

Wolf Trap Opera Company
Carmen 2014

The Story

Act I: The town square of Seville

The peasant girl Micaëla is looking for Don José, an army corporal. She learns that José is due to arrive with the changing of the guard. The cigarette factory girls – among them the beautiful gypsy Carmen – are returning from their lunch break. The other men gather around Carmen, but José ignores her. She flirts with José, throwing him a flower. Micaëla returns, bringing a letter from José's mother, in which she begs him to return home and marry Micaëla. A fight breaks out in the factory, and Carmen is arrested for stabbing another girl. José is assigned to guard her, and she persuades him to help her escape. She slips away, and José is arrested.

Act 2: Lillas Pastia's tavern, over a month later.

Carmen learns that José has been released from prison. The bullfighter Escamillo enters the tavern. He propositions Carmen; she flirts but ultimately scorns him. A group of Carmen's smuggler friends try to convince her to leave Seville to join them. She refuses, maintaining that she is in love. José arrives at the tavern and reacts with jealousy when he learns that Carmen was dancing for the officers. She agrees to entertain him privately, but the bugle sounds, requiring him to return to barracks. Carmen mocks him, but he produces the flower she threw to him and professes his love. She says that if he really loved her, he would desert and flee with her. The officer Zuniga enters, and José attacks him in a jealous rage. The smugglers break up the fight, and José has no choice but to follow Carmen and her friends into the mountains.

Act 3: The mountains

Carmen has begun to tire of José, and he regrets his decision not to return home to his mother and Micaëla. The gypsies deal cards to tell their fortunes, and Carmen's cards spell death. The smugglers leave for the border, and José acts as lookout. Micaëla appears, having sought out José to tell him that his mother is dying. Failing to find him, she leaves in fear when a shot rings out.

José has fired the shot at an intruder. It is the bullfighter Escamillo, the rival for Carmen's affections. José challenges him to a duel, but the smugglers return and separate them.

Escamillo invites them all to his next bullfight in Seville. Micaëla returns and tells José that his mother is dying. They leave together for home.

Act 4: Outside the bullring in Seville, the day of Escamillo's bullfight

Carmen arrives with Escamillo, and her friends warn her that José is in the crowd. Escamillo is called into the arena, and Carmen remains outside. José confronts Carmen and begs her to start a new life with him. She refuses. As the crowd cheers Escamillo, José takes the ultimate revenge.