

Bizet

Symphony in C
Carmen Suites
Jeux d'Enfants

Westdeutsche Sinfonia

Dirk Joeres

Royal Philharmonic

Orchestra

Mark Ermler / Andrea Licata

alto



George Bizet

Symphony in C

[1]	Allegro vivo	7:41
[2]	Andante. Adagio	9:55
[3]	Allegro vivace	5:40
[4]	Finale. Allegro vivace	6:36

Westdeutsche Sinfonia

Dirk Joeres, conductor

Carmen Suite No.1

[5]	Prélude - Aragonaise	3:30
[6]	Intermezzo	2:37
[7]	Séguedille	1:51
[8]	Les Dragons d'Alcala	1:31
[9]	Les Toréadors	2:16

Carmen Suite No.2

[10]	Marche des Contrabandiers	4:02
[11]	Habanera	2:09
[12]	Nocturne	5:42
[13]	Chanson du Toréador	2:46
[14]	La Garde Montante	3:39
[15]	Danse Bohème	4:53

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Mark Ermler, conductor

Jeux d'Enfants

[16]	Trompet et Tambour / Marche	2:14
[17]	La Poupée / Berceuse	2:56
[18]	La Toupie / Impromptu	1:01
[19]	Petit Mari, Petite Femme / Duo	4:00
[20]	Le Bal / Galop	1:56

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Andrea Licata, conductor

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

One of the most commonly pondered musical ‘what ifs’ is that surrounding Bizet’s influence on French music and opera in the 19th century. His premature death at the age of 36 robbed the world of a composer whose greatest work *Carmen* was three-quarters of the way through a respectable first run. The negative reactions of the critics had failed to consign this masterpiece to an early grave. However, in common with so many French compositions, it took a foreign production (Vienna October 1875) for the work to catch on (albeit with interpolated recitative rather than with its original dialogue) and by the time *Carmen* reappeared in Paris, many cities throughout the world had come under its spell.

Georges Bizet was born in Paris in October 1838 to musical parents who encouraged their son to take up music at an early age, with the result that he was accepted into the Paris Conservatoire shortly before his 10th birthday in 1848. His precocious talent enabled Bizet to be a prize-winner in several classes but he found himself most drawn to the composition classes run by Fromental Halèvy (1799–1862), composer of *La juivre* (1835), who had also taught Gounod and Saint-Saëns. During his student days Bizet also came to know and respect Gounod, who taught part-time at the Conservatoire and who always showed great interest in Bizet’s work. For his part Bizet avidly studied Gounod’s scores and claimed that Gounod was his greatest influence.

In 1857 Bizet was awarded the *Prix de Rome* for his cantata *Clovis et Clotilde*, enabling him to spend an extensive period in Italy (January 1858 to July 1860). Two years earlier he composed his *Symphony in C*, a work obviously modelled on Gounod’s *Symphony in D*, a score which Bizet was studying at the time. Bizet’s delightfully fresh work was only discovered in 1935 and was premiered in Basle that year under Felix Weingartner. It was quickly taken up by other conductors and a number of fine recordings appeared in the latter days of 78s including those by Charles Munch and Walter Goehr, whilst a later generation

became familiar with this charming piece through Beecham's famous recording. As well as Gounod, Bizet seemed inspired by music from an earlier age: the opening *Allegro vivo* movement recalls Mozart and early Beethoven whilst the finale betrays a love of Mediterranean warmth and spontaneity. The tender *Adagio* features a lovely oboe solo whilst the third movement is no less memorable.

In 1871 in the wake of the horrors of the Franco-Prussian war and the Commune, Bizet composed 12 short pieces for piano duet called *Jeux d'enfants* (Children's Games) and during September of that same year arranged five of them for orchestra, giving the work the alternative title *Petite Suite d'orchestre*. The first performances of the orchestral suite were originally intended to be given under the conductor Jules-Étienne Padeloup (director of the Théâtre Lyrique in Paris) but Bizet had second thoughts and withdrew the score. The task of conducting the premiere eventually fell to Édouard Colonne in March 1873. Each piece has a subtitle to which children could relate: *Trompette et tambour* (Trumpet and Drum); *La poupée* (The Doll); *La Toupie* (The Spinning-top); *Petit mari, petite femme* (Little Husband, Little Wife); *Le bal* (The Ball) and paired them with a musical term. This is one of Bizet's most delicate yet delightful scores, enjoyed by children of all ages. Others also orchestrated some of the *Jeux*: German composer Sigfrid Karg-Elert (1877–1933), better known for his organ compositions, arranged five of them as did the English conductor and part-time composer Hermann Finck (1872–1939) who was for many years musical director of London's Drury Lane Theatre.

Bizet was occupied during the summer of 1872 with composing the incidental music to Daudet's drama *L'Arlésienne*. There are a number of similarities between this drama and *Carmen*, the most obvious being that central male character is caught between two women: one of them devoted to the man she is supposed to marry whilst the other is more interesting but immoral. *Carmen*, composed in 1873-4 for the Opéra-Comique, was based on a story by Mérimée by Halévy and Meilhac with important contributions from Bizet himself. Numerous changes were made to Mérimée's

original and the work presented a challenge to participants, critics and audiences (who were unused to seeing such immoral goings-on on the stage of the Opéra-Comique). The principals, who were fully supportive of the new work, discouraged Bizet from making alterations. Despite initial adverse criticism, *Carmen* had a respectable number of performances in its first season but Bizet, discouraged by its critical reception, suffered two heart attacks and died after its thirty-third performance in June 1875, shortly before *Carmen* began its triumphal progress through the world's opera houses.

Following Bizet's death, his friend Ernest Guiraud (1837-92) was asked to substitute recitatives for the original dialogue (he also arranged and had published two suites of music from *Carmen*). Guiraud had the sense largely to retain Bizet's orchestration (rated superior to that of Wagner by Richard Strauss) but made no attempt to follow the opera's narrative. The Fate motif from the first act leads into the entr'acte before Act IV (*Aragonaise*). An *Intermezzo* is taken from the entr'acte before the third act when the action moves outside Seville to the smuggler's encampment. The *Seguidille* occurs during the opening act as Carmen dances seductively for Don José in a successful attempt to gain her release. *Les dragons de Alcala* is the marching song of Don Jose's regiment.

The Second Suite opens with the smugglers chorus from the third act. Next comes Carmen's entrance, the *Habanera* from Act One. *Nocturne* is an instrumental version of Micaela's lovely aria, sung as she arrives at the smugglers hideout in a vain attempt to win back José. After the famous Toreador Song we return to the opening act for *Garde montant*, sung by street urchins as they copy José's regiment marching. The Suite closes with the thrilling *Danse bohémienne*, sung and danced by Carmen's gypsy companions in the second

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NOTES ON THE ARTISTS

Born in Bonn, **Dirk Joeres** studied conducting and piano in Berlin, Cologne and London, and composition in Paris with Nadia Boulanger, the grande dame of 20th-century musical life. Winning first prize at the International Piano Competition in Vercelli (1972), touring extensively and appearing at international festivals, Dirk Joeres established a very successful career as a pianist, before extending his activities into conducting.

In 1987 he was appointed Chief Conductor of the West German Sinfonia. With this Orchestra he appears in major halls such as Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Musikverein Vienna, Philharmonie Berlin and the Kennedy Center Washington. On their début in Salzburg, the press wrote: “... *Joeres belongs to those conductors who certainly know how to make music speak*” (Salzburger Nachrichten). In 2000 he became Associate Conductor of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra London and in 2007 he was appointed Permanent Guest Conductor. With the RPO and the Sinfonia he has toured throughout Europe and the USA and has taken them to international festivals such as Beethovenfest Bonn, Brucknerfest Linz, Budapest, Cheltenham, City of London and the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival.

Dirk Joeres has also conceived successful new forms for the presentation of classical music. In 2008, he initiated a new concert format in Leverkusen: “KlassikSonntag!”. It has been acclaimed as “*a fascinating concept to deepen the understanding of classical music*” (Kölner Stadtanzeiger). His recordings have received excellent reviews in the international press; Gramophone Magazine awarded ‘Critic’s Choice’ for one of his Brahms recordings with the Sinfonia (ALC 1098); a Schumann CD with the RPO received raves: “*Exemplary ‘Rhenish’ Symphony – a reference recording*” (Supersonic Award, Pizzicato).

When **Dirk Joeres and the Westdeutsche Sinfonia** gave their debut in the Golden Hall of the ‘Musikverein’ Vienna in 1991, the press acclaimed the Sinfonia’s “*crystal clear classical splendour*”. The Sinfonia’s foundation in 1987 is based on the original idea to bring together leading musicians from 10 major orchestras in the

region of north-western Germany. Their first CD appeared in 1989, in 1990 they toured the USA for the first time and in 1991 for the Critics’ Choice Award, the Gramophone Magazine wrote: “*superb orchestral playing and expressive, reflective interpretations*”. The Sinfonia’s repertoire is based on the Classics such as the Beethoven and Schubert Symphonies but also highlights unjustly neglected works and premieres, for example at the Beethovenfest Bonn and Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival.

Mark Ermler (1932-2002) studied at the Leningrad Conservatory with Khaikin, making his debut in 1952. He joined the Bolshoy in 1957, and in 1960 he conducted the first staging of Prokofiev’s *Story Of A Real Man*, making his debut as a ballet conductor in 1964. He led the Bolshoy in notable tours to the West in 1974 and 1999 and subsequently became a familiar figure at Covent Garden. In addition to being Guest Conductor with several orchestras worldwide (such as the RPO in the 1990’s) he was at the time of his death Music Director with the Moscow Philharmonic, the Seoul Philharmonic as well as the Bolshoy.

Andrea Licata has conducted many opera and symphonic orchestras in Italy and abroad, including the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, the Orchestra Regionale della Toscana, Orchestra Sinfonica Siciliana, Teatro Lirico di Cagliari, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Festival of Two Worlds Orchestra of Spoleto and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. In Spoleto, he conducted the world premiere of Sarah - the contemporary opera based on the life of Marilyn Monroe composed by Paul Vy and directed by Petrika Ionesco. In the 2009/10 season, Licata made his debut with Welsh National Opera conducting *La traviata* and *Il trovatore* the following season. He returned to the Teatro Maestranza, Seville for *La traviata* and conducted *Tosca* for Opera Australia. Future plans include his debut in Beijing conducting *Cenerentola*, *Norma* in Messina, *Turandot* and *Aida* for Opera Australia in 2012.

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