

Bizet

Carmen



Sir Thomas Beecham was Artistic Director at Covent Garden between 1932 and 1939, overseeing 'International Seasons' with artists such as Frida Leider, Lauritz Melchior, Kirsten Flagstad, Beniamino Gigli and Richard Tauber. But with British opera houses closing their doors with the onset of war, Beecham relocated to North America conducting seventy-six performances with the Metropolitan Opera company between 1942 and 1944. Beecham was, along with Bruno Walter, the best known of the European conductors to make their mark at the Met during the war.

Although Beecham was a very experienced operatic conductor with a wide repertoire he mainly directed French opera at the Met (*Carmen*, *Faust*, *Mignon*, *Manon*, *Louise*, and *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), with *Carmen* being the opera he conducted more than any other (24 times over three seasons). It was also the opera that served as his broadcast debut a year earlier. The critics were enchanted: "Sir Thomas was the star of the afternoon" enthused Oscar Thomson in Musical America while Virgil Thompson declared "Beecham's work was a triumph of brilliant pacing, of delicate accompanying, of fine attention to detail and of general animation. He made the Bizet score sound like the superb score that it is, and he made the Metropolitan orchestra sound like a better orchestra than we have been used to thinking it is."

This performance, which was broadcast from the Chicago Civic Opera House while the Met was on tour, is the first surviving Met broadcast of *Carmen* to feature two native-French speakers as Carmen and Don José. Belgian-born Lily Djanel is joined by French-Canadian Raoul Jobin. Both had performed at the Opéra-Comique in Paris before the war and without doubt we are treated to authentically French interpretations of the two roles. The New York critics did not know quite what to make of Djanel. Most agreed that her acting was excellent - "playing the role as if she believed in it" one remarked, with a "powerful and unpretentious physical presence." She was always more comfortable in the higher lying musical passages but nevertheless delivered "tremendous poise, [and] serenity... in her vocalism." Jobin, a somewhat lighter tenor than the radio audience was used to hearing as José, not only brought excellent French to the role but also "power, warmth and certainty of attack on the high tones". His easy and fluid musicianship is a joy to hear.

Licia Albanese, in the early years of her long Met career, sings Micaëla. Although best known for her Violetta and Madama Butterfly, Albanese featured in five complete broadcasts of *Carmen* between 1941 and 1945. The critics consistently singled out her outstanding vocalism even if a few grumbled about her not quite so idiomatic French. Leonard Warren sings the matador Escamillo. Early reviews of his performances in this role were somewhat critical, both of his acting (or lack of) and his vocal style. By 1943 however, one critic appreciated his "virility and devil-may-care confidence, noted with appreciation by those who remembered him as a solid actor with extraordinary vocal endowments."

Four outstanding soloists and an exceptional conductor in the pit make this a truly memorable Carmen.

bizet carmen

beebecham conducts at the met

PACO 176

carmen lily djanel
don josé raoul jobin

micaëla licia albanese
escamillo leonard warren
frasquita thelma votipka
mercédès helen olheim
le dancaire george cehanovsky
le remendado alessio de paolis
moralès mack harrell
zuninga lorenzo alvary

live broadcast performance, 1943



bizet carmen

disc one

1. RADIO Introduction (1:07)

2. Prélude (2:03)

ACT ONE

3. Sur la place (6:23)

4. Avec la garde montante (3:34)

5. C'est bien là, n'est-ce pas (1:17)

6. La cloche a sonné (4:25)

7. L'amour est un oiseau rebelle (3:42)

8. Carmen! Sur tes pas, nous nous pressons tous! (1:28)

9. Quels regards! Quelle effronterie! (0:55)

10. Parle-moi de ma mère! (5:45)

11. Reste là, maintenant, pendant que je lirai (1:31)

12. Que se passe-t-il donc là-bas? (1:52)

13. Mon officier, c'était une querelle (3:54)

14. Près des remparts de Seville (4:31)

15. Voici l'ordre; partez (2:10)

16. Entr'acte (1:40)

ACT TWO

17. Les tringles des sistres tintaient (4:29)

18. Messieurs, Pastia me dit (1:00)

19. Vivat! Vivat le Toréro! (1:07)

20. Votre toast, je peux vous le rendre (4:41)

21. La belle, un mot (1:38)

22. Eh bien, Vite, quelles nouvelles? (4:59)

23. Mais qui donc attends-tu? (1:04)

24. Enfin, c'est toi (5:30)

25. La fleur que tu m'avais jetée (3:57)

XR remastered by Andrew Rose

Recorded at Chicago Civic Opera House . 27 March 1943

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Lily Djanel as Carmen

Total duration: 2hr 32:32 CD1: 74:42 CD2: 77:50

disc two

1. Non, tu ne m'aimes pas! (4:05)

2. Holà Carmen! Holà! Holà! (4:05)

3. Entr'acte (2:36)

ACT THREE

4. Écoute, écoute, compagnon, écoute (3:55)

5. Reposons-nous une heure ici, mes camarades (2:36)

6. Mélons! Coupons! (7:20)

7. Quant au douanier, c'est notre affaire (2:45)

8. C'est les contrebandiers le refuge ordinaire (6:47)

9. Je ne me trompe pas (0:25)

10. Quelques lignes plus bas (11:28)

11. Entr'acte (13:10)

ACT FOUR

12. A deux cuartos! (1:09)

13. Les voici! Voici la quadrille! (6:49)

14. C'est toi ... Carmen il est temps encore (7:37)

15. RADIO Outro (3:03)

Metropolitan Opera Chorus & Orchestra
conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham

CAST

Carmen - Lily Djanel

Don José - Raoul Jobin

Micaëla - Licia Albanese

Escamillo - Leonard Warren

Frasquita - Thelma Votipka

Mercédès - Helen Olheim

Le Dancaire - George Cehanovsky

Le Remendado - Alessio De Paolis

Morales - Mack Harrell

Zuniga - Lorenzo Alvary