

Habanera ("L'amour est un oiseau rebelle") from *Carmen*, by Georges Bizet, 1875

Situation: When the beautiful gypsy Carmen steps out of the cigarette factory in Seville, all the men beg her to fall in love with them. She teases and taunts them with this song, then tosses a bunch of flowers to the one man who has paid her no attention—Don José. It's the beginning of a love affair that changes him from soldier to smuggler to murderer, a depressing progression accompanied by splendid music. *Carmen* shocked audiences when it appeared: this was, after all, the Victorian Era. Many considered it too immoral to be staged.

The realism of *Carmen* was a major influence on the verismo opera movement, which began in 1890 with *Cavalleria rusticana* by Mascagni, and continued with works by Leoncavallo and Puccini. Verismo opera is characterized by depictions of everyday life rather than stories of nobles or mythological figures, and often includes sordid and violent scenes.

YouTube:

Angela Gheorghiu, with French and English subtitles: <https://youtu.be/tSsNFPk2vNA>

Maria Callas, vividly acting the part even though it's a concert performance - in fact, acting even while the orchestra does the introduction:

<https://youtu.be/EseMHR6VEMO>

Agnes Baltsa on stage at the Metropolitan Opera:

<https://youtu.be/px36njqCnVM>

CARMEN

Quand je vous aimerai, ma foi,
je ne sais pas.
Peut-etre jamais, peut-etre demain;
Mais pas aujourd'hui, c'est certain.

L'Amour est un oiseau rebelle
Que nul ne peut apprivoiser
Et c'est bien en vain qu'on l'appelle,
S'il lui convient de refuser.

Rien n'y fait, menace ou prière,
L'un parle bien, l'autre se tait;
Et c'est l'autre que je préfère
Il n'a rien dit; mais il me tient.

L'Amour est enfant de Bohême,
Il n'a jamais, jamais connu de loi,
Si tu ne m'aime pas, je t'aime,
Si je t'aime, prend garde à toi!

L'oiseau que tu croyais surprendre
Battit de l'aile et s'envola...
L'amour est loin, tu peux l'attendre
Tu ne l'attends plus—il est là.

Tout autour de toi, vite, vite,
Il vient, s'en va, puis il revient—
Tu crois le tenir, il t'évite,
Tu veux l'éviter, il te tient.

L'amour est enfant de Bohème,
Il n'a jamais connu de loi ;
Si tu ne m'aimes pas, je t'aime ;
Si je t'aime, prends garde a toi.

CARMEN

When will I love you—
heavens, I don't know.
Maybe never, maybe tomorrow,
But not today, that's for sure.

Love is a rebellious bird
that nobody can tame,
and it's useless to call him
if it pleases him to refuse.

Nothing helps, not threat or prayer.
This man talks well, the other's quiet;
it's the quiet one I prefer.
He's silent, but he attracts me.

Love is a gypsy's child,
it has never, ever, known a law.
If you don't love me, then I love you;
if I love you, you'd better beware!

The bird you thought you would catch
beats its wings and flies away ...
Love is far away, you can wait for it;
you're not waiting any more, and there it
is!

All around you, swift, so swift,
it comes, it goes, and then returns ...
you think you're holding it fast, it flees;
you want to avoid it, it holds you fast.

Love is a gypsy's child,
it has never, ever, known a law.
If you don't love me, then I love you;
if I love you, you'd better beware!