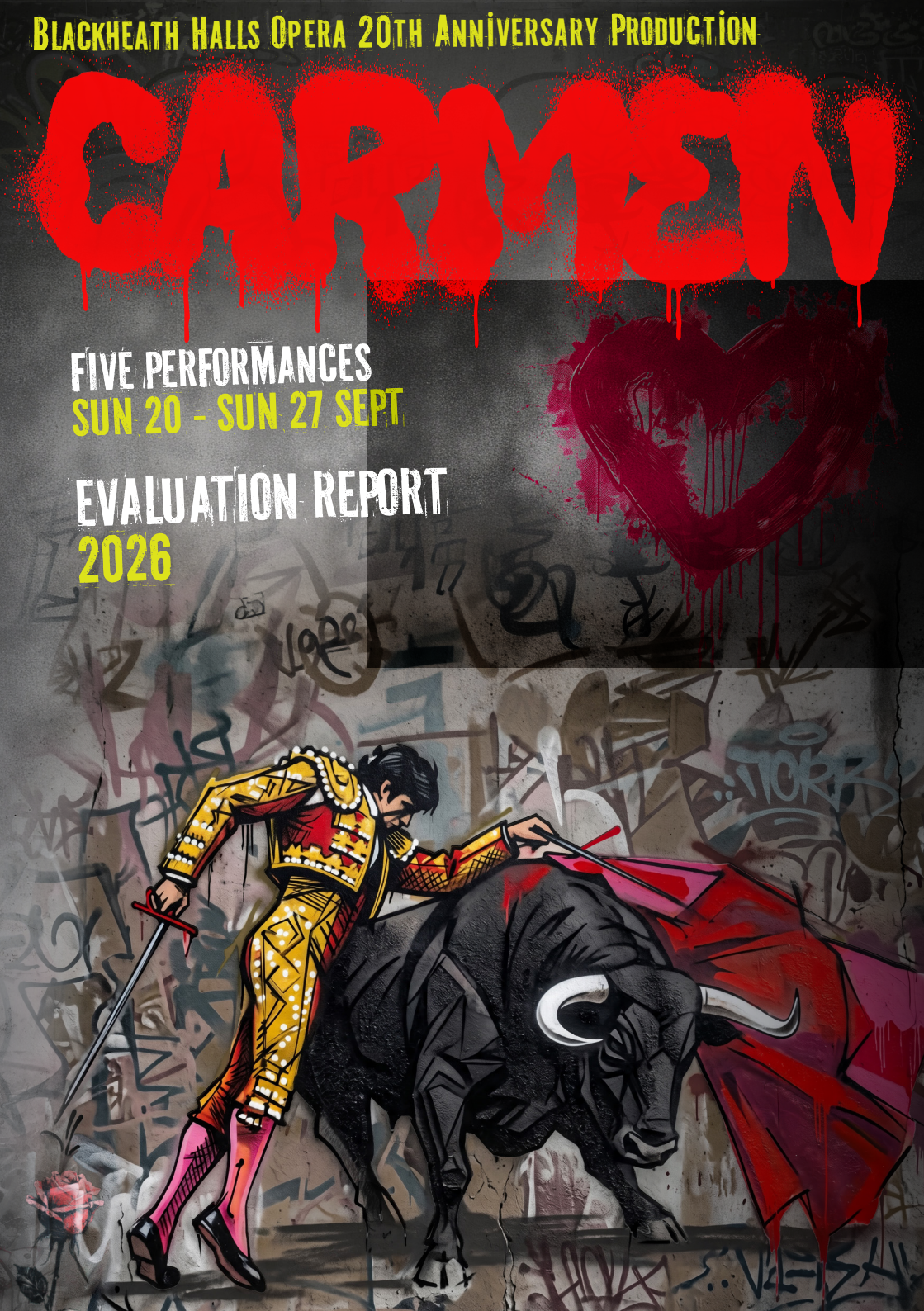
BLACKHEATH HALLS OPERA 20TH ANNIVERSARY PRODUCTION

CARMEN

FIVE PERFORMANCES
SUN 20 - SUN 27 SEPT

EVALUATION REPORT 2026





PRODUCTION TEAM

Director **Harry Fehr**
Musical Director **Christopher Stark**
Set Designer **Elliott Squire**
Costume Designer **Alice McNicholas**
Lighting Designer **Malcolm Richards**
Movement Director **Victoria Newlyn**
Fight Director **Scott Howland**
Répétiteur **Satoshi Kubo**
BSL Interpreter **Wendy Ebsworth MBE**

CAST

Carmen **Katie Bray**
Don José **Oliver Johnston**
Micaela **Meeta Raval**
Escamillo **Chuma Sijeqa**
Zuñiga **Grant Doyle**
Morales **Tom Butler**
Frascita **Clare Mariotti***
Mercedes **Ilona Nastase***
Remendado **Jacq Herbots***
Dancaire **Zac Conibear***
(* = Trinity Laban student)

Performing alongside our professional cast were:

- An adult chorus of 58 local people aged 18 – 80+
- A youth company of 34 young people aged 10 – 17
- 10 students and their teachers from specialist school Charlton Park Academy
- Blackheath Halls Orchestra – a group of 53 players

These 155 participants come from hugely varied backgrounds and circumstances, and have a wide range of experience.

Over the course of July, August and September we held 80 rehearsals, 4 graffiti workshops and performed the opera 5 times.

OPENING THE DOOR TO OPERA

We delivered two in-school taster sessions to 120 Year 5 children aged 9 and 10 at John Ball Primary and Brindishe Green Primary. These were led by Harry Fehr and Chris Stark and Katie Bray came along in her role as Carmen. As well as giving these children an insight into the staging of an opera we gave them the opportunity to sign up to take part in our youth company.

We delivered 4 Carmen assemblies to 525 Year 5 and Year 6 children aged 9 to 11 at John Ball Primary, Brindishe Green Primary, Grinling Gibbons Primary and James Wolfe Primary. Joined by Katie Bray as Carmen and Chuma Sijeqa as Escamillo we presented the story of Carmen with some of the more famous arias sung by Katie and Chuma. Children at these assemblies were offered 2 free tickets to a performance of Carmen for themselves to attend with a parent or carer. 70 people came to see the opera on these free tickets.

We ran 4 graffiti workshops to decorate our set led by Jesse from Paintbox Graffiti. 45 people attended these workshops, both young people and adults adding another strand of community involvement to the project.

> “The adults who work with the young people are SO GOOD! Our neurodivergent boys came away with their self-esteem sky high!”
> **Youth Company parent**




CARMEN













YOUTH COMPANY & SPECIALIST SCHOOL

The opportunity to take part in Blackheath Halls Opera for our Youth Company members and our specialist school students is FREE.

Our Youth Company launched the project with a 3 day summer school in August to get to know each other and the opera. They were then integrated into a series of rehearsals with the other groups leading to their five performances.

> “BH Opera has been an amazing, unforgettable experience, it has brought about my passion for music, drama and theatre! We need more creativity and arts in our lives and the people behind the opera have delivered it!” **Youth Company member**

We visited our specialist school for their first series of rehearsals and then the school came and had their own on-stage rehearsal with the full team before being integrated into the rest of the company for the performance.

We buy costumes and offer free tickets for the specialist school students and those Youth Company members whose families are experiencing financial hardship.

> “Personally I feel very moved that so many people have worked to offer this experience to our pupils. Sadly lives for young people with disabilities outside of school can be limited in opportunities. This project offers significant inclusion and visibility within the community for our pupils who take part.” **Charlton Park Academy teacher**



STATISTICS



5
Sold Out Surtitled Performances

280
Hours of Rehearsal

4
Graffiti Workshops

2
Schools' Taster Sessions for 120 Year 5 students

4
School Assemblies to 525 students



1
BSL signed performance



155
Participants engaged

5
Trinity Laban student chorus leaders and small solo roles

41
under 18s

33
Sessions 100% FREE for Youth Opera Company and Specialist School Students

1
Mentoring Lunch Session for Trinity Laban Students with our professional soloists



482
Slices of Cake consumed

£2407
Raised through cake and lunch sales



1501
Tickets Sold

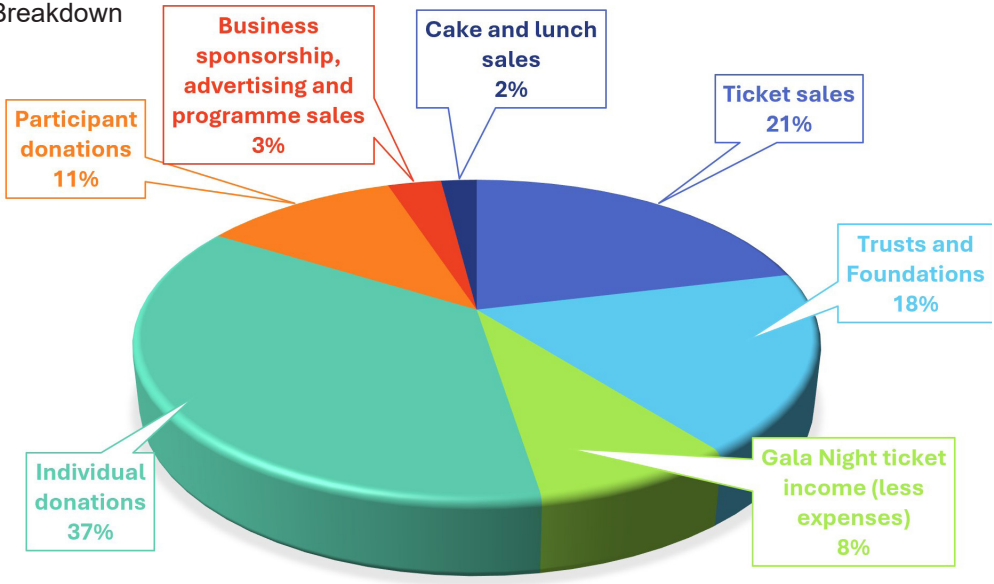


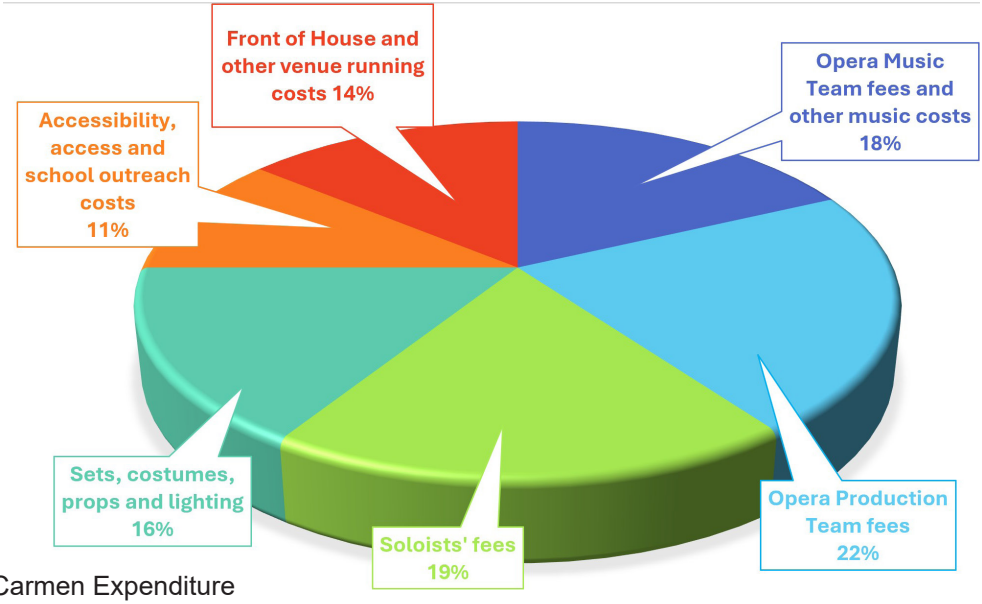
77%
of audiences surveyed gave the performance 5 stars

PROJECT FUNDS RAISED & SPENT

The total budget for Carmen was £151,589

Carmen Income Breakdown





Carmen Expenditure Breakdown



PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

"It felt a lot more inclusive and welcoming than I perceived an opera to be."

"It was very uplifting to be a part of, and has reinvigorated my interest in music and desire to keep improving."

"Working with Blackheath Halls Opera over the last two years have not only had a lasting impact on my own musical development and overall musicianship, they have also left countless memories and experiences that I will cherish for the foreseeable." **Trinity Laban Vocal Student**







"I love it so much. It makes my summer amazing."

"A stupendous and mind blowing, enriching experience that will never be forgotten."

"The best way to contribute to society!"

"It made me feel proud and accomplished."

"Without exception all our pupils want to take part again - some even calculating how many more operas they could do before they leave our school."

"The adults who work with the young people are SO GOOD! Our neurodivergent boys came away with their self-esteem sky high!"





“I wish more people could be exposed to what Blackheath Halls does with their opera. They would realise opera really is for everyone!!”

“The experience of being in a big, fantastic project with a mix of amateurs and professionals is so enriching and such a treat for children to participate in.”

“The biggest highlight was the attitude of the organisers and all the participants - it was so welcoming and everybody was really kind and helpful to each other throughout.”





AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

"One of the best productions of Carmen I have seen."

"Fabulous colourful constantly-moving staging!"

"It felt like opera for the people."

"Absolutely brilliant production — the best in all 20 years. Fantastic singing by soloists, chorus and children, great set and wonderful costumes."

"A community opera in every way. All ages and experiences sharing the joy of performing."



PRESS REVIEWS



“It is this spirit of community endeavour — the sense of sharing and participation — that gives BHO’s annual productions their special atmosphere.” **Hugh Canning**



“This production is world-class and could hold its bloodthirsty head high anywhere they like good opera.” **Michael Holland, South London Press**





GRATEFUL THANKS

Blackheath Halls is immensely grateful to the following who have made Carmen possible:

Major Opera Donors

John Baldwin and Barbara Kolator
David and Georgina Bowers
Janice and John Brooke
Anne Burton
Leslee Dryland
Phil Fortey
Jagruti and Emil Hassan
Yvonne Horsfall Turner
Kath Moser
Alasdair Neil and Penny Aldred
Professor Dawn Oliver
Alison Palmer
Alex Coupe and William Phillips
in loving memory of Jenny Phillips
Alice Robinson
Emma and Ian Rosenblatt OBE
Reverend Dr Adam and Oona Scott
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Helma Zebregs

Sponsors of Opera Gala Night

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Phillippa Keogh



Opera Donors cont...

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Stella Paskins
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Mrs Jean Phipson
Andrew Platman
John Robb
Sue and Howard Shields
Anne Sykes
Susan and Roger Taylor

Everyone else who has supported the project financially including the Opera Chorus and Orchestra, and those who wish to remain anonymous.

We would like to remember and thank Peter Hearn for his incredible generosity as a long standing Donor and Board Member. The transformation of Blackheath Halls and its heritage building over the past ten years would not have happened without Peter and The Hearn Foundation.

Supporters

We would also like to give heartfelt thanks to the Friends, Patrons and Platinum Patrons of Blackheath Halls who support all our community work.

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Ailish Tynan

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Francesa Robinson
Emma and Ian Rosenblatt OBE
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Reverend Dr Adam and Oona Scott
The Smillie Family





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Susan and Roger Taylor
Daren Wallbank (Ginkgo Financial)
Paul Watts

Legacy Supporters

Janet and Desmond
Esta Finlay
Mrs Julie North
And those who wish to remain anonymous, for remembering Blackheath Halls with a gift in their will.


OPERA GALA
NIGHT 2027
Sunday 28 February 6.30pm