

# Opera review: Promise of a spectacular 'Carmen'

**By JIM LOWE**  
STAFF WRITER

WAITSFIELD — If Green Mountain Opera's opening concert Sunday at the Round Barn is any indication, this year's "Carmen" should be vocally spectacular.

Entering its sixth summer season, this regional professional opera company has become one of the foremost in northern New England. On June 17 and 19, a fully staged production of Bizet's "Carmen" will be presented at the Barre Opera House; and on June 16 and 18, the company's "junior ensemble" will present a more basic production of Mozart's "Cosi fan tutte" at Waitsfield's Skinner Barn.

On Sunday, Canadian mezzo-soprano Julie Nesrallah strutted her stuff as Carmen — and she had it all, physically and vocally. She applied her seductively luscious mezzo to "Les tringles des sistres" from "Car-

men," effectively enticing Sunday's capacity audience.

With exotic looks, a rich, warm sound, and a vampishly seductive attitude, Nesrallah should be an ideal Carmen, a role not new to her. Nestrallah, who was Suzuki in "Madama Butterfly" here several years ago, employed the same luscious voice in Saint-Saens' "Damson et Delilah," but her tempo was a might fast and to-the-point to be truly seductive.

Montreal soprano Mariteresa Magisano, already a fine singer when she starred in the festival's first production, "The Barber of Seville," has blossomed even more. In the familiar "Ebben ne andrò lontana" from Catalani's "La Wally," Magisano revealed a warm and lustrous soprano and beautiful expressiveness, echoed in a duet from Puccini's "Madama Butterfly." She should be a gorgeous

Micaela in "Carmen."

Vermont bass Erik Kroncke delivered a humorous and vocally rich "La calunnia" from Rossini's "The Barber of Seville." He should have a powerful presence as Zuniga, a lieutenant, in "Carmen." Baritone Troy Cook, the bullfighter Escamillo in "Carmen," drove home an impassioned and vocally powerful plea, joined by soprano Leila Bowie, in "Silvio, a quest'ora" from Leoncavallo's "Pagliacci." His "Hai già vinta la causa" from Mozart's "The Marriage of Figaro," though, lacked the lyricism that makes Mozart effective and beautiful.

Mezzo-soprano Irene Roberts, the Gypsy Mercedes in "Carmen," exhibited a rich and expressive sound in the "Flower Duet" with Magisano. Corporal Morales in "Carmen," tenor Todd Delany had a light expressive lyricism in

"When the air sings of summer" from Menotti's "The Old Maid and the Thief."

The Emerging Artists, who will be performing "Cosi fan tutte," all have good skills and fine voices, but few had any idea of how to sing Mozart. Instead of Mozart's trademark flowing lyricism, they pushed lines a la Puccini. The one exception was soprano Margot Rood, "Cosi's" Despina, who not only sang with a natural and beautiful lyricism, she exhibited a wry comic wit as well.

Director Sanford Sylvan has nearly three weeks to train these singers in how to sing Mozart and, if anyone can, the star of Peter Sellars' televised "The Marriage of Figaro" can. Throughout, the singers were more than ably accompanied by pianists Karen Becker and Bruce Stasyna, who is also director of the Emerging Artists Program.