

**For Immediate Release:
The University of Arizona Fred Fox School of Music
Friday, March 24, 2017**

What

UA Opera Theater with the Arizona Symphony Orchestra: "Dialogues of the Carmelites" by Francis Poulenc

When

Friday, April 7, 2017 at 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, April 9, 2017 at 3:00 p.m.

Where

Crowder Hall, UA Fred Fox School of Music, southeast corner of Park and Speedway

Cost

\$20 general admission, \$15 UA employees and seniors 55+, \$10 students

Contacts

Media: Ingvi Kallen, 520-626-6320, ingvi@email.arizona.edu
Mindi Acosta, 520-626-9227, mindiacosta@email.arizona.edu
Public: Box Office 520-621-1162
Online ticket sales: tickets.arizona.edu

Photos

Available upon request

Related Website

music.arizona.edu
Facebook: University of Arizona Fred Fox School of Music

The University of Arizona Opera Theater presents "Dialogues of the Carmelites" by Francis Poulenc on Friday, April 7, 2017 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, April 9, 2017 at 3:00 p.m.

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963) based his dramatic opera on the story of the Martyrs of Compiègne, Carmelite nuns who were sent to the guillotine during the Reign of Terror in the final days of the French Revolution. In this provocative 20th century opera, the composer vividly depicts these prisoners of conscience, devoted to God and their monastic order, with rich harmonies, poignant lyrics and colorful orchestration. The opera will be presented in English with supertitles.

Mary Duncan is the guest stage director and Thomas Cockrell, music director, will conduct the Arizona Symphony Orchestra. Sets are designed by Sally Day and costumes are created by Christopher Allen.

Cast:

The Marquis de la Force: Antonio Cruz
Blanche: Abigail Hart (Friday) & Ariana Iñiguez (Sunday)
The Chevalier de la Force: Kyle DeGraff
Madame de Croissy, The Prioress: Piper Pack-Smith
Madame Lidoine, the new Prioress: Clara Salomon (Friday) & Soleil Oliva (Sunday)

Mother Marie: Samantha Luna
Sister Constance: Samantha Hornback (Friday) & Michelle Perrier (Sunday)
Mother Jeanne: Athena Beebe
Sister Mathilde: Matthew Alexander
The Father Confessor: Joseph Gouge
First Officer: Dan Marino
Second Officer: Simon Faddoul
Third Officer: Juan Flores
The Jailer: Mark Hockenberry
Thierry, a servant: David Ingram
M. Javelinot: Javier Molina

Mary Duncan, guest stage director

Mary Duncan's direction has been described as "inventive" and "an exciting fusion of ensemble acting, fluid staging and established singing talent" by the New York Times and Opera News. For the Kennedy Center Mozart Festival, she directed "The Impresario," "Bastien und Bastienne," and "La Clemenza di Tito" with the National Symphony Orchestra, Sir Christopher Hogwood - conductor. Other productions include Brooklyn Academy of Music "The Rape of Lucretia" and "Amahl and the Night Visitors," Berkshire Opera, (associate artistic director) where she directed numerous productions including the premiere of Stephen Paulus' "Summer," "The Consul," (recorded by Newport Classic) "The Rake's Progress," "The Turn of the Screw," "Susannah," and "La Cenerentola." Ms. Duncan directed American premieres of "La Jolie Fille de Perth," and "Maskarade" (in Danish) with Sarasota Opera. Her production of "The Magic Flute," with designs by Eric Carle aired on PBS New England.

Over a long association with The Aspen Music Festival, Ms. Duncan has directed "The Marriage of Figaro," "The Seven Deadly Sins," Cole Porter: "Let's Misbehave," "Comedy on the Bridge," "Renard, and Noye's Fludde." In addition to Aspen, faculty positions include The Juilliard School, where she choreographed "Vanessa and The Mighty Casey," and as guest faculty at The Shepherd School of Music, Rice University where she also directed "Our Town." Ms. Duncan is a graduate of The Juilliard School and studied at Harvard's A.R.T. where she interned with Robert Brustein.

Thomas Cockrell, music director and conductor

Dr. Thomas Cockrell has served as the Nelson Riddle Endowed Chair in Music, director of orchestral activities and music director of the UA Opera Theater at the University of Arizona since 2000. Cockrell is equally at home on the symphonic podium and in the opera pit, working with professionals or student musicians. In 2010 he was appointed artistic director of Opera in the Ozarks, which he had previously served as music director from 2003 to 2005. He has conducted the professional symphony orchestras of Dallas, Cincinnati, Phoenix, Tucson, Louisville and Boulder, as well as several in Romania, Italy, Mexico and South Korea. Operatic credits include productions for Dayton Opera, Opera Colorado, Opera Theatre of the Rockies and Washington D.C.'s Summer Opera Theatre. He served as the associate conductor of Cincinnati Opera, Opera Colorado, The Colorado Symphony Orchestra and the Spoleto Festivals and music director of Denver Young Artists Orchestra. He was a member of the conducting faculty of the Interlochen Arts Camp from 2006 to 2008. Cockrell frequently is the conductor and clinician for regional and all state music festivals. In 2008 he was the conducting master teacher for the College Orchestra Directors Association national conference and is increasingly sought after for conducting master courses in the USA, Mexico, Asia and Europe.

Before coming to the University of Arizona, Cockrell was on the faculty of the University of California, Irvine and the State University of New York at Purchase. He has been a visiting professor at the National Academy of Music in Bucharest, Romania and a faculty artist at the Academie Internationale de Musique, Chateau de Rangiport.

Cockrell earned his Doctor of Musical Arts and Master of Music degrees from the State University of New York at Stony Brook and a Bachelor of Arts from Yale University. He studied conducting with Franco Ferrara in Rome and at Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Siena, Italy. Additionally, he was an Aspen Conducting Fellow and completed advanced training at the Conservatoire Americain in Fontainebleau, France and the Tanglewood Music Center, where he worked with Gustav Meier, Leonard Bernstein and Seiji Ozawa.

Synopsis

(From the Metropolitan Opera, metopera.org)

Paris, April 1789 to July 1794

Act I

The first signs of the French Revolution are beginning to shake the country. The Marquis de la Force and his son, the Chevalier, are worried about Blanche, the Chevalier's fearful, nervous sister, whose carriage has been held up by a mob on her way home. When Blanche arrives she makes light of the incident, but her anxiety is revealed when a servant's shadow frightens her as she leaves the room. Shaken, she returns to tell her father that she has made up her mind to become a nun.

Weeks later at the Carmelite convent in Compiègne, Blanche is interviewed by Madame de Croissy, the aged and ailing prioress, who makes it clear to Blanche that the convent is a house of prayer, not a refuge. The prioress is touched by Blanche's resolve to embrace her new life.

Blanche and young Sister Constance discuss their fear of death, which Constance claims to have overcome. Blanche admits her envy of her companion's straightforward and easygoing nature. Constance shocks Blanche by telling her that she knows they will both die young and on the same day.

Madame de Croissy is lying on her deathbed, struggling to appear calm. She blesses Blanche and consigns her, as the youngest member of the order, to the care of the loyal mother Marie. The prioress confesses her fear in the hour of death, then falls lifeless.

Act II

That night in the chapel, Constance and Blanche keep vigil by the prioress's bier. Blanche is overcome by fear and about to run off, when mother Marie appears. Realizing that Blanche is genuinely afraid she tries to calm her.

Constance hopes that mother Marie will be the new prioress. She tells Blanche that she wonders why a god-fearing person like Madame de Croissy had to die such an agonizing death. Perhaps, she says, people don't die for themselves but for others. Someone else will be surprised one day to find death easy.

Madame Lidoine has been appointed the new prioress. In the chapter room, she addresses the convent, counseling patience and humility. A visitor is announced—it is the Chevalier, Blanche's brother, who is

about to flee the country. He urges Blanche to leave the convent and return to their father. Blanche replies that her duty is to her sisters.

In the sacristy, the chaplain, forbidden to perform his duties, celebrates his last mass. The nuns discuss the fear that has grabbed the country and mother Marie wonders if self-sacrifice will be their destiny. Madame Lidoine reminds them that martyrs are not chosen by their own will, only by God's. Knocking is heard and the sounds of an angry crowd. Two Commissioners enter and tell the sisters that they have been expelled from the convent. One of them, speaking quietly to mother Marie, adds he will do what he can to help them get away safely. One of the sisters gives Blanche a figurine of the Christ Child. When revolutionary cries are heard from outside, Blanche nervously drops the figure, breaking it. She is horrified by this omen.

Act III

In the devastated chapel, mother Marie suggests in Madame Lidoine's absence that they all take a vow of martyrdom by unanimous decision. Noting Blanche's reaction, the others suspect she will vote against it. When the secret ballot reveals one dissenter, Constance claims it was she and asks to reverse her vote so the vow can proceed. Blanche, afraid to live or to die, runs away. The sisters are led from the convent.

Blanche is forced to work as a servant in the ransacked mansion of her father, who has been sent to the guillotine. mother Marie finds her there to take her back to the sisters. On the streets, Blanche learns that the nuns have been arrested.

At the Conciergerie prison, Madame Lidoine joins the sisters in their vow of martyrdom. Constance says that she has dreamed of Blanche's return. A jailer enters and reads the death sentence. Madame Lidoine blesses the sisters. When mother Marie learns from the chaplain that the nuns will die, she resolves to join them, but the chaplain reminds her that it is for God to decide whether or not she will be a martyr.

A crowd has gathered on the Place de la Révolution. The Carmelites walk towards the guillotine, led by Madame Lidoine and singing the Salve Regina. With each stroke of the blade, their voices are cut off one by one, finally leaving only Constance. On her way to the scaffold, she sees Blanche step up from the crowd, take up the chant, and follow her to her death.

###