

The NAXOS logo is a blue square with the word "NAXOS" in white, serif, all-caps font. Above the text are several horizontal lines of varying lengths, resembling a classical architectural frieze or a stylized musical staff.

BIZET

Carmen
Suites

L'Arlésienne
Suites

Barcelona Symphony Orchestra

Pablo González



Georges BIZET

(1838–1875)

Carmen Suite No. 1

1	I. Prélude	1:31
2	II. Aragonaise	2:17
3	III. Intermezzo	2:47
4	IV. Séguedille	2:03
5	V. Les Dragons d'Alcala	1:43
6	VI. Les Toréadors	2:16

Carmen Suite No. 2

7	I. Marche des contrebandiers	4:41
8	II. Habanera	2:06
9	III. Nocturne	4:47
10	IV. Chanson du Toréador	2:49
11	V. La Garde montante	3:42
12	VI. Danse bohème	4:40

Georges Bizet (1838–75)

Carmen Suites Nos. 1 and 2 · L'Arlésienne Suites Nos. 1 and 2

The French composer Georges Bizet was born in 1838, the child of musical parents, who did a great deal to encourage his interest in music, distracting him from other pursuits by hiding books from him. In 1848 he entered the Conservatoire in Paris, while distinguishing himself as a pianist under Marmontel. In 1857 Bizet won the Prix de Rome, the prize awarded to those young composers, painters and writers able to pass the rigorous scrutiny of the examining committee, and in accordance with the terms of the award was able to study in Rome. His return to Paris in 1860 was to bring disappointment. He had some success with earlier operas, but it was *Carmen*, a work that was enjoying its first run in Paris at the time of his death, that in the end had the most profound effect on the public, arousing equal measures of enthusiasm and hostility.

L'Arlésienne Suite No. 1

13	I. Ouverture	6:40
14	II. Menuet	2:42
15	III. Adagietto	3:10
16	IV. Carillon	4:19

L'Arlésienne Suite No. 2

17	I. Pastorale	5:25
18	II. Intermezzo	4:18
19	III. Menuet	4:13
20	IV. Farandole	3:20

It is difficult for us to understand the relative failure of the opera *Carmen*, when it was first staged in Paris in 1875. Bizet had enjoyed some intermittent success in the theatre, but it was above all with Prosper Mérimée's novel that he was to find a subject fully suited to his abilities.

The story of the opera shocked audiences. It dealt with the love affair between the factory-girl Carmen and the toreador Escamillo, her flirtation with Don José, a corporal of the guard, and her murder by the jealous soldier, whose life she has ruined and corrupted. Both orchestral suites from the opera were arranged by Bizet's friend Ernest Guiraud.

Suite No. 1 opens with the *Prélude* to the first act, which sets the Spanish atmosphere of the piece, includes strains of the *Chanson du Toréador*, and an ominous theme of Fate, portending the murder that is to come. The

Aragonaise is based on the Spanish *jota* and is followed by the *Intermezzo* that serves as a prelude to the third act, where Carmen and her gypsy smuggler companions march to their mountain encampment. It was in the *Séguedille* that Carmen had first seduced Don José, to secure her release from arrest on a charge of wounding a fellow worker in the factory. *Les Dragons d'Alcala* is the marching song of Don José's regiment, which love for Carmen has induced him to desert. *Les Toréadors* brings what is probably the best known of all the melodies in the opera, recurring to mark the appearance of Escamillo, Carmen's toreador lover.

Suite No. 2 opens with the *Marche des contrebandiers*, the march of Carmen's gypsy smuggler companions, and continues with the famous *Habanera*, the song with which *Carmen* is first heard, the centre of male attention, as she comes out of the cigarette factory where she works. There is a night scene and music for Don José's regiment to mount guard. The suite ends with a gypsy dance.

L'Arlésienne ('The Girl from Arles') was the result of a collaboration in 1872 between Bizet and the writer Alphonse Daudet, an attempt to create again the form of melodrama, a combination of music and theatre. For this purpose Daudet chose to treat the story of the vain love and suicide of a young relative of the Provençal poet Mistral. Frédéric, the lover, is infatuated with the girl from Arles, who is never seen on stage, but finds that she is the mistress of a scoundrel, Mitifio. His mother persuades

him to marry Vivette, a girl who has long loved him, but on the eve of his wedding Frédéric meets Mitifio, remembers his old love and kills himself.

In the theatre *L'Arlésienne* was unsuccessful, partly because the audience expected a straight play, and took exception to music that some labelled Wagnerian. From the incidental music Bizet drew a suite (*Suite No. 1*), rewriting and rescoring the pieces for a larger orchestra than his original band of 25 players. The *Ouverture* and *Adagietto*, the latter originally for string quartet, are simply re-orchestrated, while other changes were made in the *Menuet*, originally an intermezzo, and to the *Carillon*, to which he added a middle section drawn from elsewhere in the original score. The suite won immediate success in the concert hall.

The second suite was arranged by Bizet's friend Ernest Guiraud after the composer's death. The *Pastorale* is taken from the opening of the second of the three acts of the melodrama, set on the bank of a pond in the Camargue. The *Intermezzo* is taken from the third scene of the second act and is followed by a *Menuet*, taken from another opera, *La Jolie Fille de Perth*. The final *Farandole* brings back a march theme from the opening of the work, now interwoven with the themes of the traditional folk dance.

Keith Anderson

Georges Bizet (1838–75)

Suites de « Carmen » et de « L'Arlésienne »

Georges Bizet naquit en 1838 de parents musiciens amateurs qui firent beaucoup pour cultiver son intérêt pour la musique – ils allèrent même jusqu'à cacher des livres susceptibles de le distraire. En 1848, il entre au Conservatoire de Paris, où il se distingue dans la classe de piano de Marmontel et suit la classe de composition d'Halévy. En 1857, il remporte le Prix de Rome, concours récompensant les meilleurs jeunes compositeurs, peintres et écrivains par un séjour rémunéré de trois ans

à la Villa Médicis, à Rome, qui leur permet d'approfondir leur art. Son retour à Paris, en 1860, s'accompagne de déceptions. S'il a un certain succès avec ses premiers opéras, ce n'est qu'avec *Carmen* qu'il fera une forte impression sur le public, suscitant autant d'enthousiasme que d'hostilité. Il mourra cependant durant la première série de représentations de l'œuvre.

Il est difficile pour nous aujourd'hui de comprendre le demi-échec de *Carmen* lors de sa première

représentation, en 1875. Il faut chercher l'une des raisons dans le contenu de l'opéra. Si Bizet avait trouvé avec le roman de Prosper Mérimée un sujet convenant pleinement à son talent, le public fut choqué par l'histoire de *Carmen* : une bohémienne cigarière séduit un brigadier, Don José, puis l'abandonne pour s'intéresser au toréador Escamillo avant de finir assassinée par le brigadier jaloux qui n'aura pas supporté que Carmen l'ait corrompu et ait ruiné sa vie.

L'ami de Bizet Ernest Guiraud tira deux suites orchestrales de l'opéra. La *Suite n° 1* s'ouvre sur le *Prélude* du premier acte qui installe le cadre espagnol, citant la *Chanson du Toréador* et le thème menaçant du destin qui annonce l'assassinat final. L'*Aragonaise*, une jota, est suivie d'un *Intermezzo* qui sert de prélude au troisième acte : c'est le moment où Carmen et ses compagnons contrebandiers rejoignent leur campement dans les montagnes. La *Séguedille* est la danse avec laquelle Carmen a séduit Don José pour qu'il la libère car elle a blessé une autre cigarière dans une altercation et vient d'être arrêtée. Dans *Les Dragons d'Alcala* résonne la marche du régiment de Don José qui a déserté par amour pour Carmen. *Les Toréadors* font entendre la mélodie probablement la plus connue de l'opéra, qui revient pour marquer l'arrivée du toréador Escamillo, amant de Carmen.

La *Suite n° 2* s'ouvre sur la *Marche des contrebandiers* et se poursuit par la célèbre *Habanera* avec laquelle Carmen entre en scène : la jeune femme sort de la manufacture de tabac où elle travaille, attirant l'attention de tous les hommes. On entend ensuite un nocturne puis la garde montante du régiment de Don José. La suite s'achève sur une *Danse bohème*.

L'*Arlésienne* est une musique de scène qui fait largement appel au genre du mélodrame et que Bizet écrivit en 1872 pour la première représentation de la

pièce d'Alphonse Daudet. Dans cette pièce, Daudet s'inspire d'un fait divers, le suicide par dépit amoureux d'un neveu de l'écrivain provençal Frédéric Mistral. Le personnage principal de la pièce, Frédéric, est épris d'une Arlésienne – qu'on ne voit jamais sur scène. Il apprend qu'elle est la maîtresse d'un vacher, Mitifio, et se désespère, mais sa mère le persuade d'épouser Vivette, une fille qui l'aime depuis longtemps. La veille du mariage, cependant, il rencontre Mitifio. L'Arlésienne lui revient alors vivement en mémoire et il se suicide.

La première représentation de *L'Arlésienne* fut un échec, en partie parce que le public attendait une pièce « classique » et s'offusqua d'une musique que certains jugèrent wagnérienne. Bizet tira de la musique de scène une suite (la première) et à cet effet révisa l'orchestration car sa partition avait tout d'abord été conçue pour une formation de vingt-cinq instrumentistes. Ainsi le *Prélude* et l'*Adagietto* – lequel était à l'origine pour quatuor à cordes – furent réorchestrés, d'autres modifications furent faites dans le *Menuet* – à l'origine un intermède – et dans le *Carillon*, où Bizet intégra une partie centrale prise ailleurs dans la partition. La suite remporta un succès immédiat au concert.

La deuxième suite, posthume, est due à Ernest Guiraud. La *Pastorale* provient de l'ouverture du deuxième des trois actes, situé sur les bords de l'étang de Vaccarès, en Camargue. L'*Intermezzo*, emprunté à la troisième scène du deuxième acte, est suivi d'un *Menuet* tiré d'un autre opéra de Bizet, *La Jolie Fille de Perth*. La *Farandole* finale ramène le thème de marche de l'ouverture, désormais combiné au thème de la farandole proprement dite.

Keith Anderson

Traduction : Daniel Fesquet

Barcelona Symphony Orchestra – the National Orchestra of Catalonia

Music director: Kazushi Ono • Principal guest conductor: Jan Willem de Vriend



Photo: May Zircus

The Barcelona Symphony Orchestra – the National Orchestra of Catalonia (OBC) was founded in 1944 by Eduard Toldrà. Its commitment is to promote classical and contemporary music of all cultures, giving special attention to Catalan composers. Since its foundation more than 70 years ago, the orchestra's music directors have been Eduard Toldrà, Rafael Ferrer, Antoni Ros Marbà, Salvador Mas, Franz-Paul Decker, García Navarro, Lawrence Foster, Ernest Martínez Izquierdo, Eiji Oue and Pablo González. Kazushi Ono took over as music director in September 2015. The OBC has enjoyed collaboration with renowned conductors and soloists as well as major Spanish institutions and festivals, with regular performances at the Teatro del Liceu, Palau de la Música, Festival Grec, Festes de la Mercè, Sonar, Mercat de les Flors and Festival Castell de Peralada. It has made more than 100 recordings for Decca, EMI, Auvidis, Koch, Claves, Naxos, Telarc, Tritó, Columna Música and BIS, combining Catalan with wider repertoire. The OBC has visited some of the world's major concert halls, including New York's Carnegie Hall and Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, and has taken part in international festivals including the BBC Proms in London at the Royal Albert Hall and the Schleswig-Holstein Festival. The OBC belongs to the Consorci de l'Auditori i l'Orquestra, formed by the Catalan Government and the City of Barcelona. Since April 1999, the OBC has performed in its own venue, L'Auditori de Barcelona, designed by Spanish architect Rafael Moneo.

www.obc.es

Pablo González

Photo: Benjamin Ealovega



Pablo González is one of the most versatile and passionate conductors of his generation. He studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London and first captured international attention after winning the Donatella Flick and Cadaqués International Conducting competitions. From 2010 to 2015, he was music director of the Orquesta Simfónica de Barcelona i Nacional de Catalunya. He has previously held the positions of principal guest conductor of the City of Granada Orchestra and associate conductor with both the London and Bournemouth symphony orchestras. He has conducted extensively across Europe, in Japan, and worked with a number of high-profile soloists including Maxim Vengerov, Renaud and Gautier Capuçon, Anne-Sophie Mutter, Isabelle Faust, Arcadi Volodos, Viktoria Mullova, Truls Mørk and Viviane Hagner. Recent opera highlights include two successful Glyndebourne tours; *Carmen* in San Sebastian; and a series of performances at Teatro del Liceu in Barcelona, and Opera de Oviedo. Pablo González is also very active in the recording studio, having recently released a three-disc portrait of Granados recorded with the Barcelona Symphony Orchestra on Naxos [8.503295]. He currently lives in his native Oviedo. www.pablogonzalez.eu

Despite the scandal it created when first staged in 1875, *Carmen* has subsequently become one of the world's most popular operas. The love affair at its heart shocked contemporary audiences but the music is imperishably vibrant and exciting – so much so that, after the composer's death, his friend Ernest Guiraud arranged two suites from the opera. Here the *Toreador's Song* and the graphically sensuous *Seguidilla* and *Habanera* dances are heard in all their orchestral glory. The two suites from *L'Arlésienne* contain music of great charm and refined elegance.



Georges
BIZET
(1838–1875)

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|--------------|---|--------------|
| 1–6 | Carmen Suite No. 1,
arr. Ernest Guiraud (1837–92) | 12:37 |
| 7–12 | Carmen Suite No. 2,
arr. Guiraud | 22:45 |
| 13–16 | L'Arlésienne Suite No. 1 | 16:51 |
| 17–20 | L'Arlésienne Suite No. 2,
arr. Guiraud | 17:16 |

Barcelona Symphony Orchestra
(Orquestra Simfònica de Barcelona i Nacional de Catalunya)
Pablo González

Recorded: 12–15 May 2015 at the Pau Casals Hall, L'Auditori, Barcelona, Spain

Producer, engineer and editor: Sean Lewis

A detailed track list can be found on page 2 of the booklet.

Booklet notes: Keith Anderson • Cover illustration by EREEE (iStockphoto.com)