

**Georges Bizet: Carmen**

aud 95.497

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Ferenc Fricsay was born in Budapest in 1914 and studied music under Béla Bartók, Zoltán Kodály and Ernst von Dohnányi. He had a meteoric rise to fame, making his first appearance as a conductor at age 15, and became music director of the newly formed RIAS Symphony Orchestra in Germany in 1949. He specialised in the music of Mozart and Beethoven and conducted Carmen relatively seldom in the opera house, though more frequently in the recording studio. This CD from audite features the first production that he recorded for the RIAS Berlin in 1951, containing a compilation of key scenes from Bizet's ever-popular opera Carmen. The orchestra sound is slender and transparent and he picks fresh but not exaggerated tempi. His choice of soloists – including mezzo-soprano Margarete Klose (Carmen), tenor Rudolf Schock (Don José) and soprano Elfriede Trötschel (Micaëla) - reveals marked contrasts in character. Fricsay considered recordings to be a synthesis of the arts in which audio engineering played a major role, and this recording demonstrates the extent of evocative effect that could be achieved by monaural means. Fricsay's interpretation possesses a surprising modernity and this is a fascinating historic recording one of the world's most popular operas.