

## Topic Page: [Bizet, Georges, 1838-1875](#)

Definition: **Bizet, Georges** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

French Romantic composer. His opera *Carmen* (1875), although a failure at its first performance, is one of the most popular operas of all time. Bizet also composed other operas, notably *Les pêcheurs de perles* (1863) and orchestral works, including the *Symphony in C* (1855) and *L'arlésienne* suites (1872).

Summary Article: **Bizet, Georges (Alexandre César Léopold)**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

French composer of operas. Among his works are *Les Pêcheurs de perles/The Pearl Fishers* (1863) and *La Jolie Fille de Perth/The Fair Maid of Perth* (1866). He also wrote the concert overture *Patrie* and incidental music to Alphonse Daudet's play *L'Arlésienne* (1872), which has remained a standard work in the form of two suites for orchestra. His operatic masterpiece *Carmen* was produced a few months before his death. His *Symphony in C*, written when he was 17, is now frequently performed.

Bizet was born near Paris. His father, a teacher of singing, gave him his first instruction in music and at the age of nine, being exceptionally gifted, he was admitted to the Paris Conservatory, studying piano under Marmontel, organ under François Benoist (1794–1878), and composition under Pierre Joseph Guillaume Zimmermann (1785–1853). In 1853, when Zimmermann died, he became a pupil of his future father-in-law, Jacques Halévy, having already taken a first prize for piano. His *Symphony in C* of 1855 is the least known of his earlier works, and one of the finest pieces written by an adolescent; the score, however, was not performed until 1935. In 1857 he won the Prix de Rome, but before he went to Rome he had already gained a prize in a competition for an operetta, *Le Docteur Miracle* (1857), sponsored by Offenbach. He tied with Charles Lecocq, whose setting was produced alternately with his own at the Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens.

He wrote several works in Rome and on his return to Paris in 1860 he set out to capture the operatic stage; but although the Opéra-Comique accepted his one-act opera, *La Guzla de l'Emir*, he withdrew it, destroying it later. The Théâtre Lyrique produced his next work, *Les Pêcheurs de perles*, in 1863; *Ivan le Terrible*, written in 1865, said to have been burnt by him, was recovered in 1944 and performed at Mühlingen Castle, Württemberg, Germany. In 1869 the conductor Jules Pasdeloup gave him his first chance to appear with an orchestral work, *Souvenirs de Rome*, which he later entitled *Roma*. In the same year Bizet married Geneviève Halévy.

In 1872 he was commissioned to write incidental music for Daudet's play, *L'Arlésienne*, produced at the Vaudeville in October. In 1874 Pasdeloup produced his overture *Patrie* (unconnected with Victorien Sardou's play), but Bizet had set to work before that on *Carmen*, which was premiered at the Opéra-Comique, with spoken dialogue, in March 1875. At first it scandalized audiences by its realism, and did not achieve its great popularity until after Bizet's death. It received 37 performances; but Bizet died after about 30 performances, before the work had won through prejudice to a decided success.

Bizet is clearly influenced by Gounod but far transcends his model. In a sense, his reputation has become hostage to his best-loved work; the passion and melody of *Carmen* should not obscure the same qualities to be found in the *Symphony in C*, *Les Pêcheurs de perles*, and even *La Jolie Fille de Perth*.

**WorksOpera** five, including *Les Pêcheurs de perles* (1863), *La Jolie Fille de Perth* (after Scott; 1866), *Carmen* (after Mérimée, 1875).

**Stage** incidental music to Daudet's *L'Arlésienne* (1872).

**Orchestral** works include symphony in C major (1855, first performed under Weingartner, 1935), suite *Roma* (1869), *Petite Suite (Jeux d'enfants)*.

**Other** numerous songs and piano pieces.

### quotations

Bizet, Georges (Alexandre César Léopold)

### audios

Bizet, Georges *Carmen*, *Habanera*

Bizet, Georges *Arlésienne*, L'

### APA

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## Chicago

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## Harvard

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## MLA

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