



Katrina Gray / Contributed photo

The Dressage Team merges and approaches the audience in single file.



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Horses and riders interweave across the arena.

# 'La Passion de Carmen'

Unique collaboration of opera, dressage, debuts in Old Lyme

By Lisa Reisman 9/2/22

Imagine watching a troupe of Spanish and Lusitano horses dancing to the highlights of a beloved and tragic opera as it's performed by world-class opera singers.

On Saturday, Sept. 10, and Sunday, Sept. 11, the Opera Theater of Connecticut will stage "La Passion of Carmen," a one-act event featuring a collaboration of opera and dressage at High Hopes Arena in Old Lyme.

The production, which the OTC is presenting with Patricia Norcia Dressage and High Hopes Therapeutic Riding, is unprecedented, according to Alan Mann, OTC artistic director.

"We're pretty sure this collaboration, to this level of integration of opera and dressage, hasn't been done anywhere in the States," he said. "And it's right here on the shoreline."

The event is the brainchild of Patricia Norcia, owner and dressage trainer at Idlenot Farm in Clinton. It began when Norcia, at the time a professional actress and director in New York City, would see performances of the opera Carmen at the Metropolitan Theater.

"They usually had horses, but they would basically stand there and just walk off," the Yale School of Drama-trained Norcia told Hearst Connecticut Media in June.

She remembered the Spanish horses in the bullfighting scene in the film "Carmen" and began to dream of a Carmen where "the horses get to dance to this fantastic music."

Two decades later, that dream is nearing reality.

Mann recalled the excitement that attended a preview perfor-



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Right, Carmen, portrayed by Rebecca de Almeida, flees her Dream Double, portrayed by Francesca Edwards, in a pas de deux for human and horse.



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The rider is using a garrocha, a long wooden pole used since ancient times for working with cattle on ranches in Spain, according to <http://antonio-garciaequestrian.com/>.



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Riders train for the bullfight scene.

when the horses passed within feet of them and the opera voices filling the arena capped it all

perfectly," he said.

Carmen will be played by Rebecca de Almeida, a decorated



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Poster for OTC's production of "Carmen."

Brazilian mezzo soprano with a "luscious voice and warm timbre," according to a review in *Tribuna CT* and, as it happens, an equestrienne. She'll debut at Carnegie Hall later this year.

Mann said both the two-legged and four-legged artists will be attired in brightly colored costumes, with a nod toward Spain.

"There will be a grand military entrance, training for a bullfight, as well as drama, passion, unrequited love, and tragedy," he said.

The one-act event will be presented on Saturday, Sept. 10, and Sunday, Sept. 11, at 3 p.m. at the High Hopes Arena in Old Lyme.

► Ticket, \$50 general admission. Under 13, general admission tickets are \$25.

► For more information, and to order tickets, visit [operatheaterofct.org](http://operatheaterofct.org) or call 860-669-8999.

► The performance will be COVID compliant to the guidance then provided and audience members may need to remain masked while in the arena.