

André Cluytens was among the leading French conductors of his time. His father, Alphonse Cluytens, was also a conductor, and recognized the boy's musical talents. André was enrolled in the Royal Flemish Conservatory at the age of nine. He studied in the piano class of Emile Bosquet, and received first prize for piano at the age of 16. The next year he won first prize in harmony, theory, counterpoint, and fugue.

His father was conductor at the Royal French Theater of Antwerp. André became his assistant and a choirmaster there. When an illness prevented Alphonse from conducting, André made his performance debut in 1927 in Bizet's *Les Pêcheurs de perles*. After that experience he devoted his efforts to orchestral and opera conducting rather than choral work, and he became a resident conductor in the house.

In 1932 he accepted a position as the musical director of orchestral concerts at the Capitole de Toulouse, and he became a French citizen. In 1935 was appointed the opera director in Lyons. He was an assistant of Josef Krips in a summer series in Vichy and, once again, was called on to substitute when that conductor could not perform. He became musical director of the Lyons Opera in 1942, conductor of the Conservatoire Concerts and the French National Radio Orchestra in Paris in 1943, and in 1944 conducted at the Opéra de Paris. From 1947 to 1953 he was music director of the Paris Opéra-Comique, and in 1949 was appointed as principal conductor of the Conservatory Concerts. He retained that position for the rest of his life. In 1955 he was invited to conduct *Lohengrin* at the Bayreuth Festival, the first French person to appear on the podium there. He debuted in the United States in 1956, and in Britain in 1958, when he substituted for Otto Klemperer. He formed a close relationship with the Vienna State Opera, which he first conducted in 1956, becoming a permanent guest conductor in 1959. In 1960 he became conductor of the Belgian National Orchestra in Belgium, also holding that post until his death. He also formed a close link with the Berlin Philharmonic, with which he made a notable recording of the Beethoven symphonies. However, he was primarily known for French repertoire, premiering works by Françaix, Jolivet, Messiaen, Milhaud, Tomasi, Büsser, and Bondeville. He was invited back to Bayreuth in 1965.



# GEORGES BIZET

## L'ARLÉSIENNE

### SUITE NO.1 & NO.2

## CARMEN - SUITE

André Cluytens

Orchestre De La Société Des Concerts Du Conservatoire

Known for one of the world's most popular operas, *Carmen*, Georges Bizet deserves attention as well for other works of remarkable melodic charm. Many of his works received cool receptions on their premieres but are now considered central to the repertory of classical music.

Bizet was born in Paris on October 25, 1838, and grew up in a happy, musical family that encouraged his talents. He learned to read music at the same time he learned to read letters, and equally well. Entering the Paris Conservatory before he was ten, he earned first prize in solfège within six months, a first prize in piano in 1852, and eventually, the coveted Prix de Rome in 1857 for his cantata *Clovis et Clotilde*. His teachers had included Marmontel for piano and Halévy for composition, but the greatest influence on him was Charles Gounod, of whom Bizet later said "You were the beginning of my life as an artist." Bizet himself hid away his *Symphony in C*, written when he was 17, feeling it was too much like its models, Gounod's symphonies. The two years spent in Rome after winning his prize, would be the only extensive time, and a greatly impressionable one, that Bizet would spend outside of Paris in his brief life. When he returned to Paris, he lost confidence in his natural talents and began to substitute dry Germanic or academic writing for his own developing idiom. He composed a one-act opera for production at the Opéra-Comique, but the theater's director engaged him to write a full-length opera instead, *Les pêcheurs de perles* (*The Pearl Fishers*). It was not a success at the time, but despite a few weaknesses, the work was revived in 1886, and its sheer beauty has earned it a respected position among the lesser-played operatic repertory. In 1863 Bizet's father bought land outside Paris where he built two bungalows, one of

which Bizet frequently used as a compositional retreat. He began a friendship (apparently not a physical one) with a neighbor-woman named Céleste Mogador, a former actress, author, courtesan, circus rider, and dance-hall girl. She is said to have been the model for his masterpiece's title role of *Carmen*. Bizet earned his living as an accompanist and publishing house arranger. Meanwhile, he poured his creative efforts into an immense five-act opera in the grand tradition, *Ivan IV*, but it was never performed. This proved to be a pattern for the rest of his career. Bizet would work hard to get an opera produced, and even if he did, it would usually receive only a handful of performances. Bizet's corpus of unfinished works is large, and testifies to his unsettled existence and his difficulty in finding a place in France's notoriously hierarchical and conservative musical world. In 1869 Bizet married Geneviève Halévy, daughter of his teacher. The marriage did not turn out to be a happy one, primarily due to her family's history of mental illness. In 1872, Bizet's splendid incidental music for the play *L'arlésienne* was poorly received, but when the composer assembled the music into an orchestral suite for a November performance, it found great acclaim. At last confident of his creative vision, Bizet was able to steer his final masterpiece through various obstacles, including the objections of singers and theater directors who were shocked by *Carmen*'s subject matter. When the opera had its premiere on March 3, 1875, it was received barely well enough to hang on for future productions. Although it took audiences only a few weeks to catch on, Bizet died convinced it was a failure.

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### **L'Arlésienne - Suite No.1**

- 1 Prelude 7:13
- 2 Minuetto 2:52
- 3 Adagietto 3:13
- 4 Carillon 4:35

### **L'Arlésienne - Suite No.2**

- 5 Pastorale 6:05
- 6 Intermezzo 4:54
- 7 Minuetto 4:23
- 8 Farandole 3:30

### **Carmen - Suite**

- 9 Prelude To The Act. I 2:20
- 10 Entr'acte To The Act. II 1:47
- 11 Entr'acte To The Act. III 2:21
- 12 Entr'acte To The Act. IV 2:15
- Total Time 45:28