



## Georges Bizet and *Carmen*: A Life in Music, a Legacy in Opera

*Dr. Rachel Franklin*

Tuesday, August 5, 2025 - 6:45 p.m. to 8:15 p.m. ET

### **Georges Bizet and *Carmen*: A Life in Music, A Legacy in Opera**

When Georges Bizet died suddenly and tragically at the early age of 36 in 1875, his brand new opera *Carmen* had just been dubbed a humiliating failure, panned by critics at its Paris premiere barely three months beforehand.

Bizet would never know that only a few months later its performances in Vienna, St. Petersburg, London and New York were triumphant, and this vibrant and revolutionary work has never been absent from the world's opera stages since then.

In this 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of both Bizet's death and *Carmen*'s birth, Dr. Rachel Franklin explores how, despite enjoying only modest success during his lifetime, Bizet's innovative, emotionally compelling style has influenced countless composers and profoundly shaped opera history to this day. Additional works showcased include his richly-colored opera *The Pearl Fishers*, the vivacious Symphony in C, and his *L'Arlésienne* Suites, plus the delightful 4-hands piano suite, *Jeux d'enfants* (Children's Games).

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### **Works, media:**

#### **Symphony no. 1, 1855**

- Netherlands Chamber Orchestra  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=STvVanu1fQU>

#### **Les pêcheurs de perles (Pearl Fishers), 1863**

- Metropolitan Opera, 2016, Production: Penny Woolcock, Conductor: Gianandrea Noseda, Zurga: Mariusz Kwiecien, Nadir: Matthew Polenzani, Leïla: Diana Damrau  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDi48Po5vLc>

### Jeux d'enfants, Op. 22, 1871

- João Costa Ferreira & Bruno Belthoise  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OW2rMsutlUk>

### L'Arlésienne Suite No. 1 & Suite No. 2, 1872

- Nathalie Stutzmann, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBINA9\\_RCNw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBINA9_RCNw)

### Carmen, 1875

- Maria Callas, Georges Prêtre, NDR Symphony Orchestra, 1962  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NDZa89LHKds>

### “Bizet’s Carmen” film, director: Francesco Rosi, 1984

- Julia Migenes-Johnson  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8y1dj7bvjE>

(also several other YouTube clips)

- Grace Bumbry, Jon Vickers, Herbert von Karajan, Vienna Philharmonic, 1967  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMn2G03jo98>
- Teddy Tahu Rhodes, Elīna Garanča, Metropolitan Opera, 2010  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4qfGJt6l3g>

### Entr'acte, Act IV (Aragonaise)

- London Symphony Orchestra, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jj8s2OJNpmw>
- Elīna Garanča, Roberto Alagna, Mark Elder, National Paris Opera Orchestra, production: Phillipe Jordan, 2017  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P4wPTLYVYUE>