

LEON WILSON CLARK
OPERA SERIES

SHEPHERD SCHOOL OPERA

presents

**DIALOGUES
OF THE
CARMELITES**

*An opera in three acts by Francis Poulenc
adapted from the play by Georges Bernanos
in the English translation by Joseph Machlis.*

Krešimir Dolenčić, guest director

Jo Anne Ritacca, musical preparation and pianist

Matt Coldwell, set and lighting designer

Reba Kochersperger, costume designer

November 21, 23, 24, and 26, 1996

7:30 p.m.

Wortham Opera Theatre

RICE UNIVERSITY

the
Shepherd
School
of Music

CASTS

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21 SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24

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|--|------------------------|
| <i>Le Marquis de la Force</i> | Raymond Granlund |
| <i>Blanche, his daughter</i> | Susan Hurley |
| <i>Le Chevalier, his son</i> | Creighton Rumph |
| <i>Madame Croissy, Prioress of the Convent</i> | Courtney Daniell-Knapp |
| <i>Madame Lidoine, the new Prioress</i> | Maya Chalich |
| <i>Mother Marie de L'incarnation</i> | Narelle Yeo |
| <i>Sister Constance de Saint Denis</i> | Laura Coker |
| <i>Mother Jeanne</i> | Stephanie Gruver |
| <i>Sister Mathilde</i> | Michelle Herbert |
| <i>Father Confessor</i> | Christopher Holloway |
| <i>1st Commissioner</i> | Daniel Wampler |
| <i>Thierry/2nd Commissioner/Jailer</i> | Jameson James |
| <i>1st Officer</i> | Brandon McReynolds |
| <i>2nd Officer</i> | Brandon Gibson |
| <i>Sister Claire</i> | Elizabeth Holloway |
| <i>Sister Antoine</i> | Kristin Sampson |
| <i>Sister Catherine</i> | Kelley Mack |
| <i>Sister Felicity</i> | Rebecca Morris |
| <i>Sister Gertrude</i> | Cassandra White |
| <i>Sister Alice</i> | Sibel Demirmen |
| <i>Sister Valentine</i> | Dawn Bennett |
| <i>Sister Ann of the Cross</i> | Leslie Heal |
| <i>Sister Martha</i> | Kristin Nelson |
| <i>Sister St. Charles</i> | Kristen Sharpley |

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 23 TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 26

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|--|----------------------|
| <i>Le Marquis de la Force</i> | Philip Bouknight |
| <i>Blanche, his daughter</i> | Kimberly Gratland |
| <i>Le Chevalier, his son</i> | Zachary Bruton |
| <i>Madame Croissy, Prioress of the Convent</i> | Kirsten Haimila |
| <i>Madame Lidoine, the new Prioress</i> | Laura D'Angelo |
| <i>Mother Marie de L'incarnation</i> | Mary Cowart |
| <i>Sister Constance de Saint Denis</i> | Anna Christy |
| <i>Mother Jeanne</i> | Stephanie Gruver |
| <i>Sister Mathilde</i> | Michelle Herbert |
| <i>Father Confessor</i> | Christopher Holloway |
| <i>1st Commissioner</i> | Daniel Wampler |
| <i>Thierry/2nd Commissioner/Jailer</i> | Jameson James |
| <i>1st Officer</i> | Brandon McReynolds |
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| <i>Sister Martha</i> | Kristin Nelson |
| <i>Sister St. Charles</i> | Kristen Sharpley |

Dialogues of the Carmelites

by Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

The libretto is taken from the play "Dialogues des Carmelites" by Georges Bernanos, which was inspired by Gertrud von le Fort's novella "The Song at the Scaffold" and a film scenario by Philippe Agostini and The Reverend Robert Bruckberger.

ACT I

Scene 1 - The Library of the Marquis de la Force

Scene 2 - The Parlor of the Carmelites Convent

Scene 3 - The Workroom of the Convent

Scene 4 - The Infirmary

INTERMISSION

(10 minutes)

ACT II

Scene 1 - The Chapel

INTERLUDE 1

Scene 2 - The Chapter Room

INTERLUDE 2

Scene 3 - The Parlor

Scene 4 - The Sacristy

ACT III

Scene 1 - The Chapel

INTERMISSION

(10 minutes)

INTERLUDE 1

Scene 2 - The Library of the Marquis de la Force

Scene 3 - The Conciergerie

INTERLUDE 2

Scene 4 - Place de la Révolution

This production is made possible by a generous
endowment from the late Dr. Leon Wilson Clark.

ARTISTIC AND PRODUCTION STAFF

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|---|---|
| Director | Krešimir Dolenčić |
| Musical Preparation and Pianist | Jo Anne Ritacca |
| Set and Lighting Designer | Matt Coldwell |
| Technical Director | Matt Coldwell |
| Choreographer | Debra Dickinson |
| Costume Designer | Reba Kochersperger |
| Production/Stage Manager | Alex Stutler |
| Sound Designer | Patrick Clark |
| Assistant Stage Managers | Mary Cowart, Zachary Bruton Narelle Yeo, Creighton Rumph |
| Assistant Rehearsal Accompanist | Michael Cook |

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The entire cast and musical staff are indebted to conductors Scott O'Neil and Alastair Willis for their time and invaluable assistance throughout the rehearsal process.

Special thanks to The Alley Theatre; Houston Grand Opera; Kingwood College - Fine Arts Department; Opera in the Heights; members of the University of Houston Drama Department: Sidney Berger, Drew Hoovler, Jonathan Middents, and Kristine Selenjes; Allene Butler; Nancy and Constantine Kritikos; John Villarreal; Kriste L. Sharp; Matthew Pittman; and the students of the Shepherd School Opera Workshop.

In particular, we would like to thank the Convent of Carmel in Brezovica, Croatia, for their spiritual support, and the French Gallery of Houston for their gracious donation of the French antique reproduction furniture.

This production is made possible by arrangement with Hendon Music, Inc., a Boosey & Hawkes company, sole agent in the U.S. for Casa Ricordi-BMG Ricordi S.p.A., Milan, Italy, publisher and copyright owner.

SHEPHERD SCHOOL VOICE DEPARTMENT AND OPERA STUDIES FACULTY

*Virginia Babikian, Professor of Voice and Chair of the Voice Department
Richard Bado, Artist Teacher of Opera Studies
Janet de Chambrier, Vocal Coach - Accompanist
Debra Dickinson, Artist Teacher of Opera Studies for Acting and Movement
Joyce Farwell, Professor of Voice
Thomas Jaber, Associate Professor of Music, Director of
Choral Activities, and Vocal Coach
William Murray, Associate Professor of Voice
Jo Anne Ritacca, Vocal Coach - Accompanist*

SYNOPSIS

ACT I

SCENE 1: (Paris, April 1789) The Chevalier de la Force confronts his father, Marquis de la Force, concerned about his sister Blanche, whose carriage was caught in a street riot on the outskirts of Paris. Blanche is fearful and overly timid, and her father and brother worry about the effect this shock will have on her emotional state. Blanche appears unharmed, but exhausted and nervous. After being frightened by a mere shadow in her room, she announces that she intends to enter the Carmelite convent at Compiègne as a refuge from the daily ordeal of life.

SCENE 2: (Several weeks later) Blanche requests entry into the convent at Compiègne. The Prioress, Madame de Croissy, warns Blanche against considering the convent a refuge and reiterates the Order's first purpose—prayer. Blanche tells the Prioress that, if she is accepted, she wishes to be known as Sister Blanche of the Agony of Christ.

SCENE 3: Blanche, now a novice, is working with another young nun, Constance de Saint Denis. Blanche scolds Constance for her good humor because the Prioress is very ill. Blanche strongly rejects Constance's suggestion that they offer their lives for that of the Prioress. Constance tells Blanche that she believes that they will both die young and on the same day.

SCENE 4: The Prioress lies on her deathbed and confides her concern for Blanche to Mother Marie. She feels isolated and fearful, and unprepared for her coming death despite a lifetime of meditation and prayer. As the delirium of death overtakes her, the Prioress cries out against God. In spite of Mother Marie's efforts, Blanche returns to the room and witnesses the Prioress' agonized and fearful death.

ACT II

SCENE 1: At night, Constance and Blanche stand watch by the Prioress' open coffin in the chapel. When Constance leaves, Blanche is uneasy at being left alone with the corpse. When she tries to leave, she takes fright and is met by Mother Marie, who rebukes her and escorts her to her cell.

INTERLUDE 1: In the garden, Constance hopes that Mother Marie will be chosen as the new Prioress. She outlines to Blanche her idea that the Prioress' terrible death was wrongly assigned by God and that someone else less worthy will therefore benefit from her agony with an unexpectedly peaceful and comfortable end.

SCENE 2: The new Prioress, Madame Lidoine, addresses the nuns at her inaugural service. She warns that the days of peace and security are over, but that the nuns should not aspire beyond their humble duty of prayer.

INTERLUDE 2: As the national crisis heightens, the Chevalier calls secretly at the convent to bid farewell to Blanche before leaving the country.

SCENE 3: The Chevalier urges his sister Blanche to leave the convent and return to their father, but she refuses him, claiming to be a daughter of Carmel going to battle in her own way. But as soon as he leaves, her defiance collapses, and she is helped away by Mother Marie.

SCENE 4: The Chaplain of the convent has been forbidden to perform his duties and has conducted his last mass. Caught in the street between the crowd and a patrol of soldiers, he takes temporary refuge in the convent. As he makes a second attempt to leave, the crowd beats against the outer door. Two commissioners announce that the Legislative Assembly has ordered the closure of all religious houses. The nuns must evacuate the Carmel. As the commissioners leave, Mother Jeanne announces the Prioress' departure for Paris. Mother Marie suggests again that the Carmelites still have a role to play—that of martyrs. To comfort Blanche who sits in terror and bewilderment, she hands her a little statue of the child Jesus. A shout from the crowd outside startles Blanche, and she drops the statue, which smashes on the stone floor.

ACT III

SCENE 1: In the absence of the Prioress, Mother Marie assumes command and proposes martyrdom again. After a ballot in which one dissenting vote is cast, Blanche is suspected, but Constance admits responsibility and asks to reverse her decision. The nuns take the vow of martyrdom, and Blanche flees during the confusion.

INTERLUDE 1: The Prioress has returned, and the nuns, dressed in civilian clothes, are forbidden any contact with priests or the practice of their Profession.

SCENE 2: Blanche is in her father's ransacked house. Mother Marie comes to bring her back to safety in Compiègne, but Blanche, paralyzed by fear and feeling unworthy of her father, who has been guillotined, resists.

SCENE 3: The Carmelites have been imprisoned, and the Prioress herself assumes the martyr's vow. Constance feels sure Blanche will return, and the death sentence is announced by the revolutionary tribunal.

INTERLUDE 2: Mother Marie, who has not been arrested, learns of the death sentence from the Chaplain. She feels dishonored and is distraught at the idea of her sisters dying without her, but the Chaplain tells her she should submit to God's will.

*SCENE 4: (July 17, 1794) The nuns, led by the Prioress, go to the scaffold singing the **Salve Regina**. Constance is the last to mount the scaffold, and as she does so, she sees Blanche moving through the crowd calmly and fearlessly to follow her sisters to the guillotine.*

BIOGRAPHIES

*KREŠIMIR DOLENCIĆ, born in 1962 in Zagreb, Croatia, has directed a number of plays including **A Midsummer Night's Dream**, **The Caretaker**, and **The Importance of Being Earnest**, and a number of operas, including **Samson and Dalila**, **Il Trittico**, **The Tales of Hoffmann**, **Così Fan Tutte**, and **Guglielmo Tell**, as well as operettas and musicals at theatres and festivals in Croatia, Slovenia, Germany, and England. In addition, he is the award-winning director of plays and operas from the Croatian cultural heritage. Mr. Dolenčić was honored with the prestigious award "Denis De Rougemont" given by the European Festivals Association, whose membership includes Salzburg, Bayreuth, Edinburgh, and other major festivals. He was invited to direct Henry Purcell's operas **The Indian Queen** in 1994 and **Dioclesian** in 1995 at the Dartington International Summer Festival in England. He began his teaching career at the Music Academy in Zagreb (1988-90), and at the Academy for Theatre, Film, and Television (1990-94) as an acting teacher. Mr. Dolenčić is the general manager and artistic director of Gavella, the largest drama theatre in Croatia. Currently in Houston as a Fulbright scholar, Mr. Dolenčić has been honored with the Danica Hrvatska Award Medal and the "Hrvatski Pleter" award presented to him by the President of the Republic of Croatia for his contribution to Croatian culture.*

Pianist JO ANNE RITACCA has been Assistant Conductor of The Dallas Opera for six years and has prepared productions at the Houston Grand Opera, The Boston Opera, and the Florentine Opera of Milwaukee. In preparation of more than thirty productions, she has worked with such distinguished conductors as Nicola Rescigno, Yuri Simonov, Christoph Eschenbach, Wolfgang Rennert, Borislav Klobucar, and stage directors John Copley, Sir Peter Hall, Dejan Miladinovic, Francesca Zambello, Bliss Hebert, and Herb Ross. A member of the voice faculty of the Shepherd School of Music, she is also an active chamber musician and vocal accompanist and will soon begin two recording projects.