Carmen & Carmen

Moved by the Motion & ntgent

Carmen, the passionate lover, the free-spirited woman, the fury. Who is she really? Moved by the Motion explores the legendary story of opera composer Georges Bizet.
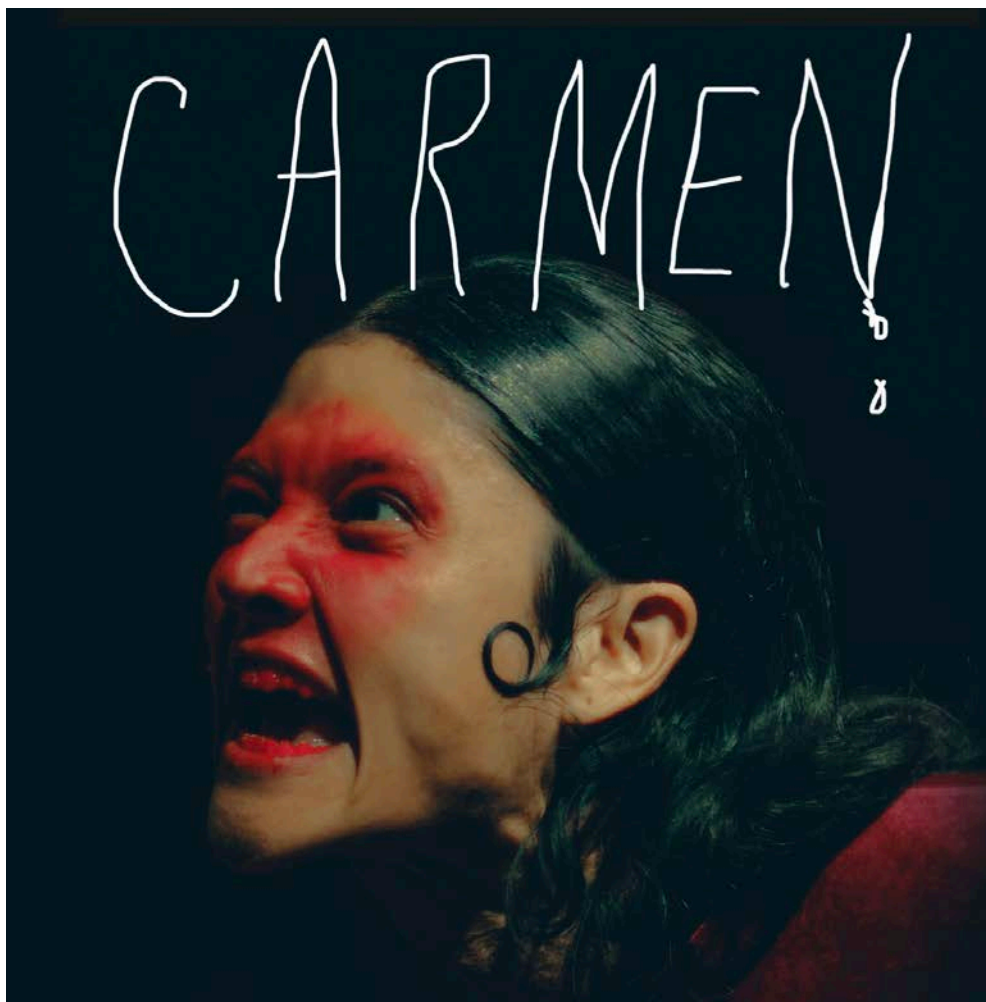
At the invitation of NTGent, Moved by the Motion embarks on research into the myth of Carmen, remixing opera, cinema, flamenco, and performance into a bold hybrid experience. Rather than retelling the classic, the group deconstructs it, using Carmen's iconic presence as a lens to explore themes of desire, violence, migration, and resistance.

Who is Carmen, really? A symbol of love, liberation — and a threat that must be subdued again and again.

Blending live performance and film, the piece unravels Carmen. As the screen begins to dissolve, a new story emerges, shifting from cinematic spectacle to visceral liveness.

ntgent

Letter from the makers

At the invitation of NTGent, Moved by the Motion continues its practice of iterative compositions and mixed-genre storytelling, extending their multi-year research of the opera Carmen.

The new performance decenters the opera by focusing on the expanded myth and its reception, with its myriad pop cultural references and political themes, particularly within the migratory fields of cinema and flamenco. In this new iteration, the myth itself becomes the score for a hybrid cinema-performance.

Carmen endures as a symbol of radical liberation and love, and therefore she must be regulated and killed over and over again. Her character is made to bear too many subalternities: as woman, factory worker, gitana, criminal; itinerant, polylingual, non-white, sexually liberated. She survives by codes that are anti(e)thetical to the very idea of Western subjecthood. In other words, her transgressiveness makes her inevitably both an object of desire and target for violence. In all her fractured multiplicity, Carmen becomes a prism to look at the ongoing socioecological disaster characterizing our times.

Moved by the Motion returns to its core ways of working, following a six-year residency at Schauspielhaus Zürich that enabled an in-depth investigation and usage of the craft of theatre, repetition in repertoire and extending collective work-methods towards an ensemble. This new production brings together different phases in the group's oeuvre: the ephemeral, iterative, improvised "Compositions" series and the opera Carmen. It brings migratory aesthetic practices into collision with the monumental and spectacular.

The "Compositions" series began in 2019 and is based on the improvised interplay between cinema, sound, and movement. Albert Einstein's notable observation of quantum mechanics as being "spooky actions at a distance" is operative in the cinematic staging of the group's ongoing poetic improvisation.

The format of the performance is a film live-scored by the performers on stage. The performance approaches the myth of Carmen using montage as a way to draw out her expanded legacy and themes implicit in her story. As the film plays, a performance starts to emerge around the edges of the film; the screen decomposes as the performance gradually overtakes it.

"Carmen belongs to nobody and everybody. She is everything her creators feared, and everything they desired. What was a threat to them is an inspiration to us"

– Wu Tsang

One inspiration for this project is Christian Marclay's *The Clock* (2010), which synchronizes a 24-hour day through film montage, as a reflection on how time is conceived and dramatized by cinema. The captured and mechanized time of cinema (with its roots in the industrial temporalities of Carmen's 19th century) creates tensions with the liveness of performance, the textures of flamenco compás, and the confabulations of speculative narrative.

Over the years, Moved the Motion has consistently worked with themes of constraint and capture, flight and movement. Considering the dominant disciplines and ideologies evoked by Carmen (Opera, State Theatre, Cinema) we can also understand the apparatus of capture in the repertory, that becomes fixed and kills through its disciplinary and regulatory forces. Performance and improvisation become a way to move through these constraints and practice liberation.

By engaging these different legacies and traditions, Moved by the Motion continues its ongoing investigation of the entangled states of live and captured images, through remixing genres of cinema, dance, music, and theater to create a hybrid stage performance. The production considers re-iteration and re-formulation of the myth through these different disciplines.