

Sarasota Herald-Tribune March 21, 2023

By Gayle Williams

“Mezzo-soprano Lisa Chavez brings strength to Thérèse while also expressing her fears about the outcome of the revolution. The caramel tones of her voice with expressive nuances carry us from situational anxiety to reminiscences of love and back again to sheer panic.”

Sarasota Herald-Tribune April 12, 2021

By Gayle Williams

“Lisa Chavez captures the tragic nature of Dido with a richly nuanced voice that touches far corners of the heart. The fragility of grief reaching for love again comes through despite her majestic presence. Then facing loss yet again, she steels herself and delivers that unforgettable lament, searing in its compelling simplicity.”

Opera Wire - August 18, 2020

By Francisco Salazar

“Lisa Chavez ..., commanding the stage at every moment she was on it. Her first selection “Acerba Volutta” was sung with command and a gutsy chest voice. Chavez has a voice with power and resonance and she used all those qualities to hold the audience’s attention in Cilea’s music. The opening lines were given an imposing character that was then contrasted with the Princess de Bouillon’s more passionate outcries. Chavez sang the “O vagabonda stella d’Oriente” section with a more connected and legato line that crescendoed to its passionate climax.

She contrasted the passionate Cilea, in her “Mon cœur s’ouvre à ta voix” from Saint-Saens’ “Samson et Dalila” as she sang with an intimate timbre connecting and holding out phrases with a gorgeous pianissimo sound. In many ways, there was a virtuoso quality to her singing demonstrating the even tones in her sultry mezzo. Her “Habanera” was yet another demonstration of Chavez’s artistry as she played to the audience dancing on stage while seductively dispatching Bizet’s famous aria with flexibility and gusto.

It is notable that Chavez also made herself present in the “Rigoletto” Quartet with her sensual phrasing and attention to the text; she was equally memorable in the final “O Sole Mio” quartet, which showcased her powerful high register.”

Classical Voice North America - June 26 2019

By James L Paulk

“Maggie, a butch lesbian modeled after a real person, who is first introduced to us fighting back from a subway assault, and later becomes the leader of the rebellion. Maggie is Campbell’s best creation, and she gets Bell’s best and most biting music. Mezzo-soprano Lisa Chavez tore into the part in a standout performance.”

Broadway World Review - June 25, 2019

By Richard Sasanow

“There’s no real central character in the piece--the closest, for me, is Maggie, the dyke from Dyckman Street (memorably sung by mezzo Lisa Chavez), who’s harassed on the subway, beaten in the bar but survives it all”

Theatre Reviews Limited - June 24, 2019

“While heading to the Village on the subway, a “micro-dick” straight man calls butch lesbian Maggie (heroic mezzo-soprano Lisa Chavez) a “cock-sucking dyke” and spits in her face.

Although Maggie manages to deck him, the police have no interest in apprehending him. Undeterred by the abuse of the stranger and the shame her father feels for her, Maggie heads downtown to hit “the dance floor, chug a couple of brews, let it all hang out, and [be herself].” Ms. Chavez tackles the text with the same bravado and strength her character summons to subdue her attacker.”

The Broadway Blog - June 2019

By Bobby McGuire

“With titular characters like Verdi’s Tosca, Bizet’s Carmen, Bellini’s Norma, and Strauss’ Elektra and Salome, the world of opera has always been rampant with ladies who you just do not want to mess with. So, it comes as little surprise that the first punch in Stonewall, librettist Mark Campbell and composer Iain Bell’s explosive opera currently receiving its world premiere production at New York City Opera, is thrown by a woman. ... It’s Friday night, June 27, 1969, and Maggie (mezzo-soprano Lisa Chavez in a star turn), a butch lesbian is being harassed by a man on a downtown subway. He promises to “make a real woman” out of her, lunges at her and eventually spits in her face – but not before she’s able to land a punch square in his gut. She recounts how the police did nothing but say, “what do you expect?!” The exchange serves as a precursor for the event that will follow when hundreds like Maggie hit a boiling point where enough is enough.”

Observer - June 24, 2019

By James Jordan

“Heading a superb cast was Lisa Chavez as the tough Maggie, flinging out compact mezzo tone like fists.”

Parterre Box - June 22, 2019

By Gabrielle Ferrari

“Wonderful, powerful Maggie (Lisa Chavez, who impressed with a lovely tone and plenty of power), the butch lesbian who starts the riot by screaming “No, just no!” calls a harasser “micro-dick,” combining convincing tough-gal bravado with likeable vulnerability. The characters are diverse, and the show was cast accordingly, with attention paid to the role of trans people of color at Stonewall, something that has been historically overlooked.”

New York Classical Review - June 22 2019

By David Wright

“Although she can defend herself with sarcasm and her fists, Maggie isn’t immune to the tension at home and crude insults on the subway, and on Friday mezzo-soprano Lisa Chavez mingled swagger and vulnerability with a strong vocal presence to anchor the production.”

Sarasota Observer - October 29 2018

By Edward Alley

“By far the most impressive singing of the evening came from Lisa Chavez, who enchanted everyone as last season’s Carmen. Rossini originally wrote the role of Rosina for a contralto, but it is usually sung by mezzo-sopranos or sopranos who transpose quite a bit of the music and ornamentation to a higher key.

Chavez has a lovely voice that could best be described as “mezzo-contralto, because she certainly has a solid upper register as well as a luscious lower voice. In describing her sound, “honeyed chocolate” is about as close as one can get, and yet she navigates the coloratura with apparent ease. Her Rosina was at once shy, flirtatious and scheming as she sometimes outwitted even Figaro himself.”

The Virginia Gazette - April 26, 2018

By John Shulson

“Without doubt, the hands-down standout of this “Carmen” was mezzo-soprano Lisa Chavez in the title role. Chavez embraced both the vocal and dramatic demands of her Carmen, applying her rich, dark, well-projected mezzo to a well-conceived portrayal, the results being seductive, persuasive and powerful. There was never any doubt as to who was in charge in this Seville setting and the tragic romance that ensued.”

Sarasota Observer - February 19, 2018

By Edward Alley

“For this production, Sarasota Opera has assembled an outstanding cast, beautifully led by Lisa Chavez as Carmen. Chavez, who was most impressive in last season’s “Dialogues of the Carmelites,” has a rich, full mezzo voice, with a warm “honeyed chocolate” sound that is even throughout its range. The “Habanera” and “Seguidilla,” showed Chavez’s Carmen at her seductive best, and her “Card Aria” in Act 3 revealed a great depth of dramatic intensity.”

Herald-Tribune - February 18, 2018

By Gayle Williams

“Then Carmen arrives and mezzo-soprano Lisa Chavez took the stage with a sure command singing “L’amour est un oiseau rebelle.” Her voice, a mixture of throaty lust and cool heartlessness, immediately painted the picture of a self-absorbed, it’s-all-about-me wanton working wench. In every turn, from the seductive “Habenera” and enticing “Seguidilla” to the castanet-accompanied dance “Je vais danser en votre honneur ... La la la,” Carmen sought to take down her quarry, Don Jose. With the exception of a couple of blistering full-embrace kisses with Don Jose, I can’t say that she could love anything but sex and herself. Who knew a few songs could create all that? Well, at least a good score in the hands of a strong singer-actress can.”

Broadway World - March 12, 2018

By Carolan Trbovich

“Ms Chavez is as bold and commanding as she is alluring and conniving. She brings a depth and grace to her lusty character. An appreciative audience particularly loved her castanet dance to “Seguidilla”. No note was beyond her reach.”

Broadway World - October 27, 2017

By Richard Sasanow

“Not surprisingly, Claiborne is the best drawn of the characters, doing whatever she must (including murder) to protect her daughter’s future, even though her efforts go unappreciated in the end. She was well cast with mezzo Lisa Chavez, whose stage presence and powerful voice easily capture the audience’s compassion. The opera counts on her ability to switch from pitiful to avenging angel on a dime, and she pulls it off with aplomb.”

Opera News Online

David Shengold

“Lisa Chavez proved a powerhouse vocally and emotionally as Dolores, honoring the legacy of NYCO singing actresses such as Patricia Neway and Brenda Lewis.”

Times Square Chronicles - October 31, 2017

“Lisa Chavez makes a magnificent and imposing *Dolores Claiborne*, in the perfect way she is both viciously maternal and cold while also being pained and heart-broken. She quickly pushes any memory of Kathy Bates aside while not obliterating her.”

Superconductor - October 25, 2017

By Paul J. Pelkonen

“As for Dolores (Lisa Chavez) she is not easy to like but there is something admirable in her sharp tongue and tough personality. She gives a searing performance. The role requires the entire mezzo instrument, down through the chest to chilling low notes, and up into the heights for the ensembles and the opera's emotional climaxes. It is a star turn much like the Governess in *The Turn of the Screw* or Marie in *Wozzeck*. This is a portrait of gravity and strength in the face of almost insurmountable odds: a desperate woman whose actions to save herself have negative consequences. At the end of the work, the magnitude of her sacrifice is revealed in a powerful final scene.”

Opera Wire - October 2017

By Matt Costello

“Lisa Chavez as Dolores is on stage throughout the opera, and has to handle the physical demands of dispatching her husband with tense music that conveys both her growing resolution and desperation. ...Chavez, quite simply, thrills And when Chavez as Dolores dispatches her husband under cover of the eclipse, the audience was ready to burst into applause. The scene, and her thrilling voice were extremely effective.”

New York Classical Review - October 23, 2017

By Eric C. Simpson

“Mezzo-soprano Lisa Chavez led the cast with a brilliant performance in the title role. it is a spacious instrument, and flows easily through the part's many lyrical lamentations. Dolores is a troubled character, no question—profoundly unhappy, abused by her husband, pushed to violence, she finds motivation only in her care for Selena, who cannot forgive her. The emotional, lyrical apologia with which she closed the opera was intensely moving.”

Opera Today - June 23, 2016

By Alexis Rodda

“The one singer who broke from this stiffness was Lisa Chavez, who gives one of the most compelling performances of the evening. With a rich, healthy mezzo voice, she brings the most three-dimensionality to her character, and her second act aria is one of the most heartbreaking moments in the opera. Luis Ledesma, playing her husband Alvaro, brings humor and charisma in addition to a well-rounded baritone voice to his role. The chemistry between these two and the commitment of both Chavez's and Ledesma's performances make the story of this failing marriage the most interesting thread of drama in the opera.”

Opera News - June 22, 2016

By Joanne Sydney Lessner

“As Paula and Alvaro, mezzo-soprano Lisa Chavez and baritone Luis Ledesma had real relationship-based conflict to work with, plus the only hints of humor (“Marinated iguana? Does one drink red or white with that?”). Chavez in particular moved beyond her archetypal character to project nuanced, personal loss.”

San Jose Mercury News - February 15, 2016

By Georgia Rowe

“Of course, it helps to have a strong singer in the title role, and this "Carmen" has an excellent one in mezzo-soprano Lisa Chavez.

Chavez, a former member of OSJ's resident ensemble, has appeared in a variety of roles for the company. From Humperdinck's Hansel to Rossini's Isabella, she's established herself as a versatile artist. But Carmen seems tailor-made for her. From her first appearance as the seductive gypsy who prizes freedom above all else, Chavez sounded terrific. Singing her mesmerizing entrance piece, the "Habanera," her smoky, richly colored voice shaped the music in expressive, voluptuous phrases.

Chavez may surprise operagoers expecting stock gestures and poses. This Carmen avoids the hip-swinging clichés that have become synonymous with the character. Haughty and intense, she radiates sensuality with a minimum of schtick. And her singing is secure, unfettered and beautiful right up to the opera's tragic final scene.

.... When it comes down to it, though, "Carmen" is about the gypsy in the title role. There's a lot to enjoy in this production, but Chavez's performance is something special.”

Operaville - February 16, 2016

By Michael J. Vaughn

“Eventually, of course, all the direction in the world fails without talent, but San Jose’s lineup is loaded. Lisa Chavez was born to play Carmen, equipped with the classic Carmen look, vocal power and attitude. She does a masterful job of tempering that power, keeping her powder dry for the truly dramatic moments. In the Habanera and other classic passages, she retains a self-assured cool that gives her the bearing of a leader.”

San Francisco Classical Voice - February 16, 2016

By Charlise Tiee

“As Carmen, Lisa Chavez was sultry and disdainful. Her voice is very loud and her performance was strongly physical and easy to read.”

Mercury News - February 8, 2015

By Richard Scheinin

“As Harriet, mezzo-soprano Lisa Chavez was magnetic, with her plush storm of a voice and her to-the-T depiction of the sister, whose unremitting snobbishness makes her comical. With each of the company's productions, Chavez reveals new aspects of her talents.”

Opera News - November 16, 2014

By Georgia Rowe,

“Lisa Chavez, glided through Isabella’s arias with assurance; her buttery, richly colored mezzo was evenly produced throughout her range, sounding shapely in Act I’s “Cruda sorte!” registering with luxuriant ease and beauty in her Act II invocation of Venus, “Per lui che adoro,” and emerging with bright, forward tone in the ensembles. Chavez is a graceful stage presence, and there was no doubting her character’s intelligence and resourcefulness. “Pensa alla patria” was her most convincing moment.”

Mercury News - November 17, 2013

By Richard Scheinin

“The heart and soul of this production are mezzo-soprano Lisa Chavez as Hansel and soprano Cecilia Violetta López as Gretel. They are a lovable team, delightful from the moment they appear, exuding the happy innocence and mischievous energy of children. This brother and sister make the fun for each other; they dance, spin, sing. They tease one another. They take care of one another through the terrors of night. Chavez is new to the company this season, and this is her breakout performance. Saturday, her mezzo voice was a cascade of colors, full of vitality -- and Chavez projects beautifully, better than anyone else in Saturday's performance. Hers was a knock-your-socks-off performance.”

Classical 101 - March 2013

By Christopher Prudy

"Lisa Chavez is a big voiced mezzo-soprano who chose barn chewing arias and chew then she did. Chavez won two awards at this weekend's annual Irma M. Cooper Opera Columbus Vocal Competition. She earned first place and the audience favorite awards.

The California native came across as sincere, dedicated and unafraid to let go. Judges and competitions often distrust big voices. Don't ask me why, because the world hungers for them. I knew in three notes this girl was something special.

Again, I'm convinced it was not only her talent but her guts that put her first. Opera isn't for the meek. Ask Irma, when you get to heaven."

The Stark Insider - May 1, 2013

By Ashley Webb,

"Lisa Chavez is slightly less familiar, if only because the last time we saw her, she was wearing the trousers in Ainadamar. Here, the unresolved tension of her character Dinah, is captured in every tremor of her voice."

San Francisco Chronicle - April 29, 2013

By Joshua Kosman

"The superb cast featured Lisa Chavez as a poignant, full-throated Dinah."

Repeat Performances - April 27, 2013

By Adam Broner

"Bay Area favorite Eugene Brancoveanu, a warm-voiced baritone with an out-sized instrument, played the husband, Sam, against mezzo Lisa Chavez as Dinah, the desperate housewife. Chavez, inspiring in a pants role as Lorca in Ainadamar, was also well matched vocally with Brancoveanu, bringing her own sturdy riches into play. But in her quieter soliloquies, such as "A woman needs so little," she seemed to reach each member of the audience privately, lithe velvet vocals over bass clarinet fifths and deeply bowed bass pulsations."

San Francisco Chronicle - February 2013

By Joshua Kosman

"Mezzo-soprano Lisa Chavez took on the trouser role of Lorca with plenty of dramatic fire and vocal richness."

Richard Scheinin, San Jose Mercury News, February 2013

"As Lorca, mezzo-soprano Lisa Chavez showed off smoky low notes and opalescent high ones."

Repeat Performances - February 16, 2013

By Adam Broner

"with Lisa Chavez singing powerfully in the alto/tenor range to elicit the ambiguous sexuality of Lorca."

Opera News - February 2012

By Arlo McKinnon

"The three main female characters, Magda, John's Mother and the Secretary, carry the heart of the drama... Lisa Chavez successfully balanced the Secretary's underlying compassion against her officious surface coldness."

Opera News - September 2008

By Judith Malafrente

“Mezzo-soprano Lisa Chavez conveyed Elizabeth Proctor's rigidity and emotion with clear, focused sound.”

New York Times - September 12, 2008

By Allan Kozinn

“The singing was uniformly strong, with Zeffin Quinn Hollis and Lisa Chavez working in tandem as a pained, sympathetic John and Elizabeth Proctor.”