

EIF – Carmen at Festival Theatre

Carmen is the opera I have seen most often.

But from the first appearance of Gaëlle Arquez on stage, I knew this was going to be something special. Simply the power of her look sent a frisson of excitement through me. She thoroughly inhabited this role and her singing only emphasised what wonderful talent we were observing.

Of course, this should be taken simply as an outstanding peak of a mountain of talent. Saimir Pirgu as Don José, Elbenita Kajtazi as Micaëla, and all the rest were superb. In fact, the singing of the entire company was of the highest quality, ringing out with such vim and verve. Especial mention is deserved for the children in the chorus.

When I saw the set as part of the backstage tour, I was a little perplexed that it seemed so sparse, but what we were unable to see were the hidden fly curtains and the clever use of props at the Smuggler's Camp. Combined with the amazing changes of costume and superb music by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra under the baton of Louis Langrée, this production by Opéra-Comique is one of the finest I have experienced.

All this is ironically joyous for such a tragic story.

<https://www.elf.co.uk/events/carmen> Until 8 August.

Review relates to performance on 6 August 2024



Carmen – Andrew Perry