

San Jose Mercury News, February 15, 2016

By Georgia Rowe

“Of course, it helps to have a strong singer in the title role, and this "Carmen" has an excellent one in mezzo-soprano Lisa Chavez.

Chavez, a former member of OSJ's resident ensemble, has appeared in a variety of roles for the company. From Humperdinck's Hansel to Rossini's Isabella, she's established herself as a versatile artist. But Carmen seems tailor-made for her. From her first appearance as the seductive gypsy who prizes freedom above all else, Chavez sounded terrific. Singing her mesmerizing entrance piece, the "Habanera," her smoky, richly colored voice shaped the music in expressive, voluptuous phrases.

Chavez may surprise operagoers expecting stock gestures and poses. This Carmen avoids the hip-swinging clichés that have become synonymous with the character. Haughty and intense, she radiates sensuality with a minimum of schtick. And her singing is secure, unfettered and beautiful right up to the opera's tragic final scene.

.... When it comes down to it, though, "Carmen" is about the gypsy in the title role. There's a lot to enjoy in this production, but Chavez's performance is something special.”

Operaville, February 16, 2016

By Michael J. Vaughn

“Eventually, of course, all the direction in the world fails without talent, but San Jose's lineup is loaded. Lisa Chavez was born to play Carmen, equipped with the classic Carmen look, vocal power and attitude. She does a masterful job of tempering that power, keeping her powder dry for the truly dramatic moments. In the Habanera and other classic passages, she retains a self-assured cool that gives her the bearing of a leader.”

San Francisco Classical Voice, February 16, 2016

By Charlise Tiee

“As Carmen, Lisa Chavez was sultry and disdainful. Her voice is very loud and her performance was strongly physical and easy to read.”

Mercury News, Richard Scheinin February 8, 2015

“As Harriet, mezzo-soprano Lisa Chavez was magnetic, with her plush storm of a voice and her to-the-T depiction of the sister, whose unremitting snobbishness makes her comical. With each of the company's productions, Chavez reveals new aspects of her talents.”

Opera News, Georgia Rowe, November 16, 2014

“Lisa Chavez, glided through Isabella's arias with assurance; her buttery, richly colored mezzo was evenly produced throughout her range, sounding shapely in Act I's "Cruda sorte!" registering with luxuriant ease and beauty in her Act II invocation of Venus, "Per lui che adoro," and emerging with bright, forward tone in the ensembles. Chavez is a graceful stage presence, and there was no doubting her character's intelligence and resourcefulness. "Pensa alla patria" was her most convincing moment.”

Mercury News, Richard Scheinin, November 17, 2013

“The heart and soul of this production are mezzo-soprano Lisa Chavez as Hansel and soprano Cecilia Violetta López as Gretel. They are a lovable team, delightful from the moment they appear, exuding the happy innocence and mischievous energy of children. This brother and sister make the fun for each other; they dance, spin, sing. They tease one another. They take care of one another through the terrors of night. Chavez is new to the company this season, and this is her breakout performance. Saturday, her mezzo voice was a cascade of colors, full of vitality -- and Chavez projects beautifully, better than anyone else in Saturday's performance. Hers was a knock-your-socks-off performance.”

Classical 101, Christopher Prudy, March 2013

"Lisa Chavez is a big voiced mezzo-soprano who chose barn chewing arias and chew then she did. Chavez won two awards at this weekend's annual Irma M. Cooper Opera Columbus Vocal Competition. She earned first place and the audience favorite awards.

The California native came across as sincere, dedicated and unafraid to let go. Judges and competitions often distrust big voices. Don't ask me why, because the world hungers for them. I knew in three notes this girl was something special.

Again, I'm convinced it was not only her talent but her guts that put her first. Opera isn't for the meek. Ask Irma, when you get to heaven."

Ashley Webb, The Stark Insider, May 1, 2013

"Lisa Chavez is slightly less familiar, if only because the last time we saw her, she was wearing the trousers in Ainadamar. Here, the unresolved tension of her character Dinah, is captured in every tremor of her voice."

Joshua Kosman, San Francisco Chronicle, April 29, 2013

"The superb cast featured Lisa Chavez as a poignant, full-throated Dinah."

Adam Broner, Repeat Performances, April 27, 2013

"Bay Area favorite Eugene Brancoveanu, a warm-voiced baritone with an out-sized instrument, played the husband, Sam, against mezzo Lisa Chavez as Dinah, the desperate housewife. Chavez, inspiring in a pants role as Lorca in Ainadamar, was also well matched vocally with Brancoveanu, bringing her own sturdy riches into play. But in her quieter soliloquies, such as "A woman needs so little," she seemed to reach each member of the audience privately, lithe velvet vocals over bass clarinet fifths and deeply bowed bass pulsations."

Joshua Kosman, San Francisco Chronicle, February 2013

"Mezzo-soprano Lisa Chavez took on the trouser role of Lorca with plenty of dramatic fire and vocal richness."

Richard Scheinin, San Jose Mercury News, February 2013

"As Lorca, mezzo-soprano Lisa Chavez showed off smoky low notes and opalescent high ones."

Adam Broner, Repeat Performances, February 16, 2013

"with Lisa Chavez singing powerfully in the alto/tenor range to elicit the ambiguous sexuality of Lorca."

Arlo McKinnon, Opera News, February 2012

"The three main female characters, Magda, John's Mother and the Secretary, carry the heart of the drama... Lisa Chavez successfully balanced the Secretary's underlying compassion against her officious surface coldness."

Judith Malafronte, Opera News, September 2008

"Mezzo-soprano Lisa Chavez conveyed Elizabeth Proctor's rigidity and emotion with clear, focused sound."

Allan Kozinn, New York Times, September 12, 2008

"The singing was uniformly strong, with Zeffin Quinn Hollis and Lisa Chavez working in tandem as a pained, sympathetic John and Elizabeth Proctor."

Ronni Reich, Backstage Magazine, September 12, 2008

"As Elizabeth, Lisa Chavez displays a rich, plangent voice and strong connection to the music."

