



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

ALANNA KAZDAN

B.Ed (Queen's University, 2016)

B.Mus (Queen's University, 2015)

**“A perfect storm of seduction:
Investigating tactical femininity in Bizet’s *Carmen*”**

School of Music

Wednesday, January 8, 2020

2:00 P.M. (PST)

MacLaurin Building

Room B115

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Joseph Salem, School of Music, University of Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. Virginia Acuña, School of Music, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Chase Joynt, Department of Gender Studies, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Daniel German, Department of Computer Science, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

Abstract

Premiered in France in 1875, Georges Bizet's opera *Carmen* (with libretto by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy, based on a novella by Prosper Mérimée) provided audiences with a main character who is not only aware of her sexuality, but who knows how to use it as a source of power and self-satisfaction. Carmen, often viewed as an ambiguous protagonist of questionable morals, embodies a triple threat toward male characters in the opera: this paper explores the tactical implementation of her words, her music, and her body as sexual weapons against men. First, the uniquely self-centered dialogue Bizet chose to give Carmen created a distinct sense of unease in early audiences. Her text is pointed and specific about her personal intentions rather than abstractly romantic. Secondly, closely tied to her libretto, the sultry and seductive moments in the music backing Carmen's dialogue are also manipulative tools she uses to tease and taunt. Thirdly, the way that she uses her body to seduce men in the opera is developed as its own weapon. Though Carmen dies at the hands of the man she spends the entire opera emotionally tormenting, her character has resonated with countless audiences over the years. Carmen's unapologetic awareness of her own sexual prowess was instrumental in uprooting societal expectations for a woman on the stage. This paper examines how the concurrence of Carmen's three key personality traits ultimately set up a perfect storm of seduction, as well as the creation of an indelible female character.