Richard Langham Smith

Bizet's *Carmen* Uncovered

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THE BOYDELL PRESS

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To the memory of my mentors,
Wilfrid Mellers & Edward Lockspeiser

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Preface

I think we must face the fact
That the *Carmen* by Bizet
Is no more Spanish
Than the Champs Élysées.[1]

So went Noel Coward's nice little song. But (to add another line):

He was wrong, wrong, wrong!

This book sets out to counter the attitude that *Carmen* has nothing really Spanish about it. It explores the Spanishness behind the opera in some depth: how that Spanishness infused the opera in several ways; and how Spanish customs, costumes and personalities penetrated both libretto and music. It opposes the view that *Carmen* is merely a French *espagnolade* or, in the more elevated words of modern theoretical studies, an example of 'auto-exoticism'. The book does not concur with the many literary scholars and critics who have seen the opera as a dilution of Prosper Mérimée's original novella.[2] Indeed, it presents arguments against this common view.

Certainly, *Carmen*'s librettists researched the exoticism of this 'other' place – in this case the opera's authentic Spanish elements – much more than did the librettists of the many oriental (and exotic) operas that surrounded it in the last third of the nineteenth century, many of which employed all-purpose orientalist musical languages, and texts based on shallow stereotypical characters and concepts. *Carmen* – I hope to persuade – certainly does not do that. Quite the reverse.

In his exhaustive study of musical exoticism Ralph P. Locke has placed *Carmen* within the context of Western classical music's canon of exotic works,

1 Noel Coward, 'Opera Notes', in *Collected Verse* (London, 2014).
2 See the seminal collection of reviews in Lesley Wright, *'Carmen': Dossier de presse Parisienne* (Weinsberg, 2001).

and has stressed its particular complexity by unearthing and discussing some of the Spanish musical sources that Bizet skilfully transformed for the rich resources of a fully fledged French nineteenth-century operatic orchestra. Locke's own studies of Bizet's models have deepened our understanding of how this *opéra à numéros* was put together. Locke counters Noel Coward's view succinctly:

> One still sometimes reads today that Bizet's *Carmen* makes no use of Spanish music. Scholars have established, though, that some of the most Hispanic-sounding numbers in the opera are indeed modelled on specific Spanish performance traditions and on folk-style pieces by professionally trained Spanish composers.[3]

The present volume suggests a few further Spanish models that Bizet may have used, in addition to those identified by Locke.

In terms of discussion of the 'exotic' Locke observes a complex layering; there is not only a 'Spanish exotic' in *Carmen*, but also a 'gypsy exotic', which he calls an 'internal other'. Gypsy customs, moralities, lifestyle and particular gifts (divination, skills with animals etc.) are all stressed in both the Mérimée sources and the libretto. Bizet takes this further by distinguishing gypsy music from music based more on the Spanish music of the *Escuela bolera* (Bolero School). To the displaced characters from the north, who include the soldiers posted south to Andalusia, gypsy ways are exotic in themselves – as is their music. This binary opposition between gypsy and non-gypsy is stressed throughout both novella and libretto.

Particularly focussed upon as characters who have moved south from the northern provinces are Don José Lizzarabengoa (almost a parody of a Basque name); Zuniga (Zúniga is a Basque name and Zúñiga a town in Navarre); Micaëla (with her blue dress and blonde tresses) and possibly Carmen herself, if we are to believe her claim to come from Etchalar (in the Basque country).[4] Chapter Six, based on a close reading of what we would now call the 'production books', uncovers yet another layer of even more northern exoticism in the 'forgotten Englishman' – a figure who, by the time of the

3 Ralph P. Locke, 'Spanish Local Color in Bizet's *Carmen*: Unexplored Borrowings and Transformations', in Annegret Fauser and Mark Everist (eds), *Music, Theater and Cultural Transfer: Paris, 1830–1914* (Chicago, 2009), pp. 316–360; Ralph P. Locke, *Musical Exoticism: Images and Refections* (Cambridge, 2009), particularly the section 'Gypsy Characters and Poor Andalusians'. The quotation is from p. 161.

4 See Lola San Martín Arbide, '*Carmen* at Home: Between Andalusia and the Basque Provinces (1875–1936)', in Langham Smith and Rowden, *'Carmen' Abroad: Bizet's Opera on the Global Stage* (Cambridge, 2020) chapter twenty.

opera, had become ubiquitous in the principal tourist streets of old Seville, *Sierpes*, translated by Mérimée as the 'rue de la Serpent'.[5]

The first section of the book – Preparing the Ground – deliberately delays in discussing the opera itself, which is too readily seen as the root of a line of Spanish-inspired French music stretching through Lalo, Massenet, and Chabrier (his *España* and Habanera), to Debussy and Ravel. *Carmen* was, on the contrary, a mid-point, the result of various movements inciting Hispanomania in France and creating an environment – clearly recognised by Bizet and his librettists – in which a skilfully texted and composed opera based on one (or two) minor literary masterpieces by Mérimée might be turned into a successful Opéra-Comique.[6] *Carmen* had many musical predecessors, in dance and in opera, as well as in *zarzuelas, canciones* and guitar music.

Primarily predicated on Mérimée's novella *Carmen*, many among the opera's French audiences would have been familiar with this principal literary source. They would ask questions and read the critics. How would it work as an opera? What were the processes of transformation: first from novella to libretto, and second from libretto into opera? Many writings on Bizet's opera have rather sidestepped its Spanish *topos*, concentrating more on the relationship between Carmen and José, and to a lesser extent on Escamillo's and Micaëla's interventions into this relationship. Productions have often taken a similar approach, divorcing the opera from its Spanish context in order to focus on the central relationship. That relationship has been imaginatively read in many ways: like many operas, commentators have speculated that perhaps its title is wrong. Maybe it should have been called 'José' – just as Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* should perhaps have been called *Golaud* – because it is in those two male characters that the incurable jealousy lies, essentially causing the 'love and death' trajectory that forms the basis of their stories.

Among writers who have taken this line – which is a fertile one – are Dominique Maingeneau, Susan McClary, Nelly Furman and Christine Rodriguez – to make a selection.[7] Their analysis of the dynamics between these characters, including the differences of their occupations, motivations and, above all, race and gender, have without doubt affected subsequent productions. This book attempts to persuade its readers that despite the fascination

5 Exoticism is often confused with orientalism or assigned mainly to places further south. This is wrong: we should remember the work of Pierre Jourda, *L'exotisme dans la littérature française depuis Chateaubriand*, whose first chapter is 'Les Anglais'.

6 Opéra-Comique has nothing to do with 'Comic opera', but rather derives from the traditions of the institution of the Opéra-Comique, which demanded works to alternate spoken sections with musical numbers. Its name derives from the words *comédien* and *comédienne*, meaning actor and actress.

7 See the Bibliography for details of these writings.

of these relationships – and the fun of recasting and resituating them – the opera was first regarded as closely linked to a Spanish *topos*, whether through Mérimée himself, by French travellers who had succumbed to the rife Spanish fever, or through productions whose scenography went to great pains to set the work in its Spanish context.

What I have written is probably a deeply unfashionable book, in a climate where directors look primarily for new concepts of characters and relationships, for changes of place and time and thus costume and scenery. Never mind! By contrast, we might remind ourselves of some classic *Carmens* that have gone to some lengths to place the opera in a vividly Spanish context and retained its original setting. At the Opéra-Comique its Spanish setting was prescribed from the outset, as Choudens – in common with other French publishers – operated in an entirely different way from today's operatic infrastructure. They were responsible not only for the performing materials but also for the staging, distributing a *mise en scène* detailing the sets and movements of the characters along with the hired *matériel* for performance – the scores and parts.

From the outset, one of the principal attractions of the opera was the gypsy tavern scene (the Act II *Chanson bohème*), which clicked with castanets, was a feast of colour and in which the trio of Carmen, Frasquita and Mercédès was augmented by imported Spanish-style dancers. This Spanish aspect was further intensified in Albert Carré's revival of the opera in 1898, which continued to run as a sort of benchmark performance at the Opéra-Comique while other completely different interpretations flourished throughout the world alongside.[8] Carré himself was unquestionably a victim of the Hispanomania, and although his first Carmen, Georgette Leblanc, was not a success, he travelled with her to Spain to research details, breathe the Spanish air and live its life, so as to infuse his new production with still more realism than the first staging.

This study of the Spanish elements, it is suggested, was also fuelled by the extensive Spanish community of painters, artists, writers and musicians who were deeply embedded in Paris, partly as exiles who had collaborated with the French during the Napoleonic occupation. Parallel to these migrants – though moving in the opposite direction – was the flourishing tourism trade: travellers going to Spain, which was becoming increasingly easy to reach, and bringing back Spanish accoutrements of all kinds (not forgetting sheet music). Shops opened in Paris selling a variety of Spanish goods and aids to getting around Spain.

8 See Michela Niccolai, '*Carmen* dusted down', in Langham Smith and Rowden, Carmen *Abroad*, chapter four.

'Exoticism' may be one approach, but another is to consider the opera with the umbrella-term 'realism' in mind. Is that equally problematic? Probably, yes. Of course opera cannot be realistic, but it can attempt to portray slices of reality and many have cited *Carmen* as one of the first operas to do this. Mérimée's experiences, expressed in minute detail in the opera's two literary sources (the *Lettres d'Espagne* and *Carmen*), provided an inescapable vein of observed realism and a disdain for both narrative embroidery and dilution. For the experienced librettists – although they never visited Spain – there was a similar motivation to incorporate genuine experiences into the libretto, largely derived from a detailed reading of the Mérimée sources alongside the countless other travelogues by established literary figures from France and elsewhere.

Bizet's music may suggest that theories of 'exoticism' and notions of 'realism' need nuancing. The Spanish numbers in *Carmen* are neither realistic nor are they exactly exotic. The *polo* (examined in Chapter Five) is a prime example. Bizet counters the sources from which he may have taken it, by, to put it crudely, giving it back its balls, even though the final (brilliant) entr'acte into which he embeds its theme is 'full-orchestral French'. Perhaps an approach better than nuancing either 'exoticist' theories or searching for 'realism' is to consider the opera in terms of its 'hybridisation': this was surely the overall challenge for both Bizet and his librettists. Their challenge was to steer a distinctly original path between gritty Spanish sources and the sugar-craving expectancy of Opéra-Comique audiences. Chapter Four aims to convince that the librettists attempted to incorporate many of the visceral details of Bizet's sources into the libretto, and that the compilers of the staging manual were also harnessed to the Mérimée original. After all, the over-arching aim for everyone was financial success, as Halévy's detailed accounts of daily receipts indicate.

The Spanish music was largely gleaned from sources the composer had found in Paris libraries, but also perhaps from performances by the extensive Spanish community of musicians in Paris, which Bizet witnessed not too far from his *quartier*. As for writing for the traditions of the Opéra-Comique, Gounod-esque though they might be, the Toréador song, Micaëla's duet with José, José's flower song and Micaëla's aria when she finds José in the mountains – all these have become pinnacles in the repertoire of that house.

This book attempts to show that an avid quest for the real Spain of sometime after 1813 (when the country regained independence) permeated the opera at all levels, even if 'dating' *Carmen* proves to be somewhat difficult. The libretto dates the action to 'around 1820'. Mérimée went to Spain – and only once to Andalusia – in 1830, by which time the region was already considerably more developed than it would have been a decade earlier. It was then ten

years (though he did visit Spain again) before he wrote his novella from his memories of Andalusia, sometimes getting his details a little wrong.[9] And it was thirty years later still that the opera would be created.

In the 1830s, when he went to the south, Mérimée self-confessedly wanted to experience the 'real' Spain – and its Black Legend. His chance meeting with the author Estéban Calderón, who guided him on his first visit, proved crucial. He maintained a copious and continuous correspondence with Spanish friends, and his novella *Carmen* was infused with realist – not exoticist – detail; in this way Mérimée was unlike many of his contemporary travellers, who idealised Andalusia. His way of writing up his travelogue contrasted with theirs, too, as it was constructed around what he saw as significant events – executions, meetings with gypsies, available women (nothing unusual for him), bullfights, gypsy dancing (and drinking) in a tavern. His experiences of his first visit were captured in his *Lettres d'Espagne*, some details of which are retained in the libretto (though this is often forgotten).

Although the librettists themselves never went to Spain, they were a highly professional and experienced team, having learned their trade through their many collaborations with Offenbach and others. Their transformation of Mérimée's novella has been much maligned, especially by literary scholars and those who take delight in the old game of making derogatory comparisons between literary sources and opera librettos, forgetting that transformation into opera was an art in itself. Chapter Four, on the way Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy adapted Mérimée's novella, aims to reassess this process, suggesting that their adaptation transformed and transferred Mérimée's 'significant events' into their narrative rather skilfully, realising the potential for his emphasis on the 'moment' to be converted into texts suitable for musical and performative numbers.

When the all-important moment came for the opera to take its final leap onto the stage, more input was also committed to retention – if not augmentation – of its Spanish elements. The original staging was Spanish enough, as can be seen from illustrations of its sets. But for Albert Carré's revival – beyond the scope of the current book – *Carmen*'s authenticity needed to be still further enhanced. The important theatre critic Gustave Larroumet remarked on Carré's determined quest for still more authenticity, to the extent of commissioning new military costumes from exactly the right region and all kinds of other details gleaned from his visit to Spain.[10]

9 For example, he remembered *gazpacho* as a salad rather than a cold soup.

10 See Michela Niccolai, '*Carmen* Dusted Down', in Langham Smith and Rowden, Carmen *Abroad*.

Carré's staging of *Carmen* ran until the 1960s and could be considered an old-school, 'authentic', version of the opera. Alongside it have been many productions that downplayed the work's original grounding in Spanish soil in favour of a focus on Carmen herself, on the turbulent (or dominating, if one sees it that way) relationship between her and José, or on Escamillo and the bull. Many others, however, have gone to some lengths to re-inject the opera with Andalusian elements – directors, scenographers and singers among them – and their input in 're-Spanishising' *Carmen* should not be underestimated. Unforgettable in this respect is Francesco Rosi's 1984 film of the opera, which has become a benchmark in itself. Set in Ronda, which has a perfectly preserved operant bullring, it resituated the opera within a thoroughly Spanish context without losing any of the tense relationships between all the characters: José and Carmen, José and Micaëla, José and Escamillo, and – of course – Escamillo and Carmen. The tobacco factory was not the real one, but it was presented most evocatively by adapting a block of flats.[11]

Why yet another book on *Carmen*? This is certainly not an 'opera guide' and it does take its time in getting to discussion of the opera itself – quite deliberately. The book is more about what lay behind *Carmen* and its tremendous success subsequent to its initial failure. What brought it to the stage? What was its relationship with the novella of Mérimée which – even on the posters – was mentioned as its major source? To what extent was it a betrayal of Mérimée's deep research – and experiences – of Spain? Did it perhaps attempt to retain the 'salt and spice' of his experiences, even through the music? Those are a few of the questions this book attempts to answer. It is not in any way concerned with *Carmen*'s afterlife – what Jonathan Miller called its 'subsequent performances'. That would be another – very interesting – very voluminous book.

This volume is addressed to those who think the Spanish context of the story may still be of interest in putting *Carmen* on stage. Some have passionately believed that story works best if set in its original context, others don't. My over-arching mission in this book is to question the wisdom of wrenching the story out of its Spanish context when interpreting the opera and to suggest that restoring *Carmen* to Spain might not be a bad idea. Read on.

11 See Daniel Snowman, *The World of Placido Domingo* (London, 1985), pp. 217–218.

Acknowledgements

People and institutions who have helped with this book go back much further than its relatively recent commissioning, for which thanks, above all, must go to Michael Middeke of Boydell & Brewer for his early conversations and immediate support for the venture. Before this there is a history in which many have been involved. Edition Peters, who initially commissioned me to undertake a feasibility study on whether a new edition of *Carmen* might be viable, were the first step in my becoming professionally involved in an opera which – of course – I had seen a few times, without knowing much about its complex web of sources. Behind this were the Peter Moores Foundation, who were planning a *Carmen* for their Opera in English series for Chandos Records. This commission may well have been based on my success in 'taming' another celebrated Spanish woman: Chimène, wife of *El Cid* and the heroine of Debussy's 'other' opera, *Rodrigue et Chimène*, which had reached the stage of the new *Opéra de Lyon* in 1993 and has subsequently been published in the Debussy *Œuvres complètes*.[1]

Nicolas Riddle and Peter Owens at Peters must be thanked for this introduction, the latter for being particularly insistent about the *espaces sécables* of the French language: the convention of putting spaces before certain punctuation marks in the French language. This was a process meticulously carried over into both the vocal and orchestral scores of *Carmen*, which have undergone a revision and re-edition with additional materials on the Peters

1 Debussy, *Rodrigue et Chimène*, ed. Richard Langham Smith, Œuvres Complètes de Claude Debussy, ser. 6, vol. 1 (Paris, 2003). See also Richard Langham Smith, 'Taming Two Spanish Women: Reflections on Editing Opera', in Barbara L. Kelly and Kerry Murphy (eds), *Berlioz and Debussy: Sources, Contexts and Legacies; Essays in Honour of François Lesure*, (London, 2007), pp. 83–102.

website.[2] Subsequent personnel at Peters who also contributed to the progress of the edition include John Snelson (who continues as a lively correspondent on the opera), Cathy Hill, Andrew Hanley, David Lewiston Sharpe and, most recently, Daniel Lewis, whose input into the transformation of the scores from the old Acorn platform to the more modern PC and Mac platform has been invaluable. Also important has been the input of Katie Tearle into the dissemination of the edition.

The conclusion of the viability study was that a new approach to the opera was needed, not a score based on Bizet's sketchy manuscript score (or what's left of it). Rejecting the confused term 'Urtext', the decision was taken to call the new edition a 'Performance Urtext', that is, a score based on what was done at the Opéra-Comique in the first run, for part of which Bizet was still alive and 'around'. The unique point of this score was that it included material about the staging as well as presenting a text based on a careful consideration of the various sources.

My colleague Clair Rowden (as I write a Reader in Music at Cardiff University), who was resident in the outskirts of Paris in the early stages of preparing the edition, assisted in this, continuing what I had begun in combing the one source which was to be the basis of the edition: the *Partition ayant servi à la première representation à l'Opéra-Comique le 3 mars 1875* (the score used for the premiere at the Opéra-Comique on 3 March 1875). These were compared with the other sources – both of the music and of the staging (all of which are detailed here in Chapter Nine).

So much for the musicological process. Through the detailed reading of every word and every note I succumbed to more than a slight bout of the Hispanomania of those travellers described in Chapter Two. By way of a Debussy colleague, Denis Herlin, I got in touch with Jean-Paul Goujon (who has written on Debussy and Paul Louÿs in Seville), and via him reached José Rodriguez Gordillo, director of the archives of the Fábrica Real de Tabacos de Sevilla (the Royal Tobacco Factory in Seville) and author of several seminal studies of it and its personnel. His work has been invaluable to Chapter Seven, 'Carmen's Places'. Visits to the museum of the Real Maestranza de Caballería de Sevilla led me to its academic publications, including studies of the place of music in *tauromachie* (bullfighting).

Continuing musicological work in Paris, the staff at the Bibliothèques de la musique et de l'Opéra have always been of great assistance. Mme Odile Gigou at the Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris helped specifically

2 See <www.editionpeters.com/product/carmen/ep7548a?TRE00000/>. The tab 'Links' leads to a more up-to-date bibliography than in the printed edition, and a comparative list of tempo markings from the various sources.

in sharing her particular views on the staging materials for *Carmen*, which at that time were under her curation. Her insights into the *mises en scène* there proved invaluable, especially for the material in Chapter Six. All this work could not have been achieved without the support of Gresham College, who awarded the University of Exeter a grant to support my *Carmen* project, appointing me as a Professor of the college.

Subsequent to this my position at the Open University was tied to the production of a third-level unit and supporting materials on *Carmen* for a 'Music and Words' module.[3] Particular thanks go to Fiona Richards for facilitating this, and also to other colleagues there for our rich group discussions – particularly with Martin Clayton, Robert Phillip, Robert Fraser, Byron Dueck and Delia da Sousa Correa. The staff of the Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris have helped considerably over the years: first Odile Gigou and subsequently Pauline Girard and Bérengère de l'Épine.

Following this Gary Kahn commissioned some materials for a new Overture Opera Guide on *Carmen*, designed to supersede the already valuable English National Opera (ENO) opera guide by Nicholas John. My contributions to this new resource included a wide-ranging essay, 'Carmen: From Mérimée to Bizet', and a full dual-language translation of the libretto including both the spoken passages and the texts of Guiraud's *récits*. This was a considerably modified version of a translation previously written for the Open University.[4] Many French friends and colleagues helped me with this and other translations connected with this project: Christine Menguy, Sue Taylor-Horrex and Pierre-Maurice Barlier all deserve thanks for this aid. Contacts with Dramaturges and others involved in the production of opera programmes have also helped me in many ways: above all Alison Latham at the Royal Opera House in London, Agnès Terrier at the Opéra-Comique and Christopher Cook at ENO. Thanks also to Shay Loya for help with the gypsy scale.

Hugh MacDonald, already a researcher deeply interested in Bizet and more recently his major Anglophone biographer, has been a continual correspondent and advisor. Other Bizet scholars have been quick respondents to questions that baffled me: Lesley Wright, Hervé Lacombe, Rémy Stricker, Michael Christoforidis, Liz Kertesz, Ralph P. Locke, Kerry Murphy. Others who have helped include Roger Parker, Brian Jeffrey, David Charlton,

3 Richard Langham Smith, 'Bizet's *Carmen* in Context', in Martin Clayton (ed.), *Words and Song* (Milton Keynes, 2007), pp. 191–263.

4 Richard Langham Smith, '*Carmen*: From Mérimée to Bizet', in Gary Kahn (ed.), *Georges Bizet: Carmen,* Overture Opera Guide (in association with ENO), pp. 9–34; dual-language translation, pp. 98–335.

Marie Rolf and Chris Collins *entre autres.* Reconnecting with Clair Rowden, through a transnational project called *Carmen* Abroad an international team of contributors was recruited; the project has subsequently hosted a conference and a website (Carmenabroad.org) and has a book in press.[5] Collaboration with all these contributors (over twenty of them) has been enlightening but I would like to single out Bruno Forment, David Cranmer, Lola San Martin Arbide and Michela Niccolai in particular for ideas that have gone into the current volume.

I have also been helped immeasurably by my colleagues at the Royal College of Music: Colin Lawson for his constant support, and more recently Richard Wistreich, whose initiatives in inaugurating the Musicology Forum have boosted the discipline considerably and enhanced the level of collegiality among staff. Of particular assistance have been Carola Darwin, who read Chapter Six; Trevor Herbert for input into the social history side; and Natasha Loges and Wiebke Thormählen, who have been a constant stimulus to the Musicology Forum. It has been a privilege to talk to singers in the common room: Nick Sears for his constant support for French music, and Sally Burgess, who was herself a celebrated Carmen.

It remains for me to thank those who have helped with the production of this book: Joe Duddell for setting the examples, Tim Jones for advice on these, Elizabeth Etheridge for sourcing the illustrations and my two anonymous readers of the original proposal.

Finally thanks are due to my family, Sue and Lily, for putting up with being dragged around museums in Ronda, Madrid and Seville in search of titbits for the book, and in Sue's case for endless proofreading and suggestions, not to mention providing me with first-class sustenance, better than if I had dining rights in the best of Oxbridge colleges.

5 Richard Langham Smith and Clair Rowden (eds), Carmen *Abroad: Bizet's Opera on the Global Stage* (Cambridge, 2020).

Note on the Text

Page references to Mérimée's *Carmen* and the *Lettres d'Espagne* refer to the edition by Maurice Parturier: Prosper Mérimée: *Romans et Nouvelles* (2 vols), Paris, Garnier, 1967.

References to the score of Bizet's *Carmen* are to my edition of the opera published in Vocal Score by Peters Edition (Leipzig, London, New York: EP7548a). The website for this edition contains a longer preface than the printed score, a further bibliography and a comparison of tempos markings between various sources. An orchestral score, currently on hire, is in production for purchase. See:

https://www.editionpeters.com/product/carmen/ep7548a
Click 'links' for additional resources.

A dual-language version of the original *mise en scène* (with English translation) is available on the Carmen *Abroad* website (Carmenabroad.org).

PART I

PREPARING THE GROUND

CHAPTER ONE

Vitoria and Waterloo: French Music and the Peninsular Wars

However perverse it might seem to begin the story of *Carmen* with discussion of a ruddy-faced British battle-commander, the Duke of Wellington was a key figure in the chain of events preparing the ground for Bizet's celebrated opera long before it was first staged in 1875. The influence on the course of European history of the Irish-born Arthur Wellesley was tremendous. Most celebrated for his victory over Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815, for the Spanish – and for an important Spanish strand in the development of French music – his earlier victory over Joseph Napoleon (Bonaparte's brother) in 1813 at the battle of Vitoria in northern Spain was crucially important. It was decisive in Spanish history, effectively ending Napoleonic rule and the Peninsular Wars in which Spain, England and Portugal had allied to oppose the invading French armies. In that battle, on 21 June 1813, Wellington finally vanquished the Napoleonic forces, and restored the Spanish crown to Fernando VII. The musician Narciso Paz dedicated his *Troisième collection d'airs espagnols* to Wellington in recognition of his liberation of Spain, though the collection was published in France.[1]

By the time Wellesley entered the fray in the Iberian peninsula the British armies there had recruited and trained a substantial number of Portuguese troops and several Spanish generals commanded trustworthy battalions, most notably General Álava. One of Wellington's strengths was in his meticulous organisation of a supply chain, which was vital if an army was to survive the harsh extremes of weather in the north of Spain. By contrast, the French armies had less back-up: writers on the period often quote a saying that 'In Spain, large armies starve, and small ones get beaten.' Thus, although the majority of paintings of the decisive battle of Vitoria were by

1 Narcisse Paz, *Troisième collection d'airs Espagnols avec acct. de piano et guitare* (Paris, n.d.).

British artists, it is a mistake to assume that the outcome was a triumphalist victory for the British. Nevertheless, on his return to England Wellesley was hailed as a hero, and it was his victories in the peninsula which earned him his dukedom, after already having been honoured by the Spanish. For Spain, the battle of Vitoria was a decisive event, resulting in the end of the *era Josefina* (1808–1813).[2]

As can be seen from the extensive collection of weapons and other artefacts in the Museo de Armeria (Museum of Armoury) in Vitoria, where Wellington's elegant sword is enshrined, his *equipage* also included a tea-set; perhaps the successful military strategies leading to his victory were conceived over an English- (or Irish-) style cup of tea.

It should not be forgotten that the paintings of the battle were complemented by its Europe-wide musical celebration by Beethoven in a piece which had great success: *Wellingtons Sieg; oder, Die Schlacht bei Vittoria* – sometimes known as the 'Battle Symphony' or 'Wellington's Victory' (often thought, erroneously, to celebrate the battle of Waterloo). It was reprinted for domestic use with an illustrated cover depicting the battle (Plate 1.1).

Music played a considerable role in Wellington's campaigns, and several songs have texts that mention his name. A particular song, which had both English and Spanish words, became a favourite: *España de la guerra,* whose title in English was given as *The Spanish Patriot's War-Song* in an edition published in London in 1811. Its words were advertised as 'as sung at the Theatre of Cadiz' and it was 'arranged by a British Officer.' Anticipating later English and French publications of Spanish music, there was no hint of a Spanish style: a symmetrically phrased melody is supported by a one-line Alberti bass. The song is in the sunny key of A major except for a middle-section in the tonic minor: an effect strikingly similar to the same section in the Marseillaise, with which it also shares the rising fourth of the opening and the sung arpeggio, in this case at the words 'la traición, la traición' (in the Marseillaise at the words 'l'étandard sanglant est levé'). The two phrases rising to a high D seem especially suited to the male tessitura, achievable by basses at the top of their voices: a rousing gesture that the soldiers no doubt delighted in singing together, competing with each other for that top D. No surprise that Wellington admired it.

2 See Ian Robertson, *An Atlas of the Peninsular War, 1807–1814* (New Haven and London, 2010).

Plate 1.1 Cover page of a piano arrangement of Beethoven's *Wellingtons Sieg; oder, Die Schlacht bei Vittoria* [Wellington's Victory; or, The Battle of Vitoria] (Wien: Steiner, c.1815).

Although there are many variants of the text, the London printing gives the following:

España de la Guerra	Spain is hoisting
Tremola su pendón	The flag of war
Contra el poder infame	Against the infamous power
Del vil Napoleón.	Of the vile Napoleon.
Sus crímenes oíd,	Hear of his crimes!
Escuchad la traición	Listen to the treachery
Con que a la faz del mundo	He has spread
Se ha cubierto de horror.	Over the face of the world.[3]

The occupation had begun in 1808, and by the following year the French had imposed an organised system of regional rule, which provided literate, liberal-minded Spaniards with relatively well-paid employment. There was also the opportunity for them to join the military forces, though that involved the serious risk that those who signed up would be forced to fight their own

3 This material is taken from Brian Jeffrey, *España de la guerra: The Spanish Political and Military Songs of the War in Spain, 1808–1814* (London, 2017).

countrymen. Despite this, the regime was cautiously welcomed by liberals who were in favour of desperately needed social reform. The implementation of the French regime became largely upheld by Spanish intellectuals working alongside Napoleon's agents, later to become known as *afrancesados* – liter-

Example 1.1 First page of *España de la guerra*, or *The Spanish Patriot's War-Song*, allegedly Lord Wellington's favourite song.

2

ESPANA DE LA GUERRA.

(OR THE SPANISH PATRIOT'S WAR-SONG,)

With the Original Words, as Sung at the THEATRE of CADIZ.

(Arranged by a British Officer,

Is Dedicated to MISS S. BROOKE, by her most Obe.t Ser.t T. F.

Price 1/6

London. Printed & Sold by L. Lavenu at his Music Warehouse No 26 New Bond Street.

Andante

Es-pa-ña de la guerra! tre-mo-la su pendon: Con-tra el poder in-fa-me del Vil Napo-le-on Sus cri-mi-nes o-id; es cuchad la traicion Sus cri-mines o-id es cuchad la traicion la trai-cion la trai-cion Con que a la faz del mundo se na cu-bier to de horror.

f

p