

# **CARMEN**

Full-length Ballet in One Act  
Music by Rodion Shchedrin (b.1932) after Georges Bizet (1838-1875)  
Choreography by Alberto Alonso (1967)  
First production 1967, Moscow  
Based on a story by Prosper Merimee

## **Principal Characters:**

Carmen, A Gypsy woman  
Don José, Corporal of Dragoons  
Escamillo, Toreador (bullfighter)  
Corregidor  
Bull, Fate  
Tobacco Workwomen

*Plus Corps de ballet*

## **PROGRAM NOTES**

The impetus and cause for the creation of *Carmen* was the cherished dream of the celebrated Russian ballerina Maya Plisetskaya to depict the highly strung and riveting character of Carmen in a ballet. Initially banned by the Soviet hierarchy as "disrespectful" to the opera for precisely these qualities, the ballet has since become Shchedrin's best-known work and has remained popular in the West as what reviewer James Sanderson of allmusic.com calls "an iconoclastic but highly entertaining retelling of Bizet's opera."

Soldier Don Jose falls in love with Carmen, a cigarette vendor, but she later abandons him for the toreador Escamillo. Don José suffers from an unhealthy passion for Carmen; he can no longer endure this situation and he urges her to come back to him. Carmen, who loves her freedom above all things and who does not accept being controlled by anyone, denies him the opportunity. Fate, an ambiguous character who takes on the shape of a bull, sketches the tragic conclusion of this exhilarating love story.

The program says, "Carmen is a beautiful woman who is free, true to herself, and completely honest. Don José lies, and thus he loses her. The Bull represents Fate. Therefore Carmen and the Bull die at the same time because she and her Fate are one." The final pas de deux, a danced contest between Carmen and Don José, is a simulated bullfight in which the ballerina assumes the combined roles of heroine and Fate in the form of a bull.