

## **Optional Response to the Ballet Carmen, by Antonio Gades & Carlos Saura, Teatro Real de Madrid, Antonio Gades Company**


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This version of Carmen was fascinating because it was so different than any other rendition I've seen. Putting the piece in a modern perspective led me to draw conclusions I never would have in a traditional ballet version. The two things that stood out the most in this version were the mirror and Carmen's death. The mirror and its twisted reflections acted as commentary on the difference between the way we perceive ourselves and the way others perceive us. I found this interesting because Carmen exudes so much confidence, but the mirror allowed us to see her at her most vulnerable—utterly discontent with herself. The closest I came to understanding that discontent in the ballet versions came from the turmoil with the men in her life, but this mirror helped me understand that the source of it all came from dissatisfaction with herself. There is a song called Carmen by Lana del Rey that focuses on this exact issue- the contrast between what everyone else sees and what Carmen keeps inside. I had assumed that the song was based on Carmen from the opera/ballet, but I had never fully understood the connection. This version of Carmen helped me understand that relationship with herself, that self-hatred and self-deprecation she kept hidden from everyone else. It made the story seem all the more relatable; much more realistic. I also found the ending very interesting. In ballet versions, Carmen's death is depicted as a crime of passion. Of course once you ponder it you can understand that it's actually commentary on men who feel they are owed a woman, and can't handle being denied. The modern version was not afraid to be honest about that— the man stabbed Carmen more than once to show intent. He then held her while she died. I found that part more open to interpretation. It could have been because she was still a woman and he felt the need to protect her, it may have been because a small part of him genuinely loved her, or it could have been that he needed to prove he could be her everything and holding her at her most vulnerable was symbolic of that. Either way, I found this rendition incredibly creative and honest, and I really enjoyed watching it.


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While watching this version of Carmen, I couldn't help but notice how different the performance seemed compared to other variations of Carmen. The atmosphere set by the dancers felt very free and open, everyone seemed to connect with each other through not only their movements, but through their expressions as well. While watching these interactions, I felt very captivated by the storyline that was being expressed, as well as the stage presence that all of the dancers demonstrated, creating an illusion that made it seem as though I was part of their story as well, and not just a member of the audience. Their expressions and emotions were so engaging throughout the performance, that I felt as if I could almost feel their expressions as well. Compared to other versions of Carmen, I liked the fact that everything felt more relaxed, and not as if the performance had to be perfect, which contributed to making everything feel much more real and genuine. The singing and clapping displayed throughout the performance showed how creative and innovative this version of Carmen was, making me more interested in the movements and interactions everyone shared. When Vanesa Vento entered the stage as Carmen, I noticed that her movements were very sharp and precise, but also very controlled and


expressive. The personality she demonstrated seemed very free-spirited and fiery, reminding me of more of a sweet but yet tangy citrus. Her interactions with the other dancers were very entertaining to watch, and overall I found the performance very amusing and enjoyable.



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Carmen has always been one of my favorite ballets. I love the Bolshoi's choreography and the style they bring to it. I guess I might be a little closed minded, but I was not a huge fan of this version. The music and vocals took away and clouded the dancer's movements, which I did not appreciate. I felt this dancer was not the correct choice for the role of Carmen. Some of her movements seemed too spastic and others felt too much like belly dancing. I also felt that Carmen and José had very little chemistry. I did enjoy the beginning piece with the corps. I also enjoyed watching how they used their hands and arms to make fluid movements while also retaining some amount of sharpness.



This performance is unlike anything I watch on my own. It was eye-catching and initially interesting to see the different style of dance. It was more character than ballet. In the beginning I was very interested in watching this and learning a different style, but my interest was lost later

on. There were different tempos throughout the whole performance and that kept me watching hoping to see something different, but it still looked a little repetitive in terms of the steps they used. There may have been other steps that were different, but so little that I missed them. There were a few scenes that grabbed my attention, but overall there wasn't anything that made me



I liked how the dancers make some sounds themselves by clapping, tapping and singing throughout it. I also thought it was interesting to see their costumes and how they were simple and mostly a skirt and a leotard.