

# MENUET FROM L'ARLÉSIENNE

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By

GEORGES BIZET



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ING, AND INSTRUCTIVE ANNOTATIONS ON  
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OF STUDY

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FORM AND STRUCTURE AND HARMONIC ANALYSIS  
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## MENUET FROM L'ARLÉSIENNE.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH—GEORGES BIZET.

*Born in Paris, October 25th, 1838.*

*Died near Paris, June 3rd, 1875.*

**T**HE story of the life of Georges Bizet is perhaps one of the most pathetic in the history of the creators of music. It seems tragic that the composer of the world-famous "Carmen" should have died not realizing that he had, at last not only written a master-work, but that he had made himself immortal by that work. When one considers the names of Patti, de Lussan, Calvé, etc., and appreciates to what extent the title-rôle of "Carmen" brought them before the greater public, one feels the injustice of the world towards the creative artist as opposed to its adulation of the interpretative artist.

Georges Bizet studied in the Paris Conservatoire (1848-1857). His masters were Marmontel (piano), Benoist (organ), Zimmermann (harmony), and Halévy (composition), the last mentioned becoming his father-in-law. In 1857 he was awarded the Prix-de-Rome, which brought with it the advantages of a sojourn in the Italian metropolis. However, he produced little representative work while there.

"Les Pêcheurs des Perles" was staged at the Théâtre Lyrique in 1863, but this opera and "La Jolie Fille de Perth," which was given its premier performance at the same theatre four years later, were both received by the public in a tepid manner. Neither was "Djamileh" (1872) greatly appreciated. Indeed, Bizet's first real success was his overture to Sardou's "Patrie," followed by his beautiful incidental music to Daudet's "l'Arlésienne," which latter was eventually incorporated in two Suites for orchestra.

Prosper Mérimée wrote the story of "Carmen." He gave it the true Mérimée touch, which even Paris found too highly flavored. Meilhac and Halévy made a modified version of it which Bizet used as his libretto, and still the Parisians objected to its *brutalité*. When produced at the Opéra Comique, March 3rd, 1875, "Carmen" was distinctly a failure. "The work was too much influenced by Wagner." "There was a lack of real Spanish atmosphere." These and many similar things the critics wrote.

Just three months later Bizet died. The libretto of "Carmen" was slightly revised and the opera was given in Italy, and in 1878 in England, where, at Her Majesty's Theatre, it finally met with its deserved success.

**POETIC IDEA:** Daudet's story of l'Arlésienne is the old tale of young affections opposed to parental control. There is the merry-making of the country festival with the final tragedy of suicide at the close. It was a plot especially suited to Bizet's temperament, and his music to the play is hardly less happy in its inspiration than the music of "Carmen."

The Menuet is a dance-form of French origin which flourished in that country in the 18th century. Lully was one of the first composers to write in this form. With all its grace and dignity of powdered periwig, it began its artistic career very simply.

In the 18th Century Suites the Menuet was not indispensable, and yet its popularity as a dance greatly assisted its development, so that we find Bach including it in his Partitas in a freer form. Thus it naturally became an integral part in the symphonies of Haydn and Mozart, more humanized by the latter, and, by logical development, was metamorphosed into the Scherzo by Beethoven.

**PEDAGOGIC IDEA:** Special emphasis is laid upon the value of a thorough comprehension of the form and harmony of the compositions under consideration. This not only widens the intellectual horizon of the student, but it enables him to appreciate many fine points of structure too often overlooked. Furthermore, it impels him to interpret the thought of the composer with a fidelity otherwise beyond his grasp. Finally, it gives him a logical method of memorizing and reading at sight.

Ano. 1006-4

FORM: Bizet was early attracted to exotic themes, which gave him opportunity to introduce tonal systems quite out of the ordinary. His early opera "Djamileh" abounds in charming oriental melodic features, while in "Carmen" not only do we find abundant evidence of Spanish influence, but also traces of Moorish musical survivals.

The play "L'Arlésienne" ("The Maid of Arles"), the scene of which is laid in Southern France, stimulated Bizet's imagination to such an extent that it seems as if each number of his music for this drama breathed forth the air of ancient Provence. The main theme is written not in our conventional C minor, but in the medieval Aeolian mode, with C for its tonic. Bearing this in mind, it will be easier to account for certain of its tonal peculiarities. The student will observe that the leading-tone B natural is not touched until the full cadence in m. 31—32.

The form adopted is, in the main, long song-form with trio. Part I consists of an eight measure period closing in E flat major, which is repeated. Now follows a double phrase, m. 25—32. This second part is repeated in its entirety. M. 49—52 introduce the trio, part I, which consists of a long period (m. 69—84). Part II, m. 85—92, repeated m. 93—100, affords a charming contrast to part I, which recurs in the form of part III, m. 101—116. M. 119—131 form a delightful and original extension and leading back to the re-entrance of the main theme in condensed form, m. 132—155.

HARMONIC ANALYSIS: As said above, the main theme of this Menuet is in the Aeolian mode, which corresponds to the natural minor scale. Note the melodic progressions in the lower voice of the first four measures, also the descending passage in thirds, m. 4—6, which contains no reference to the raised seventh (B natural). It will be observed that B flat and D in m. 2 are passing tones. The A flat and C may likewise be so considered, moving on to G and B flat, which suggest the E flat triad. The harmonies of m. 5, 6 and 7 are respectively chord of the seventh of the second degree of E flat tonic, dominant seventh, with passing tones through the ninth resolving into the tonic triad. Note how strongly the minor dominant chord asserts itself in m. 17—18, and 21—22. The graceful outline of the diminished seventh chord of the fourth degree running into its sixth degree triad, D flat, F, A flat, is particularly charming. The latter chord now becomes the Neapolitan sixth of C minor, and is followed by a complete cadence in our modern C minor scale.

Part II begins with a double phrase consisting of four two-measure members in which a motive demanding full chords in the wind instruments alternates with a unison passage for strings.

The trio key of A flat major opens with two distinct melodic figures above an organ-point on the tonic. In m. 116-124 an unusual swaying of tonalities from A flat major to B major, E major, and back through B major to A flat, is truly remarkable. This device is repeated with elaborations.

METHOD OF STUDY: The first subject of the Menuet is a charming study in thirds: particular attention should be given to the fingering, as it is essentially modern and has obvious advantages over the old method of fingering thirds. The phrasing must be considered with the violin in mind, especially the second beats of the second and third measures in the right hand must be contrasted to the third beats in those measures, in order to accentuate the staccato eighth-notes on these weak beats.

The rhythmic scheme appears simple except that this three-four rhythm must not be given the same swing as that of the waltz; it is a more even pulse than the waltz rhythm with more dignity and self-consciousness in its character.

At the measure in chords in G minor (measure 17) it may be of assistance to imagine these played in the orchestra by wood-wind instruments and horns, with the answering phrase of staccato notes energetically announced by the low strings. This very masculine phrase is to be complemented by the delightful feminine reply which may perhaps be better visualized as a wood-wind phrase.

Four measures before the entrance of the trio (measure 45) there is a *decrescendo* which should begin "p" and, with the utmost delicacy, descend to "pp." In order to obtain this soft but crisp staccato, the hand should be held very close to the keys, with a quick but slight throwing up of the hand from the wrist at the two closing chords (cadence). Contrary to the usual custom, the trio enters "f," but the true spirit of the trio is evident after four measures (measure 53), when the 'cello-like theme appears in the left hand. This whole section must be played with a subdued dynamic scheme and with a clear appreciation of the changed mood. The theme is smooth and suave with few highlights, but rather with a sinuous beauty which is extraordinarily effective after the strong rhythm of the first section.

Note how the melody changes hands eight measures before the return of the thirds in the right hand (measure 77). At the entrance of these thirds (measure 85) there must be a subtle dynamic differentiation between the right and left hands. Here we should imagine the soft laughter of the maiden as an accompaniment to the serious voice of her partner; but the laughter must be "pp" and the voice "p"; after four measures of this they continue their dance with more and more *elan*. After a repetition of these two phrases we return to the principal theme of the trio. One of the most beautiful parts of the composition follows this section. This passage (measure 117) of fifteen measures, which serves as a bridge to the opening theme, deserves careful study from the theoretic standpoint, for it is a modulation which is original and yet natural.

Ano. 1006—4

ILLUSTRATIONS.

A) A better division of the hands. The same at c) and d).

B)

c)

D) Fuller and more sonorous:

The editor has used the signature of four flats in examples a, b, c, and d, as the section quoted is actually in the key of A flat.

Ano. 1006—4

# Menuet from L'Arlésienne.

1.

Edited by Leopold Godowsky.

Georges Bizet.

**Allegro giocoso** (♩ = 184)

Measures 1-5: *f*, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Measures 6-10: 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

Measures 11-16: 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, *sempre* 16

Measures 17-21: *f*, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21

1006 - 6

Musical score for measures 22-27. The system consists of two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff. Measure 22 has a dynamic marking of *mf* and a fermata. Measures 23 and 24 have accents. Measure 25 has a dynamic marking of *p*. Measure 26 has a dynamic marking of *mf*. Measure 27 has a dynamic marking of *f*. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above the notes. There are also some handwritten annotations above the treble staff.

Musical score for measures 28-32. The system consists of two staves. Measure 28 has a dynamic marking of *mf*. Measure 29 has a dynamic marking of *mf*. Measure 30 has a dynamic marking of *mf*. Measure 31 has a dynamic marking of *pp*. Measure 32 has a dynamic marking of *f*. There are many handwritten annotations above the treble staff, including fingerings and slurs.

Musical score for measures 33-38. The system consists of two staves. Measure 33 has a dynamic marking of *mf*. Measure 34 has a dynamic marking of *mf*. Measure 35 has a dynamic marking of *mf*. Measure 36 has a dynamic marking of *mf*. Measure 37 has a dynamic marking of *mf*. Measure 38 has a dynamic marking of *mf*. There are some handwritten annotations below the bass staff.

Musical score for measures 39-43. The system consists of two staves. Measure 39 has a dynamic marking of *mf*. Measure 40 has a dynamic marking of *mf*. Measure 41 has a dynamic marking of *p*. Measure 42 has a dynamic marking of *mf*. Measure 43 has a dynamic marking of *mf*. There are some handwritten annotations above the treble staff.

Musical score for measures 44-48. The system consists of two staves. Measure 44 has a dynamic marking of *mf*. Measure 45 has a dynamic marking of *mf*. Measure 46 has a dynamic marking of *mf*. Measure 47 has a dynamic marking of *pp*. Measure 48 has a dynamic marking of *mf*. There are many handwritten annotations above the treble staff, including fingerings and slurs.

(TRIO)

Musical score for measures 49-54. The piece is in 3/4 time with a key signature of two flats. The score is written for piano and includes fingerings and articulation marks. Measure 49 starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic. Measure 52 includes the instruction *p subito* and *espr.* (espressivo). A first ending bracket labeled 'A)' spans measures 52-54. The instruction *\* una corda* is written below the piano part. The right hand part features a complex melodic line with many slurs and fingerings. The left hand part provides harmonic support with chords and single notes.

Musical score for measures 55-60. The right hand part continues with intricate melodic patterns, including slurs and fingerings. The left hand part consists of chords and single notes. Measure 60 ends with a first ending bracket labeled '(2)'. The instruction *una corda* is present.

Musical score for measures 61-65. The right hand part features a series of slurred eighth notes with fingerings. The left hand part has chords and single notes. Measure 65 ends with a first ending bracket labeled '(2)'. The instruction *una corda* is present.

Musical score for measures 66-70. The right hand part continues with melodic lines and slurs. The left hand part has chords and single notes. Measure 70 ends with a first ending bracket labeled '(2)'. The instruction *una corda* is present.

Musical score for measures 71-75. The right hand part features melodic lines with slurs and fingerings. The left hand part has chords and single notes. Measure 75 ends with a first ending bracket labeled '(2)'. The instruction *una corda* is present.

4

76 77 78 79 80

*cresc.*

81 82 83 84 85

*sf dim. pp p*

*legg: espr. 1*

86 87 88 89 90

*p mf*

*tre corde*

91 92 93 94 95

*f ff p*

*una corda*

96 97 98 99 100

*p mf f ff pp*

*una corda*



101 102 103 104

*espr.*  
*p*

106 107 108 109 110

*cres.* - *cen* - *do*

111 112 113 *dim.* 114 115

*sf*

*sempre pp*  
116 117 118 119 120

121 122 123 *sempre pp* 124 125

126 127 *smor* 128 - *zan* 129 - *do* 130 *sempre* 131

*pp* 132 133 134 135 136 137

*una corda*

138 *sempre* 139 *pp* 140 141 142 143

144 145 146 147 148 *smor* 149

150 - *zan* - 151 - *do* - 152 - 153 154 *ppp* 155