

Passion, obsession, jealousy - Cape Town City Ballet's Carmen has it all



By [Debbie Hathway](#)

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There's a formula for box-office success that dance companies count on: exemplary performance technique, visual spectacle provided by lighting, costumes and sets, and a compelling musical score. Top that with dramatic flair from the principal dancers and live orchestral accompaniment and you've got a winner.

Cape Town City Ballet's restaging of Veronica Paeper's Carmen has been entertaining Artscape audiences since it opened last week. The final performance is on Tuesday March 31, with Robin van Wyk's Thumbelina back by popular demand on April 4 and 5.



Opening night saw Laura Bösenberg as the ill-fated gypsy, Carmen, and Thomas Thorne as the conflicted soldier, Don José, play out the tragic story of one of the world's most popular operatic love affairs. Their steadily improving dramatic ability did much to transform this full-length ballet into something more memorable than I can recall from past experiences. In addition, the first two acts were combined and shortened, allowing for only one interval, ensuring a more engaging pace for this production.

Members of the corps de ballet who put more effort into the theatrical interpretations of their roles, no matter how small, stood out and it's only a matter of time before that contribution is rewarded with more characterful parts. Jesse Milligan as the bullfighter, Escamillo, produced a typically accomplished performance while Germano Trovato drew attention as the dashing castanet-playing toreador. That particular skill was last featured with Owen Murray in the role.



Under the baton of Allan Stephenson, the Cape Town Philharmonic's rendition of Bizet's powerful score, arranged by Michael Tuffin, was mesmerising. The orchestra never fails to disappoint in performance, making it impossible to resist being swept away by the evocative music.

While Peter Cazalet's sets are purpose-designed to depict the harsh background against which the story unfolds in an early 19th-century Andalusian town, they provide the perfect contrast to the golden brown, orange and red tones in the beautiful costumes.

Tracy Li and Daniel Rajna guest in the lead roles for the final performance tomorrow, with Jesse Milligan as Escamillo and Elizabeth Nienaber as Micaela. The roles Paeper envisioned for her 1987 version were created by Carol Kinsey and Johan Jooste, with Janet Lindup as the first Micaela and Eduard Greyling as Escamillo.



Tickets are R100 - R220. Book at Computicket or Artscape Dial-a-Seat on 021 421 7695.

The charming Hans Christian Andersen story of Thumbelina, choreographed by Robin van Wyk, is on this Saturday, April 4, at 11am and 3pm and on Sunday, April 5 at 3pm. Tickets are R80 - R110 through [Computicket](#) and Dial-a-Seat.

ABOUT DEBBIE HATHWAY

Debbie Hathway is an award-winning writer, with a special interest in luxury lifestyle (watches, jewellery, travel, property investment) and the arts.

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