

Institution: Cardiff University		
Unit of Assessment: Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film & Screen (33)		
Title of case study: Transforming performance of <i>Carmen</i> on the global stage		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2007-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Clair Rowden	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Reader	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 01/04/2007 – present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 01/08/2013 – 31/12/2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) <p>Bizet's <i>Carmen</i> is one of the world's most performed operas, but no published edition has reproduced the score of the Parisian premiere (1875). Rowden's work on a new edition considered manuscript performance scores, libretti and staging manuals from the original Parisian productions to produce an authoritative score with unique information on staging, to be used by practitioners to inform new interpretations of the opera. This edition influenced operatic professionals (directors, coaches, performers, composers) to revise their performance approaches and transform their interpretations of <i>Carmen</i>. In addition, examination of performance in historical and transnational perspectives led to the creation of an interactive website tracing the opera's cultural and performance history which provides audiences with new understandings of <i>Carmen</i>.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) <p>Rowden, a specialist in opera and nineteenth-century France, researches how Bizet's <i>Carmen</i> has developed from its very first performance to the modern day. Rowden's ongoing research into the musical theatrical world of Paris during the second half of the nineteenth century makes her a leading authority in the field. Her extensive work on Parisian archival sources led to a monograph on opera and parody [3.1], new insights on Gounod's <i>Faust</i> [3.1] and the operatic careers of international singers [3.2].</p> <p>2.1 Unique edition of <i>Carmen</i></p> <p>Rowden's 2013 edition of <i>Carmen</i> [3.3], co-edited with Richard Langham Smith, is a 'performance Urtext': it is based on the opera's first performances and uniquely recaptures both staged spectacle and musical text, including information not preserved in the scores or libretti from Bizet's time. Published by Edition Peters (and informally known as 'the Peters edition'), it draws on five principal sources: three musical (one published and two manuscript) and two dealing with staging. Rowden's substantial contribution included assembling these resources, comparing and contrasting the different types of information in available documents, making editorial choices about which information to present and correcting proofs accordingly. Her detailed work on the unpublished score of the first performances in Paris (which underpins the very concept of a 'performance Urtext') is significant as this is the only manuscript source which is not available digitally.</p> <p>The resulting edition is distinct from others in that it [3.3]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presents 'opera as performance' – it captures not only how the opera was first played but also how it was first staged; • provides musicians with a working score – other scholarly Urtext editions, by including large amounts of material that is never performed, are too unwieldy for practitioners to use in preparing and rehearsing a production; • provides extracts from the original staging manuals, all original dialogues, and prioritises the original French sung text. 		

2.2 Tracing *Carmen*'s journey

An opera continually evolves as it travels across borders, is translated and adapted. Rowden's conception of the Peters score as a living document gave rise to *Carmen Abroad*, a transnational study exploring the establishment of *Carmen* in the operatic repertoire and its movement across the globe from its Parisian premiere in 1875 until the Second World War. She convened 20 international researchers (a third of whom were Early Career Researchers) at Cardiff University in June 2017 for the conference *Carmen Singer of the World*, in association with BBC Cardiff Singer of the World, in order to create a community for rigorous investigation and knowledge exchange between academics.

This network meeting became the foundation of an edited book [3.4] identifying the ways in which *Carmen* has been performed, produced, disseminated and interpreted worldwide. Traditional Eurocentric paradigms within opera studies have held that opera in Europe is a quality art form with highly trained performers, whereas operatic performances elsewhere can be seen as second class and derivative. *Carmen Abroad* – by studying performances of one opera over a seventy-year period – challenges this assumption and, in doing so, remodels operatic history as a global cultural phenomenon. As well as co-editing the 21-chapter volume, Rowden contributed a full chapter on the overlooked history of French performance of *Carmen* in the provinces between its premiere and its first Parisian revival in 1883, and a co-written introduction which draws chapters together and explores transnationalism in opera and opera studies today [3.4].

Building on momentum from the conference, Rowden conceived of the accompanying website – www.CarmenAbroad.org [3.5]. Forming part of the emerging discipline of musical mapping in the digital humanities, it presents information and archival sources about performances of *Carmen* worldwide up to 1945. Rowden received a British Academy/Leverhulme grant [G3.1] to fully develop the website's potential to visualise geographical and historical data diachronically and in engaging ways. It is designed for a broad audience – including academics, practitioners, students and operagoers – and provides an interactive map and timeline of nearly 1000 *Carmen* productions, including images, archival documents and video resources for practitioners [3.5]. The website draws on diverse source materials and a huge variety of data, necessitating careful editorial and curatorial control by Rowden.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[3.1] **Clair Rowden**, *Opera and Parody in Paris, 1860-1900* (Brepols, 2020) Output can be supplied from HEI on request

[3.2] **Clair Rowden**, 'Deferent Daisies: Caroline Miolan Carvalho, Christine Nilsson and Marguerite, 1869', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 30/2-3 (November 2018), 237-58. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954586719000089>

[3.3] Georges Bizet, *Carmen*, eds. Richard Langham Smith and **Clair Rowden** (Edition Peters, 2013) Output can be supplied from HEI on request

[3.4] **Clair Rowden** and Richard Langham Smith (eds.), *Carmen Abroad: Bizet's Opera on the Global Stage* (Cambridge University Press, 2020). Individual chapter: 'Carmen Faces Paris and the Provinces' (45-63); co-authored chapter: 'Carmen at Home and Abroad' (3-25); 'Preface' (xi-xvi). <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108674515>

[3.5] **Clair Rowden**, www.carmenabroad.org (2018)

Selected grant:

[G3.1] **Clair Rowden**, 'Carmenabroad.org', British Academy, 01/04/2019- 31/12/2020, £9,974, SRG1819\190236

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

How do you take one of the world's best-loved, most-performed operas and still allow for fresh interpretations? *Carmen* has had a long history of modification and adaptation: Bizet wrote *Carmen* as an *opéra-comique*, which included both spoken and sung text and, after his death, it was adapted into a fully-sung version. By generating new ways of thinking about the opera, Rowden's research: influenced creative practice; helped operatic professionals to create

distinctive performances in a competitive market; transformed understandings; and created a new knowledge exchange community.

The vocal score co-authored by Rowden [3.3] sold over 1,260 copies worldwide and was used for at least 67 performances in six countries (Wales, England, France, Germany, Czech Republic, Singapore). Companies who have used it include [5.1]:

- Mid Wales Opera (2014);
- Singapore Symphony Orchestra (2016 – praised by *The Straits Times* for drawing “a lot of inner detail from the [Peters] score which was refreshingly revealing” [5.2]);
- Dartington International Summer School (2016);
- Brno National Theatre (2016);
- Opéra de Dijon (2019);
- Cologne Opera (2019/20);
- It was also to be used for a new production at Paris’s Opéra-Comique (the site of the opera’s 1875 premiere) with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, however the scheduled run from September 2020 was postponed due to COVID-19.

The Peters edition offers detailed musicological and theatrical knowledge which allows freedom to create new yet informed spectacles for audiences. Examples of how it influenced directors, coaches, performers, and composers to revise their performance approaches are detailed below.

4.1 Directing *Carmen*

Annabel Arden has a distinguished career as a theatre and opera director, encompassing UK productions for English National Opera, the Royal Opera House, the Glyndebourne Festival, the Royal National Theatre, and the BBC. Her wide-ranging international directorial credits include productions in Lisbon, Barcelona, Salzburg, Chicago, and New York. She used the Peters edition for the innovative and inaugural production of *Carmen* at the Grange Festival (June 2017), and twice workshopped scenes with Rowden (Royal College of Music, February 2017; Cardiff University, June 2017) when preparing new dialogue (by acclaimed playwright and librettist Meredith Oakes) [5.3].

Arden’s production re-imagined *opéra-comique* traditions for modern audiences. In her radical reinterpretation of the opera for an English-language audience, she played with multiple languages and completely reimagined the dramatic storytelling by recreating the text spoken by the characters to allow for two narrator figures/actors to take their place on stage and interact with both the characters and the audience. She called upon Rowden’s leading expertise to employ conventions of period French revue and parodical theatre, adding the figures of the ‘compère’ and ‘commère’ to frame the spectacle, who step in and out of multiple characters, break the fourth wall to address the audience directly, and comment on what is happening on stage [5.3].

Arden confirmed the Peters edition’s influence on her creative process and directorial decisions: “*It helped me to understand the tone of what the opéra-comique might have been like... This edition, with the research behind it, the images, and all the dialogue, led me to do what I did... I found the score enormously helpful. You do feel you’re linked to a history of performance practice in this score. You feel informed but not tied... [this score] was made by people who understood it would be changed, and you [Rowden] were really interested in change, so in that sense it’s a performance document*” [5.3].

4.2 Performing *Carmen*

The Peters edition’s inclusion of detailed stage and performance directions and full spoken dialogue is changing how characters are interpreted on stage. Pierre-Maurice Barlier - a nationally recognised expert vocal coach working with Welsh National Opera, Opera North

and the Grange Festival, and Rowden's husband – confirms the difference using the edition makes in musical and stage preparation.

Editorial elements specific to the edition have transformed how he and directors rehearse with actors. For example, the availability of spoken dialogue in the vocal score significantly informed Barlier's creation of new French spoken text (Welsh National Opera, 2019/20): *"I could easily draw on phrases from the original dialogue to give a traditional French or Parisian flavour, a 'je ne sais quoi', to the more modern and realistic text I was working with"* [5.4].

The inclusion of the dialogues provides detail missing from the condensed recitatives composed by Guiraud after Bizet's death. The ability to refer to dialogue in rehearsal transformed Barlier's processes of reconstructing character motivation. He used the Peters score when coaching mezzo-soprano Mirouslava Yordanova for the DomStufen-Festspiele production in 2018 and found that *"being able to refer to the Peters score was very helpful to take decisions. Especially in an older production where dialogue has been cut to a very thin skeleton, you end up with a superficial view of the character when actually the dialogues, all the threads, are there [in the Peters score] to give more depth to your character"* [5.4].

Yordanova confirmed it was *"crucial in the composition of my role to be able to use the dialogue in the Peters score to be able to fill in plot details, character motivation and traits, and to find the right tone for each musical statement"* [5.5]. For Carmen's final duet, she added that *"the Peters score gives staging detail lacking in other editions but which provides clear details of characterisation from the original production which I was able to integrate into my work on the role"* [5.5].

Industry professionals working with opera companies around Europe responded to a survey [5.6] regarding the score. Feedback on how they benefited from the score's format and musical detail includes [5.6]:

- *"It's always helpful to have the entire libretto and dialogue in one score, rather than having to refer to several copies. It helps to have a deeper understanding of the story and to see the development of the characters and plot, especially in the dialogue";*
- *"They [the critical indications] are very informative and they give more knowledge to explore different ways of approaching the music and text";*
- *"The detail provided in the score and musicality matched perfectly when learning it and provided ease when rehearsing the number. In addition, the spacing of the score aided phrasing and breathing structure".*

4.3 Orchestrating Carmen

Stephen McNeff is an award-winning opera and musical theatre composer who has been commissioned by the Royal Opera House, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Welsh National Opera, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Chamber Choir Ireland, and Canada's Banff Centre. He turned to the Peters Edition when commissioned to reorchestrate *Carmen* for Mid Wales Opera (2014), saying *"I don't think there was ever any question of not using the Peters edition because it is the authoritative edition...The Peters edition offers musicological details whilst allowing me the autonomy to create a new, yet informed ensemble; it can provide music and theatre professionals with a firm foundation on which to base their own work"* [5.7].

The Peters edition helped him achieve his objective of reinventing the score for diverse audiences in small venues. The performance detail in the score (both musical and staged), and its conception as a living score that will necessarily be changed in performance, provided him with a working edition which stimulated and challenged his aesthetic choices; he noted that *"using the Peters edition as a primary tool generated compositional ideas which underpinned the success of the final orchestration"* [5.7]. His reorchestration of the score for ten instruments was described by arts critics as *"an inspired reduction"* (Wales Online), *"an extremely skilful reduction"* (The Arts Desk), and *"opening the door to a rich and intriguing Carmen"* (Wales Arts Review) [5.2].

4.4 Understanding Carmen

Rowden communicated her research findings publicly through specialist magazines, programme books and public events. For example, she organised an event on *Carmen* for operagoers with the Friends of Welsh National Opera in September 2019. When the audience was asked what most transformed their understanding of *Carmen*, responses included:; *“Thinking about why we still perform it/see it today – the issues are not new but can be adapted to suit modern issues that modern audiences feel is relatable”* and *“Understanding different ways in which the character of Carmen can be portrayed – much more nuanced than might appear on the surface”* [5.6].

In bringing together a network meeting of scholars for Carmen Singer of the World in 2017, Rowden created a knowledge exchange community which had *“a significant impact on the wider musical community in this country and throughout the world”* and *“helped to stimulate new ways of thinking and collaborating”* [5.8]. The incoming President of the Royal Musical Association identified the Carmen Abroad project as a model for other projects and stated that it *“directly informed”* her approach to organising a conference (with Rowden) celebrating the centenary of the composer Saint-Saëns [5.8]. She highlighted the project’s engagement with Early Career Researchers (quoting an ECR who described the project as *“a model for creating a research community and engaging ‘mobile’ postdoc researchers in a transnational community”*) and noted that its model is *“informing the establishment of a Network of European Musicological Societies, which is focusing on how to support younger postdoctoral scholars”* [5.8].

The community collaboration which grew from Carmen Singer of the World is evident in the accompanying Carmen Abroad website. Edited and curated by Rowden, it offers a new way for audiences to engage with the opera’s history. Through its map and timeline, users can navigate performances while accessing performance data in textual, visual and aural formats. It extended the project’s reach (original collaborators were from the UK, continental Europe, Ireland, Japan, the US and Australia) as academics and specialists from around the world – including China, Singapore, and North Africa [5.8] – have made their research data readily available to a wide public through the site.

The Peters score has an increasing presence in higher education. McNeff uses the score as an *“example of good practice as it is unique in its consideration of both staged spectacle and musical text”* [5.7] when speaking to composers and librettists about incorporating stage directions into their scores. This was as part of his teaching role on the Operamakers MA programme at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, in residences at institutions including the Royal Irish Academy of Music and the University of Ljubljana (Slovenia), and in guest lectures at the Royal Northern College of Music, Trinity Laban, and Cambridge [5.7].

Overall, Rowden’s research generated new ways of thinking about one of the world’s most-performed operas. It underpinned new performances around the world, transformed the approaches of creative professionals, and stimulated new, critical responses from audiences.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- [5.1] Quantitative data on sales of vocal scores and performances which have used the score
- [5.2] Published reviews of performances using the score
- [5.3] Interview with Annabel Arden, Theatre and Opera Director
- [5.4] Interview with and email from Pierre-Maurice Barlier
- [5.5] Testimonial from Mirouslava Yordanova
- [5.6] Report of survey results for users of score (International), and respondent feedback to Carmen: *Performance, Performers & Productions*, September 2019
- [5.7] Testimonial from Stephen McNeff
- [5.8] Testimonial from the incoming President of the Royal Musical Association (from 2021)