

## "Carmen" in the St. Margarethen Quarry - Premiere called off after the second act due to bad weather



Attending the St. Margarethen Quarry premiere were a number of guests from the world of culture, business and politics, including Provincial Governor Hans Peter Doskozil and his wife, Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg, Harald and Ingeborg Serafin, Chairman of the Esterhazy Foundation Dr. Stefan Ottrubay, Danielle Spera, Alfons Haider, Konstanze Breitebner, Federal Minister Martin Kocher and the two board members of the Esterhazy Foundations Matthias Grün and Michael Gröschl

along with their wives, Lidia Baich and many other celebrities. All of whom came on the 12th July 2023 to experience the premiere of renowned French director **Arnaud Bernard's** captivating operatic production, **set in the 1930s and 1950s**. However, the performance had to be called off during the intermission due to a thunderstorm. *"Of course, canceling the premiere performance was not easy for us, but the safety of audience members and performers is our top priority,"* says **Daniel Serafin**, Artistic Director of the Opera in the Quarry. *"Up until the intermission, the entire ensemble demonstrated the great result of months of preparation and countless rehearsals. A total of 23 performances will take place this summer. So there are still plenty of opportunities to enjoy the new production of this opera classic with a top-class international cast,"* **Daniel Serafin** adds. All subsequent performances were able to take place in full and without any interference.

### **Between the Spanish Civil War and the great film studios of the 1950s**

Although the original opera takes place in the mid-19th century, this production is set in the 1930s during the height of the Spanish Civil War. The stage, created by set designer Alessandro Camera, encapsulates the era of 1950s Hollywood film, adding another narrative and temporal strand to the story. The conflict between the freedom-loving Carmen and the soldier Don José, who is obedient to the authorities, gains a further level of meaning that frees the story from picturesque clichés. Carmen and her friends join the resistance fighting against an unjust regime. The jump in time of around 80 years gives Carmen's struggle for freedom a social dimension: the production does not portray Carmen as a so-called femme fatale; instead, her seductive powers are shown to pave the way for female emancipation and self-determination.

The other side of this story is the glamorous world of 1950s Hollywood: shot in a large film studio filled with melodrama, and with a large cast in front of and behind the camera. This broadens the narrative perspective as different scenes unfurl simultaneously on stage. The epic rockface becomes part of the program while, at the same time, helping to produce the total immersion in a dream world. The dream and splendor of the old film studios is reborn in the St. Margarethen Quarry and reveals entirely new sides to the well-known story.

The stage scenery by Alessandro Camera creates a unique theatrical landscape and Carla Ricotti's design of around 300 costumes conjures up Spanish flair with a touch of Hollywood on the stage with around 300 costumes.

„The costume design is based on these two time periods. Colour plays a big role here. 'Real life' is more colourful, more realistic than the 'film world', which is mainly envisioned in black and white, with dashes of blood-red. In this new production of Carmen in the St. Margarethen Quarry, it was particularly challenging to capture Spain in the costume design without representing Spain as the real setting on stage,“ says

**Carla Ricotti** on the production's use of costume. This year's opera production of Carmen includes **around 300 costumes**. The majority of which are produced,

tailored, and embroidered by hand at Milan's costume design studio Casa d'arte Fiore. Every costume is tailored to fit perfectly. The soloists alone have 44 costumes; the remaining outfits belong to extras, stunt actors, and stage technicians.



*Oper im Steinbruch Carmen (c) Jerzy Bin*

Conducting the **Piedra Festival Orchestra** yesterday evening was **another internationally renowned music expert**, the young **conductor Valerio Galli**, along with **an ensemble of top international singers such as Joyce El-Khoury, Brian Michael Moore and Vittorio Prato**. Further performances with the internationally acclaimed Lebanese-Canadian singer will take place on 15.7., 22.7., 27.7., 3.8., 5.8., 17.8. and 19.8. Lilly Jørstad, who received international acclaim in the role of Rosina in the "Barber of Seville", and Francesca Di Sauro, who enjoyed success at La Scala in Milan and the Arena di Verona, will also take on the role of Carmen. Brian Michael Moore, Matthew White and Migran Agadzhanian take turns to play the unhappy lover Don José. Brian Michael Moore is considered one of the most promising young tenors in the operatic field. The same applies to Agadzhanian and the American Matthew White, who is marking his European debut with this production. Three young up-and-coming sopranos can be heard as the faithful Micaëla: Vanessa Vasquez, Yulia Suleimanova and Ana Garotič. The Italian star baritone Vittorio Prato and the young Sergey Kaydalov portray the daring bullfighter Escamillo. Prato is celebrated internationally above all for his supple bel canto interpretations, and Kaydalov, as a new member of the ensemble of the Vienna State Opera, is already enjoying great success at the Haus am Ring.

As in previous years, the Vienna Philharmonia Chorus, conducted by Walter Zeh, is an outstanding and well-established choral force. After its excellent performances in "Nabucco", "Turandot" and "The Magic Flute", and in its fourth season as resident orchestra of the "Opera in the Quarry", the Piedra Festival Orchestra also needs no introduction. In addition to an experienced team of stunt performers led by Ran Arthur Braun, who was responsible for the spectacular stunt effects in "Turandot", hundreds of extras of all ages perform on the quarry's huge open-air stage.

### **CARMEN - a ballad of love and freedom**

With CARMEN, Georges Bizet not only created one of the most-performed operas in the world, but also accomplished the feat of erecting an immortal monument on the opera stage to the downtrodden world of the cigarette workers, blue-collar guards, and smugglers. The fateful love of the impulsive factory worker Carmen and the inexperienced Sergeant José pulls the unlikely couple into a whirlpool of love, jealousy, hate, and disgust. In the end, the good soldier becomes the murderer of the woman who has never really loved anything or anyone - except for her boundless freedom. Georges Bizet creates an equally limitless abundance of grandiose melodies for this love that breaks all boundaries: the Habanera, Flower Aria, the Toreador song, Seguidilla, the Smuggler's March - all these musical masterpieces find their echo in the equally wild and gentle landscape of the St. Margarethen Quarry, which itself encapsulates the most fascinating figure on the opera stage.

## The history of opera in the St. Margarethen Quarry

Since 1996, the Opera in the Quarry has been delighting audiences with great opera performances every summer. The open-air stage in St. Margarethen in Burgenland (40 miles southeast of Vienna) lies in the UNESCO World Heritage region of Lake Neusiedl. With its reputation of offering popular and high-quality productions, the opera in St. Margarethen Quarry attracts both an enthusiastic audience as well as international opera stars and musical greats. The quarry in St. Margarethen is one of the most spectacular and beautiful open-air stages in Europe. This natural, 7000m<sup>2</sup> open-air concert hall ensures an unforgettable concert experience thanks to its acoustics and impressive atmosphere.

## Looking to the future

While this year sees "Carmen" as the strong woman caught in the middle between Hollywood's dream factory and the Spanish civil war, in 2024 Giuseppe Verdi's "Aida" will pay homage to the immortality of love.

With a passionate tale of a great love, Verdi created one of the most important operas about love's immortality. Large-scale scenes of pomp and circumstance are contrasted with intimate almost play-like exchanges, in which the longings and conflicts of the characters become a beguiling musical experience. Whether it be mystical rituals and incantation in the temple, nocturnal encounters on the banks of the Nile, or glowing triumphant scenes, the doyen of Italian opera hits exactly the right, stirring note for every mood. With the lyrical arias of Aida, Radame's dreamy romance "Heavenly Aida" and the opulent triumphal march, Verdi created immortal and unforgettable melodies in opera history. Aida's confrontations with her father and the pharaoh's daughter are also highlights of musical and psychological composition. Verdi's masterpiece fits harmoniously into the rough rocky landscape of the St. Margarethen Quarry quite unlike any other opera.

Book tickets for CARMEN in the St. Margarethen Quarry at the panevent ticket office by phoning +43 2682 65 0 65

or via e-mail: [tickets@panevent.at](mailto:tickets@panevent.at)

Information can be found at [www.operimsteinbruch.at](http://www.operimsteinbruch.at).

 Bettina Schimmer

Lindenstraße 14  
50674 Köln

+49 (0)221 - 168 796 23  
[bettina.schimmer@schimmer-pr.de](mailto:bettina.schimmer@schimmer-pr.de)  
[www.schimmer-pr.de](http://www.schimmer-pr.de)

## DATES & INFORMATION

Other dates:

**13th, 14th, 15\*, 20th, 21st, 22nd\*, 23rd, 27th\*, 28th, 29th and 30th July 2023.**

**3rd\*, 4th, 5th\*, 6th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 17th\*, 18th, 19th\* and 20th August 2023.**

**Start July:** 20.30, admission from 18.30 onwards

**Start August:** 20.00, admission from 18.00 onwards

Duration: approx. 2: 45 hrs.

Prices: € 49 to € 168

## MAIN STAGE, QUARRY ST. MARGARET

**PREMIERE 12. JULY 2023, 8:30 PM**

## LEADING TEAM

**MUSICAL DIRECTOR:** Valerio Galli

**STAGE DIRECTOR:** Arnaud Bernard

**STAGE PAINTING:** Alessandro Camera

**COSTUME:** Carla Ricotti

**STUNTS:** Ran Arthur Braun

**CHORUS DIRECTOR:** Walter Zeh

**SOUND:** Volker Werner

**CARMEN:** Joyce El-Khoury\* / Lilly Jørstad / Francesca di Sauro  
**DON JOSÉ:** Migran Agadzhanian / Matthew White / Brian Michael Moore  
**MICAELA:** Yulia Suleimanova / Ana Garotic / Vanessa Vasquez  
**ESCAMILLO:** Vittorio Prato / Sergey Kaydalov  
**FRASQUITA:** Leah Manning / Aleksandra Szmyd  
**MERCÉDÈS:** Nina Tarandek / Sofia Vinnik  
**LE DANCAÏRE:** Oleh Lebedyev / Matthias Störmer  
**LE REMENDADO:** Angelo Pollak / Timothy Oliver  
**ZUNIGA:** Mikołaj Bońkowski / Ilja Kazakov  
**MORALÈS:** Stefan Astakhov / Ivan Zinoviev