in *Le nozze di Figaro* at Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Musetta in *La bohème* with Austin Opera, Kitty Packard in the world premiere of *Dinner at Eight* with Minnesota Opera and revival of the role at

the Wexford Festival, the title role in *Madame White Snake* on tour with Beth Morrison Projects for the Hong Kong Arts Festival, Norina in *Don Pasquale* with Minnesota Opera, and Lieschen in *Der Ring des Polykrates* with The Dallas Opera.



Nmon Ford (Escamillo) stepped into new territory in 2020 by performing the title role in *Orpheus*: a house music opera, written by the artist and directed by Charles Randolph-Wright, which ran at London's Young Vic Theatre. Recently, he performed in Opera Colorado's 2021 digital production of *The Promise of Living* and in Dallas Symphony Orchestra's *Seas Symphony* under the baton of Robert Spano. No stranger to London, Nmon won exceptional reviews when he appeared as Crown in *Porgy & Bess* in a co-production between the English National Opera and the Metropolitan Opera in the 2018-19 season. Other roles include Jochanaan in *Salome* with Patricia Racette at Pittsburgh Opera, Don Pizzaro in *Fidelio* with

Christine Goerke at Cincinnati Opera and in concert with Atlanta Symphony, and Iago in *Otello* with Russell Thomas in the title role. Earlier in his career, Mr. Ford sang often at Hamburg State Opera in Germany and appeared as Scarpia in *Tosca*, Luna in *Il Trovatore*, the title role in *Billy Budd*, The Traveler in *Death in Venice*, and Thoas in *Iphigenie en Tauride* under the baton of Simone Young. His awards include First Place in the Wagner Division of the Liederkrantz Foundation of New York Competition, as well as major prizes from the Gerda Lissner Foundation and the George London Foundation. His recordings include two Grammy Award-winning discs: Naxos' *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, and Teldarc's *Transmigrations*.



ArtistiCO is a platform created as a bridge to connect professional artists to the community through dance. Founders, José Rosales and Alfonso (Poncho) Meraza Prudente are former principal soloists of the internationally renowned Ballet Folklórico De México de Amalia Hernández. Chepe and Poncho created the ArtistiCO platform to offer a safe and inclusive space for artists to showcase their talent, passion and artistic experience with dance artists from all over the world. They have performed with the most prestigious orchestras in Mexico; the most famous mariachi in the world, Mariachi Vargas; in numerous international dance festivals while

touring the world; and headlined more than 400 shows annually throughout Mexico. By far, their proudest moments took place in the Palace of Fine Arts in the heart of Mexico City.



Since 1974 the **Colorado Children's Chorale** has brought its artistry and charm to audiences throughout the world. With a diverse repertoire ranging from fully-staged opera and musical theater to standard choral compositions in classical, folk and popular traditions, the Chorale performs with an innovative stage presentation and a unique theatrical spirit. In recognition of its artistic excellence, the Chorale was awarded the Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts, the Mayor's Award for

Excellence in the Arts and the prestigious El Pomar Award for Excellence in Arts and Humanities.

Under the leadership of Artistic Director Emily Crile and Executive Director Meg Steitz, the Colorado Children's Chorale annually trains 400 members between the ages of seven and fourteen from all ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds, representing more than 180 schools in the Denver metro area and beyond. Since its founding in 1974, the Chorale has sung countless performances with some of the world's finest performing arts organizations, appeared with world-renowned artists, performed for numerous dignitaries and appeared in television and radio broadcasts.



Ari Pelto (Conductor) was appointed in 2015 as Opera Colorado's first-ever music director. His "breathtaking wizardry in the pit" (*The Denver Post*) has been widely celebrated, with Pelto in demand at opera houses and concert halls throughout the United States. At the age of 24, Pelto was appointed Assistant Conductor at the Spoleto Festival, and he has since gone on to conduct worldwide. International engagements include performances with Bochumer Philharmoniker and opera productions at New National Theatre of Tokyo and the Teatro Nacional Sucre in Quito, Ecuador. In 2004 he made his highly-praised debut with New York City

Opera, conducting *La Traviata*, after which he became a regular, returning for productions of *Madama*

Butterfly, *La bohème*, and *Carmen*. Recent successes include *Eugene Onegin* at Lyric Opera of Kansas City, *Lucia di Lammermoor* at Virginia Opera, and *La Voix Humaine* at Chicago Opera Theater.



Sahar Nouri (Chorus Master & Assistant Conductor) returns to Opera Colorado for a fourth season, serving as the company's chorus master, assistant conductor, and pianist coach. Ms. Nouri is the newly appointed music director of the Lamont Opera Theatre at Denver University. While being based in Denver, she continues to serve as guest coach/faculty with various organizations including San Francisco Opera, San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Opera North Carolina, Opera Steamboat and more.

Previously, Ms. Nouri has been a member of the music staff at Houston Grand Opera, Dallas Opera, Glimmerglass Festival, Utah Opera, Aspen Opera Center, Opera Parallèle, and Opera in the Heights. Her repertoire includes numerous classic operas as well as many world premieres such as: *Prince of Players* (Carlisle Floyd), *O Columbia!* (Gregory Spears), *Steal a Pencil for Me* (Gerald Cohen), and *Today It Rains* (Laura Kaminsky). A multi-lingual, Nouri has done studies in the Czech Republic, Italy, and Austria, and is frequently in demand as a language coach and recitalist.



Keturah Stickann's (Director) returns to Opera Colorado after directing *Lucia di Lammermoor* in 2017 and *Madame Butterfly* in 2014. Other credits include *L'Orfeo ed Euridice* (Florida Grand Opera), *Turandot* (San Diego Opera), *Seven Deadly Sins/Pagliacci* (Virginia Opera), *Macbeth* (Kentucky Opera), *Don Quichotte* (San Diego Opera), *La Traviata* (Chautauqua Opera), *Orpheus and Euridice* (Vermont Opera Project), *Flight* (Opera Fayetteville), *Don Giovanni* (Janiec Opera Company, Virginia Opera), *Rigoletto* (Opera Memphis, San Diego Opera, Dallas Opera), *The Tales of Hoffman* (Knoxville Opera), *Manon* (Knoxville Opera), *Don*

Pasquale (Opera in the Heights), *La tragédie de Carmen* (Janiec Opera Company), *Madama Butterfly* (Opera Santa Barbara), *La clemenza di Tito* (Opera in the Heights), *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* and *Bon Appetit* (Emerald City Opera), *The Pearl Fishers* (Sarasota Opera), *Peter Grimes* (San Diego Opera), *Orfeo* (Atlanta Opera, Arizona Opera), *The Old Maid and the Thief* (Emerald City Opera), *Hansel and Gretel* (Portland Opera), and *Le nozze di Figaro* (Emerald City Opera, Opera Pacific). Trained as a classical and contemporary dancer, Ms. Stickann was a performer with Cerulean Dance Theatre, Malashock Dance, The Wally Cardona Quartet, Colleen Halloran Dance, SCW/The Group and Danny Grossman and Dancers. She received her B.A. in dance education and choreography from Columbia College Chicago and was a 1997 nominee for the Princess Grace Award for excellence in the arts.

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ABOUT OPERA COLORADO

Opera Colorado has served as a cornerstone of Denver's cultural community since 1981. In addition to its mainstage performances at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House each season, the company affirms its commitment to the future of the art form by annually presenting new works; with its nationally recognized Artist in Residence Program that trains the next generation of opera performers; and by each year reaching more than 45,000 students and adults through its many education and community engagement programs throughout the Rocky Mountain region. For more information, visit operacolorado.org.