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MUSIC *in* Peebles

presents



CREATING CARMEN

Written by Clare Norburn

Carmen Alice Imelda

Merimée Niall Ashdown

Music arranged and performed by CarmenCo

Emily Andrews (mezzo & flute)

David Massey & Francisco Correa (guitars)

Directed by Clare Norburn

eg
Eastgate Theatre

2021/22 SEASON
Eastgate Theatre, Peebles
Tuesday 5th October 2021 at 7.30 pm



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AN INTRODUCTION TO ‘CREATING CARMEN’

Creating Carmen is more than a concert. It occupies the borders between a play and a concert, with 60/40 music to spoken word. It is a fully staged, costumed and professionally lit show for 3 musicians and two actors. The main characters are **Prosper Merimée**, writer of the novella on which Bizet’s Carmen was based, and **Carmen** herself as imagined by Merimée.

Prosper Merimée is struggling with his latest novella, when his leading character - Carmen - turns up in his study, larger than life, with a band of musicians in tow and chaos in her wake. Which one of them controls the narrative? And what happens when Carmen discovers the nasty ending Mérimée has planned for her?



The result is a fun-filled evening of fantasy, comedy, drama and tremendous music arranged from Bizet’s *Carmen* and Spanish and Spanish-inspired music by Boccherini, da Falla, Garcia -Lorca, Granados, Ravel and Albeniz, all arranged by the musicians of CarmenCo for guitars and flute / voice.

The project is a collaboration with writer Clare Norburn, who has developed a series of concert/plays which have toured to most of the UK’s leading venue and festivals, and director Nicholas Renton. Clare Norburn’s concert/plays have toured 18 major UK festivals and attracted 4 star reviews in printed national press including The Guardian and The Times.

Note kindly provided by CarmenCo

‘CREATING CARMEN’

The Music

De Falla	La Vida Breve
Albeniz	Cordoba
Bizet	Habanera
Rodrigo	Espagnoleta from Fantasia para un gentil hombre
Bizet	Aragonaise from Carmen
Tarrega	Recuerdos de la Alhambra
Boccherini	Passacaille from Procession of the Military Night Watch in Madrid
Bizet	Seguidilla
Bizet	Entr’acte to Act II from Carmen
Albeniz	Mallorca
Ravel	Piece en forme de habanera
Bizet	Instrumental on ‘Les tringles des sistres tintaient’ from Carmen [arr. Bourne]
Bizet	Extract of ‘La la la’ from ‘Je vais danser en votre honneur’ from Carmen
De Falla	Paño Moruno
Bizet	Instrumental intro music for Escamillo - leading into the Toreador tune
Garcia-Lorca	Nana de Sevilla
De Falla	Fire Dance
Bizet	Card aria: En vain pour éviter les réponses amères
Bourne	Fantasy on themes from Carmen - from Les tringles leading into Toreador

Clare Norburn on writing “**Creating Carmen**”

Writers often talk about their characters “hijacking the narrative” – or personal experiences looming large in their writing.

For 10 years I have been developing a hybrid “concert/play” format. The latest, ***Creating Carmen*** (commissioned by enterprising young ensemble **CarmenCo**) is about iconoclast writer **Prosper Mérimée** (1803-1870). It opens with him in midlife crisis, struggling with a new genre, writing his best known work – the novella ***Carmen*** (upon which Bizet’s opera would be based 30 years later).

Mérimée’s struggle resonated with my own work on the alchemical collision between music and theatre. As I researched him, what astonished me was how extraordinarily modern he was. He was a revolutionary – the Brecht of his day. Not only did he invent the novella but in his theatrical works, he deliberately played with, and overturned, conventions. There are echoes of Woody Allen’s ***Purple Rose of Cairo***, where a celluloid character steps out of the screen and into the auditorium. Mérimée likewise takes delight in deconstructing the artifice in front of our very eyes. In his ***The Theatre of Clara Gazul***, written when he was only 23, a dead character springs to life to say: “it’s just a play: I’m not really dead”. In ***Carmen***, Mérimée places himself as narrator directly in narrative; he meets Don José and is almost seduced by Carmen.

Carmen took Mérimée longer to write than anything else. I took that and combined it with his documented neuroticism, which stemmed from a small, insignificant-seeming childhood incident (his mother laughed at him), which wounded him for life. I created a “midlife crisis” for him, in which his creativity is intertwined with his out-of-control love life.

Again this had a personal echo – 6 months ago, when writing ***Creating Carmen***, I too was going through my own midlife separation crisis. I’d never experienced writer’s block before but, like Mérimée, in starting to

write ***Creating Carmen*** I found myself wanting to do anything – vacuuming, putting out the bins – rather than commit to that blank piece of paper.

Into Mérimée's crisis steps a living, breathing Carmen who disrupts his world further, challenging his decisions about her character. It's a comedy inspired by a sense of ridiculousness which Mérimée himself delighted in. But it has serious undertones creativity and crisis and how far a writer ever really controls their own narrative. ***Creating Carmen*** also explores the relationship between writer/character, creator/teacher and has been compared to ***Educating Rita*** and ***Pygmalion***: the instinctual, uneducated woman challenging "the expert man", prodding holes in his carefully constructed universe.

CARMEN: "The *real* question – the *interesting* thing is: why does the story matter to you?..."

MÉRIMÉE: "It doesn't matter...."

CARMEN: "Oh you *pretend* it doesn't matter. You stage manage it beautifully, carefully arranging the furniture... So nothing can be traced back to you.

"You control every move. You're oh so clever! Pulling the rug from under your readers – your friends, lovers – so that *they* can *never* pull the rug from under *you*!

"One has to ask.... *why*? Why do you always have to be in control? Just what have you got to hide?"

Excerpt from "Creating Carmen" by Clare Norburn

Carmen's challenge is a chance for Mérimée to grow personally, by exploring his own crisis through his writing. Writing about Mérimée's crisis also gave me a chance to work out my **own** creativity and crisis. It also was a chance to shine a light on the extraordinary character of Carmen – a fiercely independent woman who is outside her own time. No wonder, in 19th century terms, death could be the only possible conclusion for her... The world was not yet ready.

BIOGRAPHIES

CarmenCo is a trio comprising two classical guitarists, Francisco Correa and David Massey, and flautist-mezzo Emily Andrews. They do all of their own arrangements, exploiting the rich texture of the two guitars with or without flute or voice, and perform entirely from memory, enabling them to move around the stage while performing and connect exquisitely with each other and their audience. In 2019 CarmenCo won a generous Arts Council England grant to commission, develop and tour a new concert-play: "Creating Carmen"



CarmenCo trio formed when guitarist Francisco Correa joined the Andrews Massey Duo, (formed by Emily & David in 2009). The duo won the Tunnell Trust Award 2012-2013; were Royal Overseas League Competition semi-finalists 3 times & have appeared at Wigmore Hall, St Martin in the Fields & Kings Place. They have recorded three CDs exploring their own arrangements of folk, classical and Christmas music.

David Massey began his studies with David Burden in Hertfordshire. In 2006 he was the strings finalist in the BBC Young Musician competition. He went on to study at the Royal Academy of Music with Michael Lewin. He has performed at Wigmore Hall, Purcell Room, Sage Gateshead, King's Place, St Martin in the Fields, and expanded into chamber music and orchestral playing, incorporating mandolin and banjo and including the UK premiere of Timothy Walker's Guitar Concerto and recording with Chineke! orchestra.





Emily Andrews studied Maths at Cambridge University before following her heart and becoming a full time musician. She then did a Masters degree in flute performance at the Royal Academy of Music with Clare Southworth & Kate Hill, and since graduating, she has studied classical singing with acclaimed vocal teachers Neil Baker and Anya Szreter. As an orchestral player she has performed with BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Scottish Opera, and the Philharmonia Orchestra.

Francisco Correa performs in concert series and festivals in the UK, Europe and Latin America. Francisco has performed several concertos in England, Colombia and France, and gave the 2019 Latin American premiere of Steve Goss's Guitar Concerto at the Teatro Colón in Bogotá with the National Symphony Orchestra of Colombia. His debut CD, *Musica de la Tierrita*, has attracted enthusiastic reviews in *Classical Guitar Magazine*, *Guitare Classique* and *Soundboard* - arguably the top three most important guitar publications worldwide.



Alice Imelda hails from Preston, Lancashire, and is an acclaimed and versatile actor-singer-musician. She graduated in 2015 with a BA (Hons) in Actor Musicianship from Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance, the international drama school in London.

Her range of acting and singing styles, and musical skills (she plays piano, guitar and bass guitar), have led to a wide variety of roles in mainstream, children's and musical theatre as well as comedy and singing engagements.

Theatre includes: *Creating Carmen* (CarmenCo), *The Mad Ones* (BJW Productions/Derby Theatre), *Tell Me On A Sunday* (The Old Laundry Theatre), *Winter Holiday* (Metta Theatre), *Sense & Sensibility* and *Bold Girls* (Theatre By The Lake, Keswick), *Too Much Punch For Judy* (The Gatehouse/Camden Fringe

Festival), *Sixth Form Romeo* (Derailed Theatre), *Junkyard* (Headlong Theatre), *Three Wise Monkeys/Spitting Distance* (Bush Theatre) and *The Lost Boy* (Catherine Wheels). For Rose Bruford College, she appeared in *Songs For A New World*, *The Water Engine*, *The Broken Heart*, *The White Devil*, *Scenes from an Execution*, *Hydriotaphia*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *Punk Rock*.

Film includes: *My Dinner with Hervé* (HBO/Red Castle).



Niall Ashdown is an actor, improviser, teacher and writer. He improvises comedy onstage with the Comedy Store Players, Paul Merton's Impro Chums, Impropera and with Ross Noble.

Recent theatre work includes: *Ubu Karaoke* (Kneehigh Theatre), playing Henry Purcell in *Burying the Dead* with Baroque Ensemble Ceruleo; *Little Match Girl and Other Happier Tales* (Shakespeare's Globe/UK tour); US and UK tours of *Tristan and Yseult* (Kneehigh); *Annie Get Your Gun* and *Public Enemy* at the Young Vic; *Lifegame*

(Improbable) and *Never Try This At Home* (Told By An Idiot).

Niall has written and performed two solo stage shows, *Hungarian Bird Festival* and *The Man Who Would Be Sting*, both of which were made into BBC Radio 4 plays. On TV he's done such stuff as *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* *Outnumbered*, *Confessions* and *Parents*.

He has taught classes in improvisation in many different fields: for corporate clients to promote teamwork, creativity and better communication; for theatre organisations like BAC, Kneehigh and Improbable; and for opera and drama students at institutions such as Drama Studio, Oxford School of Drama and East 15.

Clare Norburn (writer/producer/director) first started writing and developing a new genre of concert/plays for actors with live music in 2010, initially for her own medieval music ensemble 'The Telling', for whom she wrote the *Empowered Women Trilogy*, about three exceptional medieval women. The trilogy toured throughout 2019 in productions directed by Nick Renton.



Clare's most recent commission *Burying the Dead*, for the ensemble Ceruleo, was directed by Thomas Guthrie and funded by Arts Council England. It toured during 2018/19 with a recent performance at LSO St Luke's and was featured on Radio 4's 'Today'. Her *Beethoven's Quartet Journey* (6 concert/plays to accompany a full cycle of Beethoven's string quartets) was commissioned by The Dante Quartet with actor David Timson as Beethoven. It was featured on Radio 4's 'Today', with performances including for The Apex Centre, Bury St Edmunds, St George's Bristol, Tetbury Festival and Southbank Centre's Study Day.

Breaking the Rules ("vivid and daring one man psychodrama" The Guardian) is a collaboration with vocal ensemble The Marian Consort, with actor Gerald Kyd as composer and murderer Carlo Gesualdo, directed by Nick Renton. It toured many major UK festivals/promoters in 2016 and 2017 including Cheltenham, Bath, Newbury, Brighton, Buxton and Lichfield Festivals and LSO St Luke's. In 2019 it was performed again including at Bridgewater Hall, St John's Smith Square and St George's Bristol.



Clare's first (and continuing) career is as a singer. After reading music at Leeds University, she fell in love with medieval music, joining the group Mediva (finalists in the York International Young Artists Competition and selected for Southbank Centre's Fresh Young Artists Series), Eclipse and Vox Animae, with whom she has recorded and performed medieval abbess, Hildegard of Bingen's music drama *Ordo Virtutum*.

Her group The Telling has a growing reputation for creating intimate, staged concerts. Recent engagements include Buxton International Festival, Little Missenden Festival, Hastings Early Music Festival, Totnes Early Music Series and a showcase of three concert/plays for International Women's Day for Music at Oxford. The group also spearheaded the inaugural Liverpool Early Music Festival. The Telling's new CD *Gardens of Delight* was recently released on First Hand Records (4.5 star review in BBC Music Magazine). The group has been featured on BBC Radio 3's 'In Tune' and 'Woman's Hour' and recently appeared on Radio 4's flagship show 'Saturday Live' with the Reverend Richard Coles and Aasmah Mir.

Together with Deborah Roberts, Clare co-founded Brighton Early Music Festival, stepping down in 2017 to concentrate on writing and singing. She directs the "small but feisty" Stroud Green Festival in North London.

MUSIC *in* Peebles

NEXT CONCERT

Tuesday 2nd November at 7.30pm in the Eastgate Theatre



JAMES WILLSHIRE (piano)

plays 'Passacaglia on DSCH' by Ronald Stevenson

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The Passacaglia on DSCH is a large scale composition for solo piano by Ronald Stevenson who lived most of his life at West Linton and who gave the work its first performance in Capetown, South Africa, in December 1963. DSCH are the initials of the German spelling of Dmitri SHostakovich, to whom the work is dedicated.

The work takes about 80 minutes to perform and may be the longest unbroken single movement composed for piano. It is extraordinary in its scope, the range of its reference to historic events, and the musical influences absorbed. Don't miss this rare chance to hear this pianistic masterpiece.

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In its 75th season, Music in Peebles faces unprecedented uncertainty.



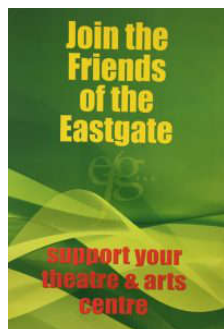
We remain committed to presenting high-quality live concerts. However, until audiences return to pre-pandemic levels, there is no doubt that our ability to maintain the number and quality of concerts will be under pressure.

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MUSIC *in* Peebles

Patron: Gina McCormack

2021-2022 Season

Sunday 5 September 2021 at 7.30pm

CLARE HAMMOND

Tuesday 5 October 2021 at 7.30pm

CARMENCO

Tuesday 2 November 2021 at 7.30pm

JAMES WILLSHIRE

Tuesday 16 November 2021 at 7.30pm

GAIA

Monday 13 December 2021 at 7.30pm

KWON-LIM DUO

Sunday 9 January 2022 at 2.30pm

PATRON'S CONCERT

Sunday 6 February 2022 at 2.30pm

BRODSKY QUARTET

Tuesday 1 March 2022 at 7.30pm

LEON McCAWLEY

Tuesday 29 March 2022 at 7.30pm

AILIE ROBERTSON

Tuesday 12 April 2022 at 7.30pm

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