

Georges Bizet

L'Arlesienne Suite II (1876)

Movement 2, Intermezzo

1st bassoon

Measures 29-46 (18 measures)

Range (C in the staff to high Ab)

Performance issues: Phrasing, Rhythm, Dynamics, High register

**About the music:** A year after Bizet died, E. Guiraud created a second suite from the *L'Arlesienne* music. While it is generally not thought to be crafted as well as Bizet's work, it has become popular in its own right.

The excerpt chosen is of a highly melodic nature: the bassoon enters with the clarinet to join the unison horn/saxophone line already in progress. As can be seen before rehearsal D, the melody falls into regular four bar phrases. At D, the phrase is extended to a six bar group before the cadential phrase returns to the four bar length. (The oboe enters the texture at D, so five solo instruments finish the section in octaves, creating an interesting combined timbre.) The use of saxophone in the orchestra only began in the late nineteenth century—when included, it tends to be in a soloistic setting such as this, featuring its new woodwind color. Most use of the saxophone is in French literature, so Bizet was true to his times and his nationality in this usage.

For interest, a second passage (Extra) is included because it is representative of the type of cue which may be written into the bassoon part. (Any exposed line which the composer feels may be missing in a performance, and which can be covered satisfactorily by another instrument, is written into that other instrument's part so that it can be supplied if necessary.) The bassoonist frequently finds cues for bass clarinet, English horn, Bb clarinet, and saxophone (alto or tenor). Occasionally there are even cues for extra brasses such as horn and trombone, or strings, as in the case of divisi cello. The individual must be ready to provide these parts if the principal instrument is not present. If the solo line is double-cued, e.g., the saxophone line appears in both the bassoon and the clarinet parts, then the conductor must determine which substitute color is preferred. Taken from the Menuetto, this particular cue is a substitute for saxophone and happens in the midst of a duet between flute and harp: the harp is accompanimental and the solo flute melody engages in dialogue with the saxophone/bassoon for these few measures before continuing on with the solo line.

**About performing the excerpt:** Rhythmic accuracy is a major issue because of the many dotted note values and the sixteenth rest in the second measure; the player must be as accurate in performance as the composer was in notation. At the same time, the *alargando* allows for deviation from strict tempo, so the player will need to be flexible. The extended range at D will give the student practice in upper notes of long duration; tone quality and pitch will be especially important. In working out the phrasing and expressive performance of this melody,

the bassoonist has to coordinate efforts with four other solo players. Following all of the given dynamic nuances is a good start, but in addition, the player must be sensitive to the balance between instruments and the sense of placing one's tone quality within a complex sound without trying to be heard separate from that sound.

This excerpt was taken and used with permission from Ann Pesavento's doctoral dissertation: *Orchestral excerpts as developmental studies for the intermediate bassoonist: a collection of selected passages*. D.A. diss, University of Northern Colorado, 1989. Pp. 360. OCLC#: 21892445. UMI 9016608.

Bizet — L' Arlesienne, Suite No. 2

Fagott I.

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Extra (from 3rd movement)