BOSTON LYRIC OPERA

SYNOPSIS

CARMEN

Music by Georges Bizet
Libretto by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy
after the novel by Prosper Mérimeée

***Carmen* premiered at the Opéra-Comique in Paris on March 3, 1875**

PART ONE

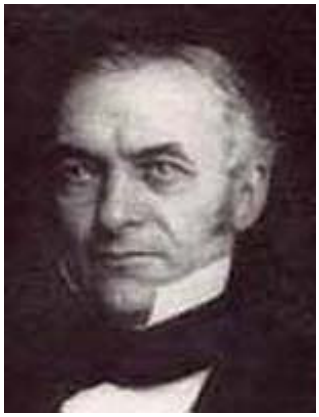
As Morales and a company of soldiers comment on the bourgeoisie promenading, Micaëla, a young girl who is a stranger to Seville, approaches them to inquire where she can find a corporal named Don José. They inform her he will return shortly, with the changing of the guard, and suggestively invite her to spend time with them while waiting. She cleverly brushes off their advances and runs off. At the trumpet calls, José arrives to assume duty along with their new commander, Lieutenant Zuniga, who questions him about his past. A factory bell announces a mid-day break and the cigarette girls pour out of the tobacco factory. Soon thereafter, Carmen and some gypsy comrades arrive to sell flowers and tell fortunes. Don José, in seeming to ignore Carmen, arouses her curiosity and she throws a flower at him. Micaëla returns, bringing news from his mother and they reminisce about their childhood. A fight breaks out in the factory and a woman's face is slashed. Carmen is accused and Zuniga orders José to take her to prison. She persuades him, now infatuated with her, to let her escape. José is demoted and imprisoned.

Georges Bizet

A month later...
Dancaïro, leader of the gypsy clan, informs his comrades of a dangerous mission to steal a shipment of precious gems. Their planning is interrupted by a torchlight parade celebrating the famous matador Escamillo and his recent triumph in the bullring. He is intrigued with Carmen and dedicates his next kill in the bullring to her. Resuming their planning for the jewel heist, Dancaïro tries to persuade Carmen to join their enterprise but she refuses, saying that she is waiting for her lover--the soldier who let her escape. José enters, pours out his love for her and Carmen agrees to dance for him. When a trumpet call sounds, summoning the soldiers back to the barracks, José prepares to leave and Carmen, shocked and hurt by this behavior, mocks him. Zuniga enters and orders José out but he attacks his Lieutenant in jealous fury. Zuniga is killed and José, realizing that he now has no other option, agrees to join Carmen and her comrades in their criminal endeavors.

PART TWO

Some weeks later...



Prosper Mérrimée

The love between José and Carmen has soured and when José pleads that they settle their differences, she declares she no longer loves him. She has read her fate several times in the tarot cards, each time with the same result: death is in store for them both, first for her, then for him. Carmen and the rest of their clan depart to steal the jewels, leaving José behind on guard duty. With the help of a guide, Micaëla enters the clan's lair determined to save José from his criminal life and bring him home to see his dying mother, but her attempts are interrupted by the arrival of Escamillo, who has come for Carmen. He and José get into a vicious fight and Escamillo avoids death only through the intervention of Carmen herself. Before departing, Escamillo invites Carmen and her clan to his next bullfight, while Micaëla persuades José to return home with her to his mother.

Back in Seville, Escamillo prepares for the bullfight, aided by Carmen who is now his lover. José appears, confronts Carmen and begs her to return to him. She refuses and throws away the ring he had given her, bringing the tragedy to its full conclusion.