

# LIVE INTENSELY

DMITRI TCHERNIAKOV, STAGE DIRECTOR

I have been asked more than once to stage the opera *Carmen*, and more than once, I have had to refuse because I could not feel the credibility of this story. I feel I know everything about this opera, since childhood even, and I do not think I am the only one... It is one of the most well-known operas in the world, perhaps even the most well-known. Take any passer-by in the street and ask them: "What is *Carmen*?" and I bet they will answer at once. It may not be a very deep answer, but it will be instantaneous.

Personally, I have always found it difficult to believe in the situations in which this story wants to thrust me. Today, there are many things in this opera that are difficult to accept with your eyes closed, and everything we have read, seen or experienced, our entire emotional background, can only contribute to nourishing this distrust. All of these famous sunny squares in Seville, these toreadors, these smugglers, these tobacco factories are now something of a curiosity for tourists. These habaneras and the arrest of this demonic bohemian by a soldier have become artificial clichés. Carmen, Micaëla, Escamillo are now fixed archetypes. And this type of "flirting" doesn't work today; it could not provoke such a reaction with a partner: we are all too disillusioned. The story of this bohemian has become a myth. A myth however which has lost its authenticity.

Today, we need to believe in this story and understand how it relates to us. This performance will speak about our equals: emotionally disillusioned, nourished with bitter experiences, filled with despair and irony. They have lost their innocence, they are not in blissful ignorance, they understand which story they are taking part in. Like all of us, they know the story of Carmen well, and the opera too. Modern man still prefers to stay in his comfort zone, to not be overcome with unbridled passion, to avoid the emotional drowning which has befallen famous historical characters since time immemorial. There are passion-filled narratives, and there is the reality that, for many of us, consists of habits, repetitive events, frustrations, boredom, emptiness, etc. The inability to feel anything, to live the present moment to the full.

The characters in our performance are not exactly the heroes of the opera Carmen, but in meeting up inside this famous story, they will gradually be carried away by it and they will start to live it intensely. The story of Carmen will thus become the best kind of therapy for them.

*Dmitri Tcherniakov, May 2017*