

New Adventures in association with Sadler's Wells presents

MATTHEW BOURNE'S
THE CAR MAN
BIZET'S CARMEN RE-IMAGINED



TEACHER'S RESOURCE PACK

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1. USING THIS RESOURCE PACK

This pack aims to give teachers and students further understanding of **MATTHEW BOURNE'S THE CAR MAN**.

- It contains information and materials about the production that can be used as a stimulus for discussion and practical activities.
- There are worksheets containing information and resources that can be used to help build your own lesson plans and schemes of work based on **The Car Man**.

This pack contains subject material for Dance, Drama, English, Design and Music.

	Discussion
	Practical exercise
	Written work

The symbols above are to guide you through this pack easily and will enable you to use this guide as a quick reference when required. They will appear through the pack as symbols highlighting further work that can be done.

There are also a number of related activities, practical exercises and discussion ideas that can be used to develop ideas, workshops and as a starting point on which to use for your own course requirements.

2. INTRODUCTION TO *THE CAR MAN*

a) Plot synopsis

Music by Terry Davies and Rodion Shchedrin's *Carmen Suite* (after Bizet's *Carmen*)

Sound by Paul Groothuis

Lighting by Chris Davey

Designed by Lez Brotherston

Directed and Choreographed by Matthew Bourne

The Car Man is a dance in two acts, set in a fictional mid-west Italian-American town called Harmony. The story centres around:

Luca – A drifter
Dino – Owner of Dino's Diner and Garage
Lana – Dino's wife
Rita – Lana's sister
Angelo – Rita's boyfriend

ACT ONE

Welcome to Harmony...

When a stranger, Luca, arrives in Harmony he takes a job at Dino's garage as a car mechanic. His presence has an immediate effect on all those in the town. Lana tries to resist his allure but ends up succumbing and they embark on a passionate affair. Luca also befriends Angelo, who is bullied by the other mechanics and he helps him to find confidence. Angelo also falls in love with Luca, unbeknownst to his girlfriend Rita.

During a wedding party Dino starts to suspect that something is going on between Lana and Luca but he dismisses this idea. After the celebrations are over he goes out. When he returns he finds Lana and Luca together. A fight breaks out between Dino and Luca during which Lana hits her husband over the head with a tool from the garage. Dino is on the floor covered in blood but not yet dead. Lana hands the tool to Luca to give Dino the final blow that will kill him. Angelo finds Dino, and as the police arrive Lana throws money all over the floor, rips her dress and pulls Angelo on top of her to make it look as though Angelo has killed him. Angelo is arrested and put in jail.

ACT TWO

The scene begins in a bar and Lana and Luca are now together as a couple. Luca is having hallucinations about the death of Dino and the arrest of Angelo. This angers Lana, she thinks that this is a sign of weakness. Luca tries to prove himself to her by involving himself in gambling, car chases and fight nights to prove his strength.

Angelo is still in jail where Rita visits him and tells him of what really happened on the night of his arrest. She tells him that he was framed for something he did not do. He is angered by this news and after Rita has left he escapes from jail. Angelo returns to Harmony to find Lana and Luca. He captures Rita and holds her hostage until Lana returns. During the fight night he appears and fights with Luca. Angelo kisses Luca passionately before pushing him away. Luca pulls out a gun and holds it to Angelo, he is about to pull the trigger when Lana fires a shot from behind that kills her lover.

b) Carmen and The Car Man

Composer: Georges Bizet.

Libretto: Henri Meilhac and Lucovic Halevy after Prosper Merimee's novel.

The original Carmen is an opera in four acts, set in the Spanish city of Seville.

The story centres around:

- Carmen** – A gypsy
- Don José** – A corporal who is in love with Carmen
- Micaëla** – A peasant girl who is betrothed to Don José
- Zuniga** – Don José's captain
- Escamillo** – A matador who is in love with Carmen

Carmen, a tempestuous, wayward and beautiful gypsy girl is desired by all men. She works in a Seville cigarette factory. Arrested after she is involved in a fight with one of her colleagues, she is assigned to the custody of Don José, a corporal in the local barracks whose betrothed, Micaëla, has just arrived from their country village to look for him. Thoroughly bewitched by Carmen, José allows her to escape and is himself placed under arrest.

Meanwhile, at the tavern of Lillas Pastia, Carmen and her friends sing and dance whilst Zuniga attempts to woo her but she thinks only of José who has been in jail for a month and is due to be released that day. The glamorous toreador, Escamillo, arrives with his entourage and sets his sights on Carmen. Although tempted by him, she decides to wait for José. He arrives at the tavern on his release and Carmen tries to persuade him to leave with her instead of returning to the army, he refuses but becomes involved in a fight with his superior officer, Zuniga. After this incident José is forced to flee with Carmen.

Hidden away in the hills Carmen grows bored with José, so when Escamillo seeks her out she agrees to attend his forthcoming bullfight in Seville. Micaëla appears having found her way to them and pleads with José to return home with her, Carmen urges him to go. He refuses but Micaëla tells him that his mother is dying. Jose leaves with Micaëla but vows to return to Carmen.

In Seville the town prepares for the bullfight, Carmen and Escamillo arrive together but Jose accosts her outside the bullring, begging her to start a new life with him. She refuses and tells him that she loves Escamillo. At the very moment the crowd erupts in excitement over Escamillo's triumph in the ring, José, crazed with grief and jealousy, stabs Carmen to death.



The Wedding Party - Act One, Scene Three

Similarities and Differences:

The Car Man uses the themes of lust, passion, revenge and murder, which are all associated with the original opera. The main character of *Carmen* is similar to the character of both Lana and Luca in **The Car Man**. Luca has a mesmerising effect on the residents of Harmony, both male and female.



Look at the moment that Luca arrives in Harmony. What happens to the music, lighting and the movement? As there are no words how does this change in tempo help to convey what effect he has on Harmony? What impact does this have on an audience?



Dino's solo – Act One, Scene One



Luca is the first person in **The Car Man** to dance alone. What is the significance of this? How does his solo communicate and introduce him to the rest of the town, in particular the way he interacts with differently with the men and women? There is repeated use of elevation, and his dance has a strong Toreador influence.

What does this say about his character? How is this portrayed through dance? How do you as audience members respond to Luca on arrival in Harmony?



c) Key Themes

In small groups look at the main themes in **The Car Man**: **LUST**
PASSION
MURDER
REVENGE

Think about what images these words conjure up. Use these words and ideas to communicate these themes to an audience using your existing skills and dance training.

LUST:

Lana is immediately attracted to Luca and he to her. Lana tries to ignore his advances but Dino gives him a job and it is only a matter of time before lust turns to passion.

Angelo is rescued from a fight by Luca and admires him, Luca begins teaching Angelo how to fight and stand up for himself. Admiration develops into infatuation.

PASSION:



Lana dances a solo. Her dance is flirtatious. Look at the use of elevation, compare Lana's solo to the dynamics of Luca's solo in Scene One.



Lana's solo – Act One, Scene Two

Dino goes out and eventually Lana and Luca are alone. Luca goes to Lana and pulls her into his arms. Lana tries to resist but she succumbs to his advances. As they enter into a passionate dance, the residents of Harmony follow suit around them.

Lana and Luca are nearly found together by Dino but Luca escapes just in time. In the next scene a couple are making love in a car, Luca emerges followed by Angelo, they kiss passionately.

MURDER:

Lana and Luca are discovered by Dino. Luca and Dino fight, Lana panics and hits Dino over the head with a wrench. He falls to the floor and Lana hands the wrench to Luca to finish him off.



The actual death of Dino is the climax of his suspicions being aroused. Discuss what techniques are used to make the audience aware that he is becoming suspicious that something is happening between Luca and Lana. Pay special attention to the use of lighting and of music. These are integral elements that enhance tension.

REVENGE:

Angelo is framed by Lana for the murder of Dino. He escapes from jail wanting revenge. He holds Rita hostage until Lana and Luca arrive back at the car yard and then he fights with Luca.



For further exercises on this scene go to Worksheet C

3. PRODUCTION ELEMENTS – From Page to Stage

a) Set

The designer, Lez Brotherston and the director and choreographer, Matthew Bourne decided to set *The Car Man* in the 1960's. They both wanted to relocate the action from Spain to help distinguish this production from the original *Carmen* but it was important to both Brotherston and Bourne that the production kept a European feel.



In small groups or as a class think of other settings that *Carmen* could be 're-imagined' into.

Bourne cites his influences for this production as being the early Visconti films, and in particular *Ossessione* (1943) based on James M. Cain's 1934 novel *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. This film version of the novel is very urban and all the characters are very real. This was a major influence on the design and feel of **The Car Man** and so it was decided to set it in an Italian-American community in a fictional town called Harmony.

It was decided that the same set would serve for all the different locations in the production.

In Act One the set is the car yard and the diner.

In Act Two the same set is used with different coverings to act as the inside of the bar and with a dramatic change in lighting the set becomes a prison cell.



Matthew Bourne has set **The Car Man** in a fictional town called Harmony. Why do you think Bourne chose this name? We see the name very clearly at the beginning and the end of the production. How does it inform the production?



Harmony – Prologue

b) Costume

Brotherston purposely designed the costumes to not look like dance costumes. The women all wear pointy bras rather than dance underwear as this is very much of the period. The dresses are loose-fitting with buttons undone and they dance for most of the time in bare feet. The men are all typical James Dean characters with jeans, t-shirts and loose checked shirts. The men all wear work boots rather than dance shoes to maintain the period feel.



Lez Brotherston has designed very naturalistic costumes. How does this influence your interpretation of the production?

c) Music

The score is all Carmen music with the exception of one or two pieces which come from Rodion Shchedrin's *Carmen Suite* score. Terry Davies, the composer, didn't use the Shchedrin music as one whole piece but instead he mixed it all up so it is very difficult to hear where one ends and the next one begins. The music sounds very filmic and it was created specifically in that way. In films the music can enhance or create the atmosphere, in this production, as you only have the music, so it needs to not only inform but also create the atmosphere. Because of this it is an extremely important element of the production.



Music is not the only way that atmosphere can be created on stage. What other techniques are used in this production to help tell the story and create atmosphere?

d) Lighting

Lighting is an extremely important factor of the production. As there is only one set used lighting is an effective way to show a change in focus and atmosphere. For example, in Act Two the set changes from one scene inside a bar to the next scene in a prison cell with the use of just lighting.



Describe how this is achieved in the production.

e) Sound

Sound is used in this production to heighten atmosphere, for example, at the beginning of Scene Two there is the sound of buzzing in the air and insects chirruping. It is also used with the character of Dino to great comedic effect.



Think of some examples where sound effects are used around Dino. What effect does this have on the audience, how does it help portray his character?
Think of other moments throughout the production where sound is used to enhance or create atmosphere.

4. WORKSHEET A

Everyday movements and gestures

There are many everyday movements that are stylised to make them into dance movements. This can be done by exaggerating movements, setting them up to different rhythms and beats. In the first scene tyres, cars and chamois leathers are used as props and the movement actions are associated with cars.

The shower scene that follows this is choreographed using very simple gestures but they are timed so that it becomes interesting and exciting to watch.

EXERCISE 1



ACT ONE, SCENE ONE – Shower scene

- Create your own bathing gestures in pairs. Make sure you use different levels
- Join with another pair, use a line formation (A B A B)
- Work on contrasting phrases and find how they connect visually. What looks interesting?
- Adapt the timing so that high and low levels are used at different times.
- Add in a moment of canon and unison.



Shower scene – Act One, Scene One

EXERCISE 2

ACT ONE, SCENE TWO.

The scene starts with the buzzing and chirrup of insects and it is clear from the outset that it is extremely hot.



Look and discuss what is happening on stage to create this feeling of unbearable heat.

Music: What tempo is the music? What effect does this have?

Lighting: Describe the lighting in this section. How does it add to the meaning?

Sound: What other sounds are used other than those above? How do these sounds contribute towards the atmosphere?

Movement: The men use their shirts to stretch and move in the heat, the women sit, exhausted on chairs, others lie on the ground, but all movements are slow and languid. The movement is a similar pace to the music but what movements are being used? How do these movements indicate heat? Contrast the dynamic qualities of this scene to the mechanics dance or shower scene.



Individually try and imagine this heat, think about what effect this has on your body and on the way you move.

- Use a shirt or a chair if you would like to use a prop and experiment with movements relating to this scene.
- Choose 2 movements and exaggerate the movement to develop it into a motif. Pay close attention to the rhythm of the movement.
- In groups of about 4–6, teach each other the motifs and practice varying dynamics and speed.
- Create a phrase using the motifs, including transitions to link them. Consider pathways and direction of facing.
- Rehearse this sequence, working in unison. This sequence can then be developed by adding repetition and canon.



Angelo's solo – Act Two, Scene Two

EXERCISE 3

Extended prop work

Further to the exercise above smaller props are used throughout such as cigarettes, towels, Angelo's chains. Each of the props effect the movement of the dancers, look at how each prop is used throughout **The Car Man**.

For example: Act Two, Scene Two. Angelo's solo.



Angelo's hands are tied – how does this enhance his movement?

- There is extensive use of different levels including floorwork.
- How does this solo display Angelo's emotional state of mind?



Individually choose a prop from those you have seen being used in the production. Find a way to integrate this prop into a piece of movement.

Think about the following:

- How it influences the way you move
- How it changes or effects your focus
- What happens to your body language
- Change the dynamics of your movement, what impact does this have?

Move into pairs and decide what prop you are going to use between you. Use this prop in the same way as above but you can also use your prop to play with status and movement from one person to the next. Find shapes that you can hold with your partner, these may involve counterbalances, being on different levels and balances.

The prop you decide to use will inform the style and dynamic of the movement.

For example. A cigarette is used during the quartet in Act One, Scene One. It is very playful, and the prop is passed from one to the other in a relaxed formation.

This contrasts with the use of the gun between Rita and Angelo in Act Two, Scene Four. The prop creates tension and fear.



Present your sequence to the group and discuss.

WORKSHEET B

Characters

The Car Man is a very clear story told through dance. It focuses on 5 main characters who are all linked with each other.

- **Dino** – Owner of the garage
- **Lana** – Dino's wife
- **Rita** – Lana's sister
- **Angelo** – Rita's boyfriend
- **Luca** – A drifter

Matthew Bourne says that in developing **The Car Man** all of the dancers had to write a back history for their character.

EXERCISE 1



Can you think what benefit this might have on the telling of this story and how it might impact on the dancers' journey throughout the production?

EXERCISE 2



How does Matthew Bourne illustrate the different characters through his choreography?

Look at each of the 5 characters and start by writing down 5 words that describe each one and how this is conveyed to the audience. Look at their action, dynamic and spatial content and how this contributes to the audience's understanding of their character.

You may find it useful to write a short back history for each character to assist in a better understanding.

RELATIONSHIPS

Dino is married to Lana who is having an affair with Luca who is also having an affair with Angelo who is the boyfriend of Rita.

Dino – Lana – Luca – Angelo – Rita



Luca and Lana – Act Two, Scene Three

EXERCISE 3



Creating movement from tableaux

- It may be beneficial for one group to work at a time so that it can be shared with the rest of the group and discussed.
- In a group of 5 you should each adopt one of the 5 characters listed above.
- Create a tableaux or frozen image to portray each character. You can use some of the words from the exercise above. Think about how the characters might stand in relation to each other, but the characters should not be touching at any time.
- You may wish to introduce some music at this point. Ideally it would be a piece of music from the production.
- Now think about how each character would move. Very slowly start moving around the space, don't interact with the other characters yet. Think about the following:
 - What speed are you walking at?
 - Are you looking straight ahead or are you glancing around you or down?
 - What status is your character?
- When the moment feels right begin to interact with the other characters that are sharing the space with you, how do you react to each other, what effect does this have on the other characters around you.
- In this group think of 3 memorable or significant moments from the production. Ideally it would be beginning, middle and end.
 - Start each moment as a tableaux and then move slowly into movement. Pay particular attention to use of space, facial expressions and body language.
 - Each moment should last no more than 2 minutes.
 - Share these with the rest of the group and discuss why those three moments are significant.

Bourne breaks convention with the character of Luca. He is set up as a conventional macho character. He arrives in Harmony and courts Lana so he is set up to be a seducer of the heroine. It is therefore surprising when he enters into an affair with Angelo.

Bourne does not expect modern audiences to be too surprised by this relationship but within the conventions of traditional dance it is surprising.



Think of any other plays, dance or films where the main character does something to break convention. What effect does it have on the audience?

What effect does it have on the story and the characters in the story? How do they react?

WORKSHEET C

Duets

There are many duets throughout **The Car Man**. Compare and contrast.



Angelo and Rita – Act One, Scene One



Luca and Lana – Act Two, Scene Three

EXERCISE 1



RITA AND ANGELO

Their first duet in Act One, Scene One is both unsure and delicate. Chairs are used and the lifts are measured and gentle.

Contrast this with Act Two, Scene Four. This begins as a solo for Rita when Angelo returns. A prop is used once again but instead of chairs it is a gun.

- How has Angelo changed? And how is this shown through his actions and dynamics?
- Look at Rita in both of these duets. Her body language in the first is open and loving but in the second duet she is scared and her body is stiff and unwilling.
- How do the different props effect the movement?

EXERCISE 2



LANA AND LUCA

Their first duet in Act One, Scene Two is passionate, intense and strong.

Contrast this with their duet in Act Two, Scene Three. It is closing time at the club and Luca is drunk. He is haunted by what he did to Dino and Angelo, Lana makes him dance with her to try and forget about what has happened.

- Look at the use of elevations, how do they differ? Give one example of a lift in each duet and describe how they are different and the effect this has on the duet.
- How do Luca's actions and dynamics show that he is drunk?
- Comment on the music in both duets and how it informs the action.

EXERCISE 3

Supports, counterbalances and assisted lifts

There are examples of the above throughout *The Car Man*, in the both the duets and the solo dances. In Luca's first solo dance he uses some of the mechanics for support as he dances alone. The duet between Angelo and the prison guard is an example of using assisted lifts.

WORKING IN PAIRS



Using Partner As Support

A acts as the support bent over with hands on thighs, elbows in, head down. B can use this base to push off during jumps, cartwheel over. As seen in Act One, Scene One, this support can be used to move across the floor whilst B is balanced on A's back.

B can also roll over across A's back to move across the floor.

- In groups of 4 find 6 different ways of moving using each other as support. The moves can include jumps, rolls, cartwheels and floor movement.
- When 6 moves have been practised as separate movements try and find a way to link these together.
- Create a travelling phrase to link each move so that it doesn't become static.
- Vary dynamics and speed and you can also play with canon and unison.



Luca and Lana – Act Two, Scene Three



Luca and Lana – Act One, Scene Three

5. REFLECTING AND REVIEWING

Reviewing live performance

GENERAL OVERVIEW:

- Summarise the plot in 3–5 sentences
- Describe the style of the production
- Did it remind you of any other productions you have seen or know?
- What was your personal response to the production?
- What theatrical devices and conventions were used?

DIRECTION AND CHOREOGRAPHY:

- What do you think the director/ choreographer was trying to convey through the production?
- Do you think that the choreography, set design and staging supported and conveyed this?
- Was there an interesting and varied use of stage space?

DANCING:

- How would you describe the dancing style?
- What different styles of dance did you recognise?
- Were they all successfully used within the production?
- What can you say about the dancing in comparison with the dancing in other productions you have seen?
- Who gave the most notable performance? Try to be specific about why in your answer.

DESIGN:

- Describe the set, costume, lighting and sound.
- What kind of statement did each of these make?
- How did the design contribute to the production's meaning?
- Give examples of how the lighting enhanced the narrative.



Quartet dance – Act One, Scene One

6. ESSAY QUESTIONS

- Why is Matthew Bourne's work often called dance theatre as opposed to dance?
- It is difficult to categorise Matthew Bourne's work. Bourne believes that "any movement that is set to counts to the music is dance, but I know a lot of people would argue with this statement". Discuss.
- How does Matthew Bourne use humour in **The Car Man**? Identify where it can be seen. What is it about the movement material and/or choreography that makes it humorous?
- Matthew Bourne uses a number of different film techniques in **The Car Man**. For example split screen effect, slow motion and flashbacks. Give at least three examples of when these techniques are used and their effectiveness onstage.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- The Car Man DVD (original production 2000)
- *Ossessione* (1943) based on James M. Cain's 1934 novel *The Postman Always Rings Twice*.
- *Carmen* by Georges Bizet, Libretto: Henri Meilhac and Lucovic Halevy after Prosper Merimee's novel.
- Rodion Shchedrin's *Carmen Suite*



Angelo and Lana – Act One, Scene One

The logo for 'New Adventures' features a red triangle pointing to the right. The word 'NEW' is written in white, bold, uppercase letters inside the triangle. The word 'ADVENTURES' is written in red, bold, uppercase letters to the right of the triangle, overlapping its edge.

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