

CARMEN.maquia

**Educator's Guide
(Grades K-6)
2025**



CARMEN.maquia – Educator's Guide (Grades K-6)



CARMEN.maquia – Educator’s Guide (GradesK-6)

Overview

CARMEN.maquia is a bold, imaginative retelling of Georges Bizet’s opera Carmen—but instead of words, this story is told through powerful dance, dynamic movement, and striking black-and-white visuals inspired by Picasso.

This performance introduces students to themes of independence, emotion through movement, and cultural expression through Spanish dance styles. It’s an ideal opportunity to explore storytelling without dialogue, connect music and emotion, and begin talking about making choices and consequences.

What Students Will Learn

- How dance can tell a story without words.
- That movement, facial expressions, and music help us understand characters’ feelings.
- To notice patterns, colors, and shapes in performance and design.
- Lessons about courage, freedom, friendship, and consequences of choices.

Takeaway Messages for This Age

- Movement is a powerful way to express who you are.
- We all have choices—our actions can hurt or help others.
- Leadership and bravery can look different in different people.

CARMEN.maquia – Educator’s Guide (GradesK-6)

The Story

In CARMEN.maquia you will see the images of a town in Andalusia, Spain. Carmen is the leader of the young women who work in the cigar factory. We are introduced to the Cigarillas, the dance movement is fun and flirtatious. When Carmen enters the town square, she is strong and demands attention. The women leave and two soldiers are free to leave their post and dance. The soldier’s movement makes fun of their work and shows their friendship.

Soon Carmen and the Cigarillas return, and they show the soldiers how powerful they are in their dance. Carmen stands out to the soldiers and begins to tease Don José. She leaves and we are taken to another scene. We see Camren having an argument with one of her girlfriends, the guards pull them apart, but Don Jose must take her to jail for her bad behavior. He ties her hands and takes her away.

At the jail Carmen’s solo dance hypnotizes Don Jose and after dancing together, she manages to escape. Don José cannot stop thinking about Carmen and has a dream. The hallucinations of ghost like Carmens torment him. We leave Don José and are introduced to the town square where a soldier and townsman argue over who is better to be Carmen’s boyfriend but soon Escamillo the bullfighter ends that argument with his powerful bullfighter dance. Carmen is attracted to Escamillo for his bravery and strength.

The next scene takes us to Carmen’s room where she is reading the tarot cards. Cards that may hold her future. She takes each card and reads what may come. Her future is dark. But she decides to marry Escamillo the bullfighter and our last scene is her wedding to Escamillo.

CARMEN.maquia – Educator’s Guide (GradesK-6)

Key Characters to Know

- **Carmen** – Bold, confident, and independent. She moves through life on her own terms.
- **Don José** – A soldier who falls deeply in love with Carmen.
- **Escamillo** – A famous bullfighter whose bravery captures Carmen’s attention.
- **Micaëla** – Don José’s kind, first love.
- **The Cigarrillas** – Carmen’s coworkers; strong, playful, and proud.
- **The Soldiers & Townspeople** – Background characters who help tell the story.

Dance as a Language

Even without words, dancers can tell powerful stories. Here’s what to watch for in CARMEN.maquia:

Movement

This ballet mixes contemporary dance with flamenco and paso doble. It’s full of sharp gestures, flowing arms, and strong footwork.

Postures & Gestures

Dancers use body language to show feelings like pride, anger, or love. Students can observe how fast or slow, high or low, a movement is to understand what the character might be feeling.

Spatial Patterns

Watch how the dancers move through space—are they in a circle, a line, or all alone? The way they move together (or apart) shows the mood of the scene.

Music

All the music in the show is by Georges Bizet and Pablo de Sarasate. You’ll hear familiar melodies like the “Habanera” and “Toreador Song,” filled with Spanish and Afro-Cuban rhythms.

CARMEN.maquia – Educator’s Guide (GradesK-6)

The Look of the Show

Scenic Design

The set is inspired by Picasso’s art, using black-and-white shapes and accordion-style paper walls. Designer Luis Crespo created a clean, bold space that lets the dancers shine.

Costumes

All the dancers wear white—except Carmen, who wears black. This helps us see who she is right away. The costumes are modern and simple, moving away from traditional red flamenco dresses.

Props

Only a few props are used: a handkerchief, a rope, and tarot cards. These small details help the story feel real and keep the focus on movement.

Symbols

Ask students: What do you think the colors, the rope, or Carmen’s tarot cards represent? Can you spot other symbols?

Vocabulary to Explore

- **Floreo** – A hand movement in flamenco that looks like a flower blooming.
- **Zapateado** – Rhythmic foot stomping, like a drumbeat made with your feet.
- **Paso Doble** – A Spanish dance that mimics the drama of bullfighting.
- **Roma People** – An ethnic group with roots in India and a rich cultural tradition in Europe, including flamenco.

CARMEN.maquia – Educator’s Guide (Grades K–6)

Activities Before the Show

- 🎧 Listen: Play Bizet’s “Habanera” or “Toreador Song.” What does it make you imagine?
- 🩷 Strike a Pose: Try a flamenco pose with one hand up and one on your hip.
- 🧐 Act it Out: Use only movement to show surprise, sadness, or excitement. Can classmates guess your emotion?

After the Show: Reflect Together

- What part of the show was most exciting to you?
- How did Carmen move differently from the other dancers?
- Did the black-and-white colors make the story feel modern or old-fashioned?
- What choice did a character make that you agreed or disagreed with?

Big Questions for Young Minds

- What does it mean to be free?
- Can you tell what someone feels just by how they move?
- What makes someone a leader?

Themes for Further Research

1. The Roma People
2. Flamenco
3. George Bizet
4. Pablo Picasso
5. Cubism
6. The Romantic Era

For more information, please contact: Natalia Mesa, Community Engagement Director, at nmesa@ballethispanico.org or 212-362-6710, ext. 846.