

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY OPERA

PRESENTS

SATURDAY, JANUARY 27TH AT 8PM

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28TH AT 3PM

ALEXANDER KASSER THEATER

DIALOGUES DES CARMELITES BIOS

Music & Libretto by Francis Poulenc

Premiere: Teatro alla Scala, January 26, 1957

Sung in French with English supertitles

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY OPERA

Kyle Ritenauer, *Conductor*

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Kyle Ritenauer, *Conductor*

Daniel Gurskis
Dean, College of the Arts

Anthony Mazzocchi
Director
John J. Cali School of Music

John J. Cali
School of Music

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PROGRAM NOTES

by David Rosenmeyer

*"To the memory of my Mother,
who revealed music to me"*

Poulenc's foremost dedication for his
Dialogues des Carmélites

Francis Poulenc's masterwork, *Dialogues des Carmélites*, came about almost by chance. In his fifties, still suffering from periodic depression and hypochondria, though continuing to maintain a highly productive performance and composition schedule, Poulenc yearned for a project that would allow him to showcase his greatness in a large-scale work.

In 1952, he considered composing a ballet based on a sacred theme for La Scala, but was unable to find the right scenario. Guido Valcarengi, then director of the Ricordi publishing firm, proposed he write an opera instead. Margarita Wallmann, Valcarengi's wife and La Scala's Director of Ballets at that time, suggested Georges Bernanos' play, *Dialogues des Carmélites*. Poulenc in fact had seen the play twice, a fact that Wallmann knew — he'd been that impressed — and was immediately persuaded, though he had some doubts regarding his ability to set it to music. He wrote to a friend:

"Then, two days later, right in the middle of a bookseller's window in Rome, I saw [Les] Dialogues which seemed to be waiting for me ... I bought the book and decided to read it again ... It was 10 in the morning.... At half past noon I was drunk with enthusiasm, but there remained the acid test: could I find the music for such a text?"

He needn't have worried. In another letter, he wrote that upon opening the book at random to the First Prioress' speech at the beginning of Act I, he had found, "incredibly," the melodic curve for that long speech. He

immediately telegraphed Valcarengi that he would write *Carmélites*.

During the next few years, the 'nuns,' as he would refer to it, would occupy the center of his creative attention, though he continued to tour and compose other works. Wallmann, a dancer and choreographer who'd fled her native Berlin with the rise of Nazism, became Poulenc's main consultant and dramaturg, directing its world premiere at La Scala, as well as many subsequent productions throughout Europe.

Francis Poulenc was a man of lively contradictions, many of which are expressed in his music. Born into a well-to-do Parisian family, he inherited a deep religious faith from his father's devout Catholic side, and a love for the worldly cosmopolitan and artistic life from his mother. His friend, music critic Claude Rostand coined a description that Poulenc himself approved and personally adopted: *"There will always be inside me the 'moine' (the monk) and the 'voyou' (the rogue).*

Loving music from an early age, Poulenc showed talent as both a pianist and a composer. He was well-read, well-educated, and even published a meaningful review of *Tosca* when only twelve years old. Yet he did not become a prodigy or achieve unusually early success. Ever the dandy, he enjoyed the pleasures of Paris following WWI, while beginning to gain some renown as a pianist and composer. He was a member of *Les Six*, a group of six young composers including Poulenc's good friends Georges Auric, Darius Milhaud, and Arthur Honegger, who all collaborated in organizing concerts and promoting one another's careers. While *Les Six* may not have had a unifying vision, they were agreed on two things: their shared love of Eric Satie, and their near contempt for any show of musical sentimentality, which was the great shadow of late 19th and early 20th century post-Romanticism. Their aim was to be modern and direct, thoroughly streamlined rather than overly decorated.

Poulenc's early successes focused on

combining music from the countryside, his father's family origins, with the sophisticated Parisian sounds. Yet his true love, both as a composer and a performer, was the *chanson*. He wrote more than 150 songs throughout his career, being very rigorous in his choice of poets, and writing mostly for specific singers, including long-lasting collaborations with his friends, baritone Pierre Bernac and soprano Denise Duval, who would create the main role of *Carmélites* in its French premiere. Poulenc also composed piano music, ballet scores, orchestral works, as well as chamber and choral music, always returning to vocal compositions as his preferred mode of expression.

In the mid-1930s, two events shattered Poulenc's world. The first was the death of his close friend and fellow composer [Pierre-Octave Ferroud](#) in a horrific car crash. Afterwards, Poulenc visited the sanctuary of [Rocamadour](#), and wrote of his experience there:

... As I meditated on the fragility of our human frame, I was drawn once more to the life of the spirit. Rocamadour had the effect of restoring me to the faith of my childhood ... The same evening ..., I began my Litanies à la Vierge noire for female voices and organ. In that work I tried to get across the atmosphere of "peasant devotion" that had struck me so forcibly in that lofty chapel.

The second was the rise of fascism and the threat of war all across Europe. Poulenc, extremely sensitive to global politics, suffered at the indifference to this upsurge shown by many of his friends and colleagues. It was during this period that he began to struggle with depression and anxiety, which would trouble him throughout his life. Two works from this era prefigure the music of *Carmélites*, written eighteen years later: the *a cappella* *Mass in G*, his first large scale religious work, and the *Deux marches et une intermède*.

In 1941, Poulenc composed an *a cappella*

setting of the Catholic hymn *Salve Regina*, which he would later re-use for the climactic final scene of *Carmélites*. Towards the end of the war, Poulenc composed a larger choral work, *Figure Humaine*, premiered in a London radio broadcast when France was already completely under Nazi control. This work ends with a long series of repeated low Es that underline the ending syllable of the piece's last word: *Liberté*. He would repeat this passage in *Carmélites* at the end of Act I, when the agonized Prioress desperately asks for stronger painkillers.

Right after the war, Poulenc composed his first large-scale choral/orchestral work, *Stabat Mater*. This piece braided together his diverse personae: the chansonnier, the dramatic composer, and the renewed religion-themed composer. This progression leads quite naturally to the creation of what is arguably his magnum opus, *Dialogues of the Carmelites*.

While he learned, and appreciated, the modern and even avant-garde techniques of his contemporaries, he made the conscious choice in his own work to stay within the realm of tonality and formal clarity. From his letters, one can see how much he resented that during his youth, he was never considered "one of the greats" because of the provocative brevity, the deceiving directness, and straightforward simplicity of his work. Yet now, in the post WWII era, he continued to be dismissed: for being too musically *conservative*. It seems believable that Poulenc would be looking for a grand work to cement his reputation, and found it in Bernanos' play.

Based on a true story, the play chronicles the trial and subsequent public guillotining of sixteen nuns from a convent in Compiègne during the French Revolution's Reign of Terror, which actually ended just a few days later. The world became aware of the story through the 1832 memoirs of the convent's sub-prioress, Sister Marie of the Incarnation, who escaped martyrdom because she'd been delayed in her travels. In 1931, a Catholic convert, Gertrud von le Fort, published her novella based on

the story: *Die Letzte am Schafott* (*The Last to the Scaffold*). While closely adhering to the original material, von le Fort introduced the fictional character Blanche de la Fort (a variant of her own name), a young woman who enters the convent, hoping to connect her life to the Agony of Christ. Immediately after the WWII, plans were made to produce a film, for which Bernanos provided the script. He died shortly thereafter, though, and the film wasn't made. The script, however, was published to great acclaim and later turned into a play, which is how Poulenc found it.

Musically, *Carmélites* is an interesting display of contrasts. Poulenc mentions Monteverdi, Debussy, Verdi, and Mussorgsky in his dedication as compositional influences. Monteverdi and Debussy are present in the 'stile rappresentativo,' eschewing all conventional arias or duets, and exploring instead recitative and arioso sections. While not adopting musical motifs as obviously or consistently as Wagner does, Poulenc *does* fill his piece with motivic and instrumental themes for characters, brilliantly deploying the score as a dramaturgical tool anticipating mood, foreshadowing action, and resolving complex emotional scenes.

The opera starts with a series of disjunctive rhythms and intervals combined with surprising silences in the orchestra. The first text is notably: "*Where is Blanche?*" This question lingers throughout the work, both in a literal sense — as she joins the convent, then leaves, and then re-joins her sisters, at the very last minute, to be martyred, and as a metaphor, in a philosophical and theological sense. Blanche's self-examination of faith and sacrifice, and her role in a community, are both the main plot theme and also a distillation of the complete work. Blanche's first entrance is over a musical motif of fear and danger. The Prioress' first line, the first line Poulenc set to music, refers to her as 'a soldier in Christ's army'; the novice Sister Constance's music is lighthearted, but the darker harmonies foreshadow the notion that Blanche and

Constance will die together, and at the end of the Act II interlude, the orchestral score begins to answer the question: whose death will be added to the first prioress's agonized passing?

Poulenc packed the final act with most of the musical symbolism and intertextual references to other works. Starting with a Sarabande taken from his own *Stabat Mater*, and reminiscent of the final chorus in Bach's *Saint Matthew Passion*, it brings a sense of elegant determination to the upcoming events. The jailer reads the official edict in a sardonic and fast-paced patter song; the orchestra fades to a pianissimo on the word 'mort'. Poulenc builds up the whole opera to its tragic and paradox-filled conclusion, the single longest lyrical passage of the whole work, in which all the nuns join together to sing 'Salve Regina' (based on his 1941 hymn) as they walk up the ramp to their executions. The chorus of sixteen voices is reduced by one voice at a time, underscoring the elegant symmetry of the hymn with the cruel asymmetry of their deaths. In liturgy, one of the most common uses of a hymn was to close the ordinary mass, and was so commonly known that in a performance of the play in Zürich, the audience stood up after the curtain fell and sang the hymn. Poulenc, in an era of open and ambiguous avant-garde endings, gives us the most musically and dramatically satisfying resolution together with the most tragic of conclusions.

As a devout Catholic, Poulenc struggled with profound theological questions stemming from his life as an openly gay man, along with questions regarding the role of faith and the Church during the two world wars. He concludes the opera with a beneficent hope: a moment from the end of his 1937 *Mass in G*, and hidden in the opera's opening, repeating the notes that conclude the Agnus Dei: *Dona nobis pacem*. Grant us peace.

CREATIVE TEAM

Malena Dayen (Director) is an Argentinian opera singer, director, and a Princeton University Hodder fellow. She recently directed *Aida* and *La Médium* with Fort Worth Opera and *Roméo et Juliette*, *Carmen* and *Frida* with Opera Naples. Malena directed and co-created Bare Opera's *FireSongs* by Thomas Cabaniss, presented in collaboration with National Sawdust at Chelsea Factory in New York City in June 2022. In 2020 Malena won the 1st Prize in Catapult Opera's competition for innovation in opera and directed Teatro Grattacielo's *Fedora* and *Mefistofele* video productions, which were selected for the Munich Music Video Awards, the 4th Dimension Independent Film Festival, and the London International Music Video Awards.

In November 2021 she directed *Cuando el fuego abrasa*, a co-production of Opera Hispánica and Teatro Grattacielo featuring songs by Piazzolla and De Falla's *El Amor Brujo* at LaMama in New York City as well as Teatro Grattacielo's production of Mascagni's *L'Amico Fritz*.

She directed *The Late Walk*, a new opera in collaboration with Bare Opera and the Decameron Opera Coalition that has been inducted into The Library of Congress's Performing Arts COVID-19 Response Collection. Malena starred in and directed a production of Piazzolla's *Maria de Buenos Aires* and *Don Giovanni* with Bare Opera in New York City and co-created *Exercises on The Presence of Odradek*, a new experimental operatic work performed live online.

Malena is a collaborative artist with the Early Childhood Programs at Carnegie Hall and co-created *luzAzul*, an opera for babies 0-2 years old that premiered in 2023 at Chelsea Factory and the Princeton Lewis Arts Center. As an operatic mezzo-soprano Malena was praised by the New York Times as "Outstanding" for her performance at Carnegie Hall of the world premiere of *The Blizzard Voices* (P. Moravec). Malena made her

debut as Cherubino at the Teatro Municipal of Rio de Janeiro and has performed in *Carmen*, *Manon Lescaut*, *Elektra* and *Thaïs* at the Teatro Municipal de São Paulo as well as *Carmen* with the Natchez Opera Festival and the Festival d'Art Vocal de Montreal. Born and raised in Buenos Aires, Malena is a Spanish music and tango specialist, performing this repertoire with orchestras around the world. Malena holds an MFA from CUNY Brooklyn College in the Performance and Interactive Media Arts program and an MM and a PSD from the Mannes College of Music, the New School.

New York City-based conductor **Kyle Ritenauer** (Conductor) is a rising presence in the classical music world. Kyle is currently serving as the Director of Orchestral Studies at the John J. Cali School of Music at Montclair State University, serves on the conducting staff at the Manhattan School of Music, and regularly works as Cover Conductor for the National Symphony Orchestra (Washington, DC) and the New York Philharmonic. This summer Kyle will begin as Associate Conductor and Faculty at The Pierre Monteux School.

Throughout his career, Kyle has appeared as a guest conductor with the Elgin Symphony, the Norwalk Symphony, the Hudson Valley Philharmonic, Symphony New Hampshire, and Carnegie Hall's Ensemble Connect. In the role of cover conductor, Ritenauer has worked with the National Symphony Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Métropolitain (Montreal), American Composers Orchestra, the Utah Symphony, the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

Ritenauer has led orchestras in a myriad of genres, including collaborations with Broadway superstars Kelli O'Hara and Matthew Morrison, and giants of contemporary music such as John Adams, Claire Chase

and Richard Danielpour. He was particularly honored to conduct a Juilliard School workshop of *American Symphony* by Jon Batiste, former bandleader of the Stephen Colbert Late Show. Kyle recently worked with The Knights (New York City) to workshop *ATTENTION!* in collaboration with mandolinist and composer Chris Thile.

Kyle is a student of David Robertson and a graduate of The Juilliard School's Orchestral Conducting Program where, upon graduation, he received the Charles Schiff Conducting Prize for outstanding achievement. He also attended the Aspen Conducting Academy as a student of Robert Spano.

Born in St. Petersburg, Russia, **Victoria Schwartzman** (Music Director and Repetiteur) performs regularly as a soloist and chamber musician. Victoria has appeared at the Music Mountain Festival, in the New York Philharmonic Ensembles series at Merkin Hall, at Summit Music Festival with Dmitri Berlinsky, at Bargemusic, in the Gessner-Schocken concert series in Cambridge, WMP Concert Hall, and the Nicolas Roerich Museum concert series in New York City. After graduating from Jerusalem Conservatory, Victoria continued her education at the Longy School of Music and New England Conservatory. While pursuing various degrees in solo and chamber music performance, she was selected to perform in masterclasses given by Dmitri Bashkirov, Menahem Pressler, and Richard Goode, among others. Her principal teachers include Irina Kivaiko, Issak Kossov, Victor Rosenbaum, Sally Pinkas, Eda Shlyam, and Eteri Andjaparidze.

As a soloist with orchestra, Victoria has performed with the Jerusalem Chamber Orchestra, the Longy School of Music Chamber Orchestra, the Riverside Orchestra, and the Greater Newburgh Symphony Orchestra. She has performed at the Quartet Program in Pennsylvania and participated in the Tel-Hai International Piano Festival in Israel and the Lyrica Chamber Music Festival in New

Jersey. She is on the coaching faculty in the Vocal Department at Montclair State University and Long Island University Post as well as on the piano faculty at the Bard College Conservatory Preparatory division. Victoria is also the co-founder of the Newburgh Music Festival, a week-long immersive classical music program devoted to both solo performance and chamber music, located on the shore of the Hudson River, in Newburgh, NY.

William Hobbs (Assistant Conductor and Repetiteur) received his Bachelor's in Piano Performance summa cum laude from the University of Colorado at Boulder, and a Master of Music in Piano Performance, Research and Literature from the Eastman School of Music.

Mr. Hobbs has been heard worldwide in solo and song recitals, chamber music and orchestra appearances in over a dozen countries, including the United States, England, Korea, France, Greece, Italy, Spain, Malta and Poland. He has collaborated with many of today's top performers, including Yo-Yo Ma, James Galway, Renee Fleming, Joyce DiDonato, and many others.

Mr. Hobbs works at many of the world's major opera houses as pianist and conductor, including the Opéra National de Paris, the Salzburg Festival, San Francisco Opera, Chicago Lyric Opera, Seattle Opera, Washington Opera and the Opéra de Monte-Carlo.

Mr. Hobbs began his Academic career at Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey in 2010, followed by appointments at the Juilliard School and the City University of New York. He currently serves on the faculties of the John J. Cali School of Music at Montclair State University, and the Peabody Institute (Baltimore, Maryland).

Mr. Hobbs can be heard in recordings of music by Lowell Liebermann, Xavier Montsalvatge, Dave Soldier, Christos Hatzis, and Kaikhosru Sorabji.

Karen Driscoll (Head of Artistic Operations/Opera and Clinical Specialist of Voice) Ms. Driscoll recently directed Cali Chamber Opera's "The Ghosts of Gatsby" and "The Beautiful Bridegroom," and has led multiple scenes programs for MSU's Opera Workshop classes, as well as role preparation productions including "Sweeney Todd" and "La Bohème" to name a few. She has also enjoyed collaborating on many occasions as not only a soprano soloist with MSU Singers and Chorale choirs but also as director of "Considering Matthew Shepard". As a soprano, Ms. Driscoll has sung leading roles with Seattle Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Florentine Opera, L'Opéra de Montréal, Vancouver Opera, Virginia Opera, Baltimore Opera, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, National Lyric Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, Opera Columbus, Toledo Opera, Opera Carolina, Hawaii Opera Theater, New Jersey State Opera, Palm Beach Opera, Long Beach Opera, Worcester Chorus and Masterwork Chorus to name a few. She is a native of Ohio where she began her music studies at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and also where she holds a Bachelor of Music in Music Education and Master of Music Degree in Vocal Performance.

Phil Clifford (Production Manager) has worked extensively in the live concert industry as a production manager and has toured the United States as an audio engineer for many artists and productions. He has worked directly with such artists as Aretha Franklin, Béla Fleck, Todd Rundgren and many others. At the Cali School, Phil manages day-to-day operations, directly oversees all concert and recital activities, and teaches courses for the recording arts and production degree program.

Kaye Voyce (Scenic & Costume Designer) Ms. Voyce is a New York City based designer for theatre, opera, dance and film. Opera work includes the world premieres of "Stranger

Love" (LA Philharmonic) and "The Listeners" (Den Norske Opera), "Bluebeard's Castle" (Des Moines Metro Opera), "The Merry Widow" (Wuppertal Oper), the world premiere of Philip Glass' chamber opera "Mud/Drowning", "Ellen West" (world premiere, Saratoga Opera and Prototype Festival) "La Fanciulla del West" (National Centre for the Performing Arts, Beijing) "Il Turco in Italia" (Festival d'Aix en Provence, Opera Dijon, Teatro Regio Torino, Teatr Wielki), "Le Roi Arthus" and "The Wreckers" (Bard Summerscape), many productions for Spoleto Festival USA ("L'Île du Merlin", "Luisa Miller", "Kepler", "Louise" and "Amistad"), the Glimmerglass Festival ("Bluebeard", Philip Glass' "Orphée", "The Consul", "The Magic Flute"), New York City Opera ("A Quiet Place") and Opera Theater of St. Louis ("Susannah", Dialogues of the Carmelites" and "La Traviata"). In theater, she has worked on Broadway (most recently "Sea Wall/A Life" with Jake Gyllenhaal and Tom Sturridge, "True West" with Ethan Hawke and Paul Dano, and "The Real Thing" with Ewan McGregor and Maggie Gyllenhaal). She has worked Off-Broadway (most recently on Sarah Silverman's musical "The Bedwetter"), theaters across America, for venues in Europe including the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Festival d'Automne à Paris.

Sangmin Chae (Projections Designer) is a creative technologist at CultureHub and a media artist with extensive knowledge of designing and building video systems for media and performance. In collaboration with the CultureHub team, Sangmin has created telepresence systems for multi-location productions including *Vital Signs*, *Changing Tides*, and *Weather*, and has developed video design and video systems for productions such as *Hi-Fi | Wi-Fi | Sci-Fi* and *Panorama*, which was part of the Public's Under The Radar Festival at La MaMa where it received The New York Times Critics Pick. He has collaborated with opera director Malena Dayen

since 2019 and created video and interactive projections for numerous productions, including *Don Giovanni*, *Aida*, *María de Buenos Aires* and *Carmen*. He designed the video for *The Late Walk*, a new opera in collaboration with Bare Opera and the Decameron Opera Coalition that has been inducted into The Library of Congress's Performing Arts COVID-19 Response Collection. Sangmin is a graduate of Seoul Institute of the Arts where he studied broadcasting. He earned his MFA in the Performance and Interactive Media Arts program at CUNY Brooklyn College.

Benjamin Weill (Lighting Designer) is an NYC-based lighting designer. He has received the BroadwayWorld-New Jersey award for Best Lighting Design of a Musical. He is back for his eighth year designing the Cali School Opera. Benjamin is the resident lighting designer for the New York Gilbert and Sullivan Players and has designed touring and sit-down shows on both coasts including: *Trainspotting Live*, *The Mikado*, *They're Playing Our Song*, *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Monty Python's SPAMALOT*, *HMS Pinafore*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Les Misérables*, *Ruddigore*, *South Pacific*, *Charlie Brown*, *Songs for a New World*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Into the Woods*, *Book of Days* and *The Crucible*. www.benjaminweilldesign.com

Brie Guillen (Production Stage Manager) is a senior at MSU as a design, technology and management major and is excited to be working on her final production at MSU. She has previously worked on *Anna in the Tropics* (2023) and *Dancemakers* (2023) as a Production Stage Manager. She has also worked on other productions like *Elephant's Graveyard* (2023), *Pippin* (2022), and *Curious Incident* (2022) as an Assistant Stage Manager.

Samara Lee (Assistant Stage Manager) is a sophomore at Montclair State University majoring in design, technology and management. She's delighted to be working

on her fourth production at the Alexander Kasser Theater. Her previous works as an Assistant Stage Manager have been *Anna in the Tropics* (2023), *Elephant's Graveyard* (2023), and *Black Snow* (2022). She would like to give thanks to Brie Guillen and Malena Dayen for all their hard work and dedication in this production!

LeAnn Overton (Surtitled Caller) is a vital member of Montclair State's adjunct faculty, where she has served as music director, vocal coach and lecturer. Ms. Overton is also on the faculty of the Manhattan School of Music. In addition to her recital and opera role coaching, she was also music director for the Amato Opera in Brief Educational Outreach. She continues her work as music director for the MSM Precollege. In 2014, Ms. Overton founded the summer intensive program *Respiro Opera*, NYC which focuses on the tenets of Alexander Technique, Body Mapping and Yoga for singers. Other institutions where Ms. Overton has worked: Vocal Arts Festival in Colorado, Metropolitan Opera Guild Educational Outreach, Oberlin in Italy, *Lingua e Canto* Summer program in Italy. She has been a title caller at the Metropolitan Opera since 2000.

CAST

Omar Abdallah (*Thierry/Jailer*) is currently a music education major working toward his bachelor's and master's degrees, along with a certification to teach students with disabilities. Omar has been a part of the opera program at MSU for the past two years, having been involved in *Gianni Schicci/Buoso's Ghost* and the Spring Opera Scenes program. With all of his time here at Montclair, Omar hopes to attain the skills to foster a community of expression and freedom through the art of singing and creating music. "Thank you very much to my teachers and coaches along this journey so far. And especially thank you to my loving, supportive family. I hope you enjoy this wonderful production!"

Eliza Arnone (*Carmélite Ensemble*), soprano, is a fifth-year senior music education major with a primary focus in voice. Eliza studies with eminent Italian American soprano Maria Natale and is set to graduate this upcoming spring. Arnone's future goals are to obtain her master's degree in vocal performance and have a career as a professional soprano soloist. This is Arnone's first-ever opera performance, and she is elated to bring her character Sister Catherine to life on stage. Eliza would like to thank Malena and both casts for welcoming her with open arms throughout this musical process. She highly anticipates that you will enjoy both performances of Poulenc's historic and poignant opera.

Rashaun Ashley (*Second Officer*), baritone, is in the fourth year of his undergraduate vocal performance degree. Rashaun studies with Professor Jeffrey Gall at the Cali School of Music and will graduate this upcoming spring. Some of his recent operatic roles include Buoso's Corpo Morto (Dead Body), in *Gianni Schicchi*/Buoso's Ghost and Dr. Falke in *Die Fledermaus*. He hopes that you have a wonderful time at the show.

Lisa Bremer (*Carmélite Ensemble/Madame de Croissy cover*) graduated from MSU in 2022 with her Master's in Vocal Performance. As a performer, Lisa has sung roles such as Sorceress and Dido in *Dido and Aeneas*, Madame Flora in *The Medium*, Third Lady/Knabe in *Die Zauberflöte*, and Tisbe in *La Cenerentola*. She is involved with the Light Opera of New Jersey's Savory Faire, which is a touring group that performs Gilbert and Sullivan classics. Outside of performing, Lisa is the Operations and Finance Manager for UIA Talent Agency.

Abby Brodnick (*Sœur Constance*), soprano, is in the second year of her Master of Music degree at the Cali School, studying with Professor Beth Roberts. She is the winner

of the 2023 Camille Coloratura Awards Student Division and a Study Grant Artist of the Savannah Voice Festival. Abby recently debuted the *Carmina Burana* soprano solos at the Cali Choral Masterworks concert. This summer, she will sing Eurydice in Offenbach's *Orphée aux enfers* and Rapunzel in Sondheim's *Into the Woods* as a Resident Artist with Opera North. Abby earned her Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance with a musical theater minor at DePauw University.

Ho jung Choi (*Chevalier de la Force*), tenor, is in the first year of his Vocal Performance A.D. He studies with Professor Beth Roberts at the Cali School of Music. Some of his recent performances include Ferrando in *Così fan tutte* and a soloist in the *Messiah*, the *Coronation Mass* and *Gloria*. Welcome to the opera!

Hyunjung Choi (*Mère Jeanne*), soprano, is in the first year of her Vocal Performance A.D. Hyunjung studies with Dr. Lori McCann at the Cali School of Music and graduated from the Mannes School of Music. Some of her recent operatic roles include Laoula in *L'étoile* and Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*. She won a scholarship to SongFest 2023, and she is interested in not only opera but also art song.

Inhye Choi (*Mère Marie de l'Incarnation*), mezzo-soprano, is in the second year of her Vocal Performance A.D. and studies with Professor Beth Roberts. Some of her recent operatic roles include Zita in *Gianni Schicchi*/Buoso's Ghost, Mercedes in *Carmen* and Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro*.

Barbara Dever (*Madame de Croissy*) has been acknowledged as one of the outstanding, internationally acclaimed dramatic mezzo-sopranos of her generation.

Barbara Dever has sung Dalila opposite Plácido Domingo's *Samson* in Mexico City and Amneris for the grand re-opening of the Teatro Massimo in Palermo, Italy. Over 24 seasons

with the Metropolitan Opera, she has sung as Eboli (*Don Carlo*), Azucena (*Il trovatore*), Amneris (*Aida*), Ulrica (*Un ballo in maschera*) and Herodias (*Salome*). She sang with Luciano Pavarotti at the Met and appeared with him on *Pavarotti Plus, Great Performances at Lincoln Center*. Highlights of orchestral performances include Handel's *Messiah* and Verdi's *Requiem* with Zubin Mehta and the Israel Philharmonic, Mahler's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* with the Louisville Orchestra, and the National Orchestra of Mexico. She made her debut with the Canadian Opera Company as Filipjevna in *Eugene Onegin* and Geneviève in *Pelléas et Mélisande*. Ms. Dever received critical acclaim for the role of Baba in *The Medium* with the Spoleto Festival. Recordings: Amneris in *Aida* (Naxos), Azucena in *Il trovatore* (Fone live from Parma) and Adalgisa in *Norma* (Teatro Bellini in Catania), and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony under the baton of Seiji Ozawa (Phillips). She has been recently heard in concerts with The Palisades Virtuosi Trio and The Orpheus Men's Chorus. She was heard in the premiere of Joseph Turin's "And crimson roses once again be fair" with the New Washington Orchestra and Music Viva.

Most recent performances include the Mother Abbess in *The Sound of Music* with the Broadway Theatre in Pitman, NJ where she resides with her husband, Dr. Jack Dever.

Ms. Dever is an active composer of liturgical music for Sacred Heart Parish in Camden, NJ. She has been music and liturgy director at Sacred Heart for 40 years. She was raised in Camden, NJ. She graduated from Camden Catholic High School, where she is a member of their Hall of Fame.

Ms. Dever is the Director of the Young Artists Program at Northern Lights Music Festival in Minnesota.

Ms. Dever is currently a Distinguished Artist Voice Faculty member at Montclair State University. She received an honorary doctorate degree from Rowan University in 2009.

Runyu Feng (*Carmélite Ensemble*), from Hangzhou, China, is in the second year of her master's program at the Cali School for classical vocal performance. She is studying with Professor Beth Roberts. She loves singing and dancing, and is developing her Artist Vision Project "Illuminating Beauty" by combining dance and singing. Runyu Feng is thrilled to join this opera production.

Jenna Ferrera (*Carmélite Ensemble*) is in her first year of pursuing a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance at Montclair State University. She studies with Dr. Lori McCann at the John J. Cali School of Music. She is thrilled to be a part of the Cali School's production of *Dialogues des Carmélites* and hopes you enjoy the show!

Marcello Fois (*Second Officer*), a basso, is a second year in the music education program. He is a student under Professor Jeffery Gall at the Cali School of Music. Some recent roles of his include Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Inspector Javert in *Les Misérables*. He'd like to wish all the best to his fellow cast and crew and hopes you enjoy the show.

Sonia Fortezza (*Sœur Mathilde/Sœur Constance cover*), an Italian-American soprano, was born and raised in New York City where she currently resides. Ms. Fortezza made her debut at Merkin Hall alongside the Pulitzer Prize and two-time Grammy-winning composer Caroline Shaw, performing Shaw's "Aurora Borealis" (2023). She is a recent winner of the 2023-2024 Angela Lastrico Raish Scholarship through the Abruzzo Molise Heritage Society. She currently studies under the tutelage of Professor Beth Roberts and will graduate this spring with a master's degree in vocal performance from Montclair State University.

Olivia Gasper (*Sœur Mathilde/Mère Marie de l'Incarnation cover*) is a versatile soprano whose charm and charisma shine in anything

from opera and musical theatre to pop and rock. Some of her recent operatic roles include La Ciesca in *Gianni Schicchi*/Buoso's Ghost, Mrs. Nolan in *The Medium*, and Cendrillon in Pauline Viardot's *Cendrillon*. Olivia is in the second year of her Vocal Performance M.M. and studies with Professor Beth Roberts. Outside of performance, Olivia works as the graduate assistant for Montclair State University's Opera Program. After she graduates in the spring she plans to begin work as a full-time arts administrator.

Gabrielle Guida (*Mere Marie de l'Incarnation*) is a fourth-year undergraduate vocal performance major. Gabrielle is extensively involved in a variety of Cali School of Music ensembles, including Chorale, University Singers, Vocal Accord, Mainstage Opera, and Opera Workshop. This year, she is privileged to serve as the University Singers' Alto Section Leader. Previous performances include Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Maestro Spinelloccio, Il notaio and The Magistrate in *Gianni Schicchi* and *Buoso's Ghost*, as well as Jo March in scenes from *Little Women*, directed by Karen Driscoll. Gabrielle is deeply grateful for the extensive solo, ensemble, and leadership opportunities afforded to her by the Cali School of Music faculty, who have mentored, inspired, and supported her on her vocal journey.

Maya Henry (*Mere Jeanne*), soprano, is in the first year of her Vocal Performance M.M., studying with Karen Driscoll at the Cali School of Music. Some of her recent operatic roles include Laurentia in Dan Shore's *The Beautiful Bridegroom* and the Second Lady in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. Maya returns to the Kasser stage after receiving her bachelor's degree from MSU in May 2023.

Mitchell Hernandez (*Chaplain/First Officer*), tenor, is originally from Canyon, Texas, where he obtained his Vocal Performance B.M. from West Texas A&M University. Mitchell is

pursuing his Music Composition M.A. from Montclair State University, where he studies composition with Professor Scott Davenport Richards and voice with Dr. Julia Rolwing. Mitchell's recent roles include Monostatos in *The Magic Flute*, Marco in *The Gondoliers*, Gherardo in *Gianni Schicchi*, and Frederic in *The Pirates of Penzance*. Mitchell thanks the Lord for his many blessings, and hopes y'all enjoy the show!

Clara Luz Iranzo (*Blanche de la Force*), a soprano from Puerto Rico, has been a young artist with Houston Grand Opera's YAVA program, Rhodes International Festival, Phoenicia International Festival of The Voice and has performed at the United Nations. Ms. Iranzo has collaborated with the Symphony Orchestra and The Foundation of Zarzuela and Opereta of Puerto Rico. She was the winner of the second annual Cali School of Music Vocal Scholarship Competition and a winner of the Concerto Competition in 2023. Past roles include Lauretta in *Gianni Schicchi*/Buoso's Ghost, Ilia in *Idomeneo*, Zerlina in *Don Giovanni*, and Theresa Álvarez in *The Listeners*, among others. She graduated from Mannes School of Music and is in the second year of her master's degree, studying under the tutelage of Professor Beth Roberts.

So Yeon Kim (*Blanche de la Force*) is a soprano based in New York and is originally from the Republic of Korea. She received a master's degree from the Manhattan School of Music and is now studying with Professor Beth Roberts as an artist diploma student at Montclair State University. Her recent operatic roles include Lauretta (*Gianni Schicchi*), Von Frauenliebe (*The Beautiful Bridegroom*), and Noémie (*Cendrillon*). Also, she recently won the Encouragement Award at The Journal of Music 37th Concours.

Tyler Kriney (*Monsieur Javelinot*), baritone, is a freshman getting his Vocal Performance B.M. Tyler studies with Peter Stewart at the

Cali School of Music. Tyler plans to become a professional opera singer after graduation. He is very excited to share his first opera performance with the audience.

Emma Mason (*Carmélite Ensemble*) is a junior in the vocal performance program. She studies with Dr. Lori McCann. She recently performed as the principal dancer and a soloist in Cali Opera's *The Ghosts of Gatsby*.

Natasha McFarland Rhoads (*Carmélite Ensemble*) is a soprano from the Philadelphia suburbs. She's earning her master's degree at Montclair State University and studies with Barbara Dever. She most recently performed as an ensemble member and soloist in *The Ghosts of Gatsby* by Evan Mack.

Deiniol McGovern (*Marquis de la Force*), baritone, is in the second year of his master's in vocal performance degree, studying with Professor Beth Roberts. Deiniol recently performed with Cali Opera as F. Scott Fitzgerald in Evan Mack's *The Ghosts of Gatsby*. He is very excited to sing today.

Hanbyeol Min (*Sœur Constance*) is a lyric coloratura soprano from Seoul, South Korea. She is a first-year artist diploma student and studies with Professor Beth Roberts at the John J. Cali School of Music. She graduated with a Master of Music degree from the Manhattan School of Music under the instruction of tenor Neil Rosenshein. She also graduated with a bachelor's degree from Seoul National University in South Korea under the instruction of soprano Hana Park. Some of her operatic roles include Despina in *Così fan tutte*, Ophelia in *Hamlet*, and Erste Dame in *Die Zauberflöte*. Concert soloist credits include Vivaldi's *Gloria*, Mozart's *Coronation Mass*, Handel's *Messiah* and Gounod's *Messe Solennelle de l'honneur de Sainte Cécile* with the Westchester Korean choral and Bach's *Christen, ätzet diesen Tag* and *Magnificat* with the Chantez a Dieu Choir in Seoul, South Korea.

Churan Qiu (*Carmélite Ensemble*) is a mezzo-soprano from China. Ms. Qiu graduated from the Manhattan School of Music in 2022. In the same year, she began her artist diploma at Montclair State University, studying with Professor Beth Roberts. In the summer of 2023, Ms. Qiu sang in the Florida VOICE Project and performed the role of Komponistin in Strauss's *Adriane auf Naxos* with the Berlin Opera Academy.

Jairo Santana (*Marquis de la Force*), a baritone from Bayamón, Puerto Rico, received his B.A. in Music and Foreign Languages from The University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus. Most recently, he sang the role of F. Scott Fitzgerald in *The Ghosts of Gatsby* and Marco in Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* and Michael Ching's *Buoso's Ghost*. As of fall 2023, Jairo has also taken on conducting studies at the John J. Cali Music School under Kyle Ritenauer, conductor of the Montclair State University Symphony Orchestra. He is currently pursuing an M.M. in Vocal Performance at Montclair State University, studying under Professor Mark Schnaible.

Julio Santiago (*Thierry*), baritone, is in the third year of his undergraduate music education degree. Julio is currently studying with Professor George Spitzer at the Cali School of Music. This is his first time in a mainstage opera, he couldn't be more excited and is anxiously awaiting the next one. He hopes that you enjoy the show!

Eric Šebek (*Chevalier de la Force*), tenor, is in his last year at Montclair State University as a music theatre major. In MSU's Musical Theatre Program, Eric has played Musidorus in *Head Over Heels* as well as The Cat in the Hat in *Seussical*. Last January, he sang the role of Rinuccio in Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* and Michael Ching's hilarious continuation: *Buoso's Ghost*. Over the summer, Eric played the roles of Tamino in *The Magic Flute* and Gastone in *La Traviata* at The Quisisana Resort. He is

thrilled to be a part of the cast of *Dialogues des Carmélites* and hopes you enjoy the performance.

Ben Silvesti (*Jailer*) is a sophomore vocal music education major studying with Professor Jeffrey Gall at the Cali School of Music. He is very excited to be making his opera debut in *Dialogues des Carmélites* and plans to do more opera throughout college and beyond. He would like to thank the cast and team for their endless support throughout this experience!

Thalia Suleymanov (*Carmélite Ensemble*), soprano, is in her junior year of her Vocal Performance B.M. Thalia is studying with Karen Driscoll at the Cali School of Music and will graduate in the spring semester of 2025. Her most recent operatic roles include Cherubino in *The Marriage of Figaro* in Germany and Leonora in *The Beautiful Bridegroom*. Now she is very excited to take part in *Dialogues des Carmélites* as Sister Anne of the Cross!

Helena Waterous (*Madame Lidoine*) is a second-year A.D. student studying with Professor Beth Roberts. She holds an M.M. from Indiana University and a B.M. from SUNY Potsdam's Crane School of Music. Some of her recent credits include Mrs. Grose in *The Turn of the Screw*, Elettra in *Idomeneo*, Poppea and Ottavia in *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, and Eurydice in *Orfeo ed Eurydice*. Her upcoming Cali performances include Senta in *Der Fliegende Holländer* with Cali Opera's Scenes Program and a solo recital. Helena is honored to bring this incredible character and story to life on stage. She would like to thank the entire Cali Opera team as well as her wonderful coaches and teachers!

Jacklynn Wick (*Madame Lidoine*) is a soprano currently in her second year at Montclair State University, pursuing an M.M. in Vocal Performance under the guidance of Professor

Beth Roberts. She made her role debut in 2022 as Madame Kirsten in Dan Shore's opera *The Beautiful Bridegroom*, under director Professor Karen Driscoll. Immersing herself in musical excellence, Jacklynn actively participates in all three curricular choirs at the Cali School and serves as a graduate assistant to Conductor Dr. Heather J. Buchanan.

Doohyun Yoon (*Chaplain/First Officer*), a tenor and voice major, is currently in his second year of the A.D. program and studies under the guidance of Professor Beth Roberts. He began his master's degree at NEC and completed his graduate studies at the Manhattan School of Music. Eager to share the joy of music, he looks forward to presenting enjoyable performances before you all!