



Ballet Hispánico Carmen

March 6, 2018 – Claudia A



Bizet meets **BALLET HISPÁNICO** meets Picasso in this exuberant re-imagining of Carmen.

Ballet Hispanico, founded by Tina Ramirez, is as a standard bearer for the Latino community. Furthermore it is the premier Latino dance organization in the USA, delighted the Edinburgh audience with their dynamic rendition of George Bizet's famous opera... ballet style! Before the main presentation though, the audience was treated to 'Linea Recta' (choreography: Annabelle Lopez Ochoa) which brought a super adrenalin-charged and rather unusual aspect of Flamenco to the stage. Unusual because contrary to traditional Flamenco, the absence of physical contact between the dancers stood in contrast to what one might expect of the most famous of all traditional Spanish dances. And yet the stage sizzled with feverish sensuality dipped in alluring hues of red – both costumes and lighting – complemented by an original guitar composition by Eric Vaarzon Morel.

After the intermission the curtain rose for the main presentation **CARMEN**.maquia (choreography: Gustavo Ramirez Sansano) and here the set design, courtesy of Luis Crespo, was an entirely monochrome affair – even the dancers wore only white (with the occasional black). Indeed, the set consisted of what might have been inspired by Picasso's Cubist period and to both sides of the stage a female face and a male face with bull's horns dangled from the top, images reminiscent of Picasso's trademark style and also strictly in black & white.

Those familiar with the opera know the story, and those unfamiliar with the story will at least be aware of the opera's two signature songs: the Habanera and the Toreador Song, though for this production the music was entirely instrumental.

In a nutshell: the cigarette factory worker Carmen (Shelby Colona), a fiery, seductive and independent soul, has her eyes set on army corporal Don José (Chris Bloom), who in turn has a girlfriend called Micaela (Eila Valls). Teasing a group of men with her dance, Carmen does not care that Don José is visited by Micaela who carries a letter requesting his return to his mother and marry Micaela. Shortly after, a conflict breaks out between the female factory worker and Carmen is blamed while Don José is designated to arrest her and throw her into prison. Of course Carmen applies all of her seductive skills with the result that Don José not only lets her go but henceforth he is hopelessly smitten with the gypsy girl. So much in fact that he himself ends up in prison for having her allowed to escape! Upon his release, he finds himself confronted with some serious 'competition' in the shape of famous matador Escamillo (Joaquín Cortés-lookalike Mark Gieringer) and the unavoidable tragedy is about to unfold...

The interpretation of this popular story through dance is nothing short of breath-taking and the four leads are exhilarating to watch in expressing the whole spectrum of emotions with skilful movements and perfectly built bodies – a tour de force which pours originality and burning sensuality into this production of CARMEN.

The production runs until Saturday, March 10th.

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