

Cape Town City Ballet to present Veronica Paeper's *Carmen* at the Artscape

The Cape Town City Ballet will present Veronica Paeper's *Carmen* at the Artscape Theatre Centre from 25 August until 4 September 2021.

Set to Georges Bizet's dramatic, famous score, *Carmen* will be performed to a recording by the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra. Inspired by Prosper Mérimée's romantic novel of 1845, *Carmen* is the ultimate tale of love, passion, betrayal and revenge.



Image: Supplied

Carmen is a fiery gypsy girl who mesmerises and seduces a young soldier, Don Jose. He gives up everything for her, abandoning his childhood sweetheart and deserting his military duties. However, Carmen's free spirit will not be tamed and her unfaithfulness to him leads to tragic results.

Completing the stellar creative team for the production, the design is by Peter Cazalet with lighting design by Wilhelm Disbergen.

"I was truly delighted when Debbie Turner invited me to re-produce *Carmen*, a ballet I consider one of my better efforts," says Veronica Paeper. "Bringing this wonderfully wild, passionate and headstrong gypsy back to life has been a real challenge in these difficult times, a challenge I have relished. Together with the dedicated dancers and all the staff of CTCB - artistic, admin and stage - I believe we have created a wonderful evening of entertainment. I certainly have enjoyed producing the ballet."

"*Carmen* is a perennial favourite with its powerful story of love, passion, revenge and power, performed to Bizet's sweeping score," says Debbie Turner, CEO of Cape Town City Ballet.

"We are delighted to be able to present this production by one of South Africa's iconic women and ballet legends, Veronica Paeper, in Women's Month. Veronica is a former artistic director of both Capab and Cape Town City Ballet and it is a privilege for all of us at the Company to be able to appropriately restore her work and once again bring together the creative powerhouses and artistic partnership of Veronica with designer Peter Cazalet, coupled with the masterful lighting design of Wilhelm Disbergen."

Carmen is one of more than 40 ballets, among them 16 full-length works, that have been choreographed by Paeper, who began her creative portfolio in 1972. She choreographed her first production of *Carmen* in 1987 for Capab. Her production of *A Christmas Carol – The Story Of Scrooge* for Cape Town City Ballet played to sold-out houses and critical acclaim in December 2019 and will be restaged in December.

Paeper received her ballet training under the tutelage of Dulcie Howes at the UCT Ballet School, where she also studied with David Poole, Pamela Chrimes and Frank Staff. Staff, whom she married in 1966, and from whom she drew and continues to draw great inspiration, was to have a profound influence on her work as a choreographer.

During her performing career, Paeper rose to become a principal dancer with three South African companies: Capab Ballet, Pact Ballet and Pacofs Ballet.

Paeper held the position of Artistic Director and Resident Choreographer of Capab from 1990, and Cape Town City Ballet from 1997 until 2005. She led the company on its first international tour of a South African ballet company in 1994.

Paeper's first work, created for Capab Ballet in the early 1970s, was *John, the Baptist*, a dramatic one-act ballet set to music by Ernest Bloch. It featured scenery and costumes designed by Peter Cazalet, an innovative, witty artist who would remain Paeper's most frequent artistic collaborator for the next 25 years.

Established as the Nico Malan Theatre in 1971, the Artscape building this year marks its 50th anniversary in existence. *Carmen* is presented as part of Artscape's celebrations for National Women's Day, which run throughout August and include the 15th annual Women's Humanity Arts Festival.

Bookings can be made from 16 August at Artscape Dial-a-seat 021 421 7695 or through Computicket. The event complies with all Covid-19 regulations including social distancing and patrons must wear masks for entry.

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