

LAKES AREA MUSIC FESTIVAL

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Lakes Area Music Festival Presents Carmen

Julia Bullock makes her role debut in Bizet's Carmen

Brainerd, MN (July 30, 2026) – The Lakes Area Music Festival (LAMF) continues its 2026 season, Passion, with Bizet's *Carmen* on Friday, August 14 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, August 16 at 3:00 p.m. at the Gichi-ziibi Center for the Arts in Brainerd.

Internationally acclaimed soprano Julia Bullock makes her role debut as Carmen, the magnetic free spirit at the center of Bizet's enduring opera. Praised by *Opera News* for her "intense, authentic feeling" and by the *Los Angeles Times* as "an essential soprano for our times," Bullock is known for her versatility across opera, concert, and contemporary music, as well as her work as a curator and collaborator on new artistic projects.

This production marks a milestone for both Bullock and the Festival, bringing one of today's most celebrated artists to the Brainerd lakes area for her first-ever portrayal of one of opera's most iconic heroines.

At the center of *Carmen* is a story of desire, jealousy, and fate, as a young soldier becomes entangled in Carmen's world of independence and danger. Driven by some of opera's most recognizable music, the work remains a searing portrait of passion at its most consuming.

"For many years I've dreamed of presenting Julia's first Carmen," said LAMF Artistic Director John Taylor Ward. "She's one of the defining artists of her generation, and watching her bring this role to life for the first time is something audiences rarely have the opportunity to experience. It's exactly the kind of bold artistic moment we hope to share with our community."

The production is directed by Lisenka Heijboer Castañon, whose fresh staging explores the opera's timeless themes of freedom, obsession, and fate.

CAST

Carmen – Julia Bullock

Don José – Paul Appleby

Escamillo – Evan Hughes
Micaëla – Katerina Burton
Zuniga – Nathan Jeffrey Herfindahl
Le Dancaïre – John Taylor Ward
Le Remendado – Zachary Olmoz
Mercédès – Isabella Chaney
Frasquita – Léa Nayak

CREATIVE TEAM

Stage Director – Lisenka Heijboer Castañon
Music Director – Christian Reif
Collaborator on Dramaturgy and New Dialogues – Antonio Cuenca Ruiz
Scenic & Costume Designer – Çağla Karslıoğlu
Lighting Designer – Jennifer Fok
Choreographer & Intimacy Coordinator – Laura Osterhaus
Hair & Makeup Designer – Emma Gustafson
Assistant Conductor – José Luis Gutiérrez
Chorus Masters – Celeste Marie Johnson, Kennedy Niska
Principal Coach – Laura Poe
Repetiteurs – Connor Buckley, Chloe J. Kim
Production Manager – Aislinn Curry
Stage Manager – Kate Fehan
Technical Director – Cal Metts
Assistant Stage Managers – Mackenzie Renford
Costume Coordinator – Heather Pearson
Production Assistant – Nick Jafary

The Lakes Area Music Festival's 2026 season, *Passion*, runs July 31 through August 23 and features orchestral concerts, chamber music, opera, dance collaborations, and community events throughout central Minnesota.

Tickets and additional information are available at lakesareamusic.org.

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About the Lakes Area Music Festival

The Lakes Area Music Festival is Minnesota's summer home for world-class opera, orchestra, and chamber music. Celebrating its 18th anniversary season, more than 200 artists from the nation's top orchestras and opera companies will present 60 concert, education, and community outreach activities this July and August. Founded in 2009, the Lakes Area Music Festival sparks connections between its central Minnesota community and the

nation's top classical performers to create transformative musical experiences. The Lakes Area Music Festival is a 501c3 non-profit based in Brainerd, MN. To find out more visit lakesareamusic.org or call 218-ASK-LAMF (218-275-5263).