The University of Washington Schools of Music and Drama and Public Performing Arts

PRESENT

Dialogues of the Carmelites

BY FRANCIS POULENC
along in a deft mixture of tender melodic spurts, hypnotic use of ostinato and fluidious writing for winds. The orchestration is spare but forceful, often or like in sonority. Poulenc loved the voice and French theatrical and musical traditions. His vocal writing takes its cue from Monteverdi, Mussorgsky and Debussy. It is based on speech patterns, contrasting lyrical arioso (Blanche) with strict declamation (Mme de Croissy).

ACT I

Scene I — The Library of the Marquis de la Force
Scene II — The Parlor of the Carmelite Convent
Scene III — The Workroom of the Convent
Scene IV — The Infirmary

ACT II

Scene I — The Chapel
Interlude I
Scene II — The Chapter Room
Interlude II
Scene III — The Parlor
Scene IV — The Sacristy

ACT III

Scene I — The Chapel
Interlude I
Scene II — The Library of the Marquis de la Force
Interlude II
Scene III — The Conciergerie
Interlude III
Scene IV — Place de la Révolution

CAST

Marquis de la Force.......................................................Brian Kerns
Blanche.............................................................Janeanne Houston
The Chevalier......................................................Jeff Francis
Madame de Croissy..............................................Geraldine Sorrentino
Madame Lidoine..................................................Marjorie Sackett
Mother Marie of the Incarnation..................Kathryn Bishop
Sister Constance...............................................Connie Corrick
Mother Jeanne....................................................Sara Hedgpeth
Sister Mathilde..................................................Marcia Bellamy
Father Confessor..................................................John Hagen
First Commissioner..............................................Paul Anderson
Second Commissioner.................................John Sackman
Thierry...........................................................David Morris
Jailer...............................................................David Morris
Officer.............................................................David Morris
M. Javelinot......................................................John Sackman
Mother Gerald..................................................Regina Hill
Sister Claire....................................................Kay Shirey
Sister Antoine...................................................Laurie Haney
Sister Catherine..............................................Maurity Verburg
Sister Felicity....................................................Pam Mc Keon
Sister Gertrude...............................................Beth Eaton
Sister Alice.......................................................Sheila Burke
Sister Valentine...............................................Bernadette Allred
Sister Anne of the Cross..............................Mari Nelson
Sister Martha...................................................Ann Wopat
Sister St. Charles............................................Anne Bergsma
Universi ty Opera Orchestra Personnel

Violin I
*Benita Lenz
Delphine Frazier
Christine Olason
Beth Chandler
Patricia Chinn
Anthony Bondi
Danielle Franklin
Carol Willis

Violin II
*Barbara Rood
Sandy Wightman
Kim Brown
Stephen Hegg
Kjellrun Hauge
Jamie Keys
Nicholas Yokan
Janet Fogle

Viola
*Michael Watson
Kelly Shanafelt
Ann Schnaidt
Julie Patchamatla
William Goodwin
Greg McKee

Cello
*Andrea Arksey
Lyn Fulkerson
Meg Brennam
Jane Hawkins
Dave Beck
Paige Stockley

Bass
*Virginia Ring
Brian Clark

Flute
*Susan Hallstead
Anne Halpern

Piccolo
Doug Hjelm

Oboe
*Tad Margelli
Susan Swanson

English Horn
Ailene Munger

Clarinet
*Jere Knutsen
Edwin Rodriguez
Mary Kantor

Bass Clarinet
Marvin Western

Bassoon
*Francine Floyd
Eleanor Froelich
Paul Rafanelli

Contra-bassoon
Paul Rafanelli

Horn
*Chuck Karschney
Suzanne Johnson
Jon Picker
Roger Bolstad

Trumpet
*Warren Johnson
Dawn Stremel
Roger Tanner

Trombone
*Rosemary Kiertzner
Greg Powers
Aaron Keyt

Tuba
Ed Phillips

**denotes concert mistress

*denotes principal

Timpani
David Dunbar

Percussion
Robin Jansen
Matthew Beckmeyer

Harp
*Deette Puckett
Naomi Kato

Piano
Rose Mauro

Librarian
Rose Mauro

DIALOGUES OF THE CARMELITES

The Story

France 1789. Revolution threatens. In his library the Marquis de la Force talks worriedly with his son, the Chevalier, about Blanche, his nervous and impressionable daughter, who is unable to overcome her fear of life. She suddenly appears, frightened by hostile crowds that surrounded her carriage. After retiring, Blanche returns, terrified by a servant's shadow, and announces her intention of becoming a nun.

Several weeks later, at the Carmelite convent at Compiegne, Blanche comes for an interview with the prioress, Mme de Croissy, a woman debilitated by fatal illness. Gently but firmly the prioress makes it clear to Blanche that the convent is a house of prayer, not a refuge in which heroism is facilitated: it will test her weaknesses, not her strengths.

While doing their chores in the convent workroom, Blanche and Constance, a lively novice, discuss death. Constance believes she will die young and that Blanche will die with her. Blanche responds angrily, accusing Constance of evil thoughts.

In the convent infirmary, the prioress lies on her deathbed. Her struggle to appear calm slowly fails as the anxiety of her condition overtakes her: years of meditating on death have not made the actuality less frightening. Mother Marie accepts charge of Blanche from the prioress, who advises firmness, judgment and character--qualities she says Blanche lacks. When Blanche comes, the prioress tells the girl of her special concern for her as the newest member of their order. Saying farewell, she offers her own death to avert the dangers facing Blanche. A physician comes and goes. The prioress grows delirious, relating a fitful vision of their convent desecrated. In a last attempt to confess her fear of death, she falls back lifeless. Blanche kneels sobbing.

In the chapel, where the prioress lies in state, Blanche and Constance intone a Requiem. When Constance leaves, Blanche attempts a prayer but flees in fear. She is stopped by Mother Marie, who gently rebukes but reassures her.
Constance explains to Blanche that the prioress died another person's death, that her death was too ugly and hard for her. Someone else, she says, will be surprised to find death so easy.

In the chapter room, the ceremony of obedience to the new prioress is coming to an end. Mme. Lidoine, who has been appointed, addresses the sisters, counseling patience and humility, warning of the temptation of easy martyrdom. Mother Marie leads the prayer.

The Chevalier visits Blanche before escaping abroad, asking that she return and stand by their father, now alone. Blanche brusquely refuses, explaining that her highest duty is to the convent that has changed her life. Later, Blanche regrets her outburst, but Mother Marie reassures her that the motive behind her pride will give her the strength.

Autumn 1792. The Chaplain, banned by the revolutionaries from his clerical duties, performs a last mass in the sacristy: the sisters sing an "Ave Verum Corpus." Mme. Lidoine replies that martyrs are chosen only by God's will. An angry revolutionary mob storms the convent, and a Commissioner reads a decree evicting and dissolving the order. Shaken by the shouts of the crowd, Blanche drops and breaks her figure of the Christ child.

In the new prioress' absence, Mother Marie again suggests the Carmelites take a vow of martyrdom. A secret vote reveals one dissenter. Though the sisters suspect Blanche, Constance confesses and reverses her decision, taking the vow with Blanche, who then runs off.

Working as a servant in the Marquis' ruined library, Blanche is sought out by Mother Marie in civilian dress. The older woman urges her to return to the order, but Blanche insists on staying where she will be safer, revealing that her father has been guillotined.

DIRECTION AND DESIGN STAFF

Conductor.................................................Stanley Chapple
Stage Director.............................................Robert Desimone
Set Designer..............................................Robert Dahlstrom
Costume Designer.........................................James Crider
Lighting Designer.........................................Richard Devin
Musical Preparation and Accompanist..................Glenda Williams
Chorus Director..........................................Dennis Coleman
Stage Manager............................................Dennis Coleman
Assistant Stage Manager................................Nancy Hautala
Technical Director........................................Alfred Nelson
Property Master..........................................Alex Danilchik
Master Electrician.......................................Steve Deibert
Board Operator..........................................Steve Deibert
General Manager of Production..........................Richard Devin