

a Poulenc Cabaret

operamission
from the composer to the audience

Thursday, February 2, 2012 at the Gershwin Hotel

this evening's program

Les Mamelles de Tirésias, 1944

Prologue (Guillaume Apollinaire)

Michael Weyandt has performed Schaunard in *La Bohème* and Mozart's Count Almaviva with **operamission**, appeared with Lorin Maazel at his Castleton Festival and James Levine in Mozart operas at Tanglewood, performed contemporary works from Peter Maxwell Davies to Olga Neuwirth, and taught ESL in rural China for two years.

michaelweyandt.net

The pianist for this evening's songs and sonata is conductor **Jennifer Peterson**, director of **operamission** since its founding in 2009, whose next presentation will be the North American professional stage premiere of Georg Friedrich Händel's first opera *Almira, Königin von Castilien* in May of this year.

*Public, attendez sans impatience
Je vous apporte une pièce dont le but est de réformer les mœurs
Il s'agit des enfants dans la famille
C'est un sujet domestique
Et c'est pourquoi il est traité sur un ton familier
Les acteurs ne prendront pas de ton sinistre
Ils feront appel tout simplement à votre bon sens
Et se préoccupent avant tout de vous amuser
Afin que bien disposés vous mettiez à profit tous les enseignements
contenus dans la pièce
Et que le sol partout s'étoile de regards de nouveaux nés
Plus nombreux encore
Que les scintillements d'étoiles
Ecoutez, o Français, la leçon de la guerre et faites des enfants vous
qui n'en faisiez guère*

*Vous trouverez ici des actions qui s'ajout' au drame principal et
l'ornent
Les changements de tons du pathétique au burlesque
Et l'usage raisonnable des invraisemblances
Il est juste que le dramaturge se serv' de tous les mirages dont il
dispose
Comme faisait Morgane sur le Mont Gibel
Il est juste qu'il fass' parler les foules, les objets inanimés s'il lui
plaît
Et qu'il ne tienne pas plus compte du temps que de l'espace
Son univers est sa pièce
A l'intérieur de laquelle il est de Dieu créateur qui dispose à son
gré les sons, les gestes, les couleurs
Pour fair' surgir la vie même dans toute sa vérité
Car la pièce doit être un univers complet
Avec son créateur*

*Pardonnez-moi cher public de vous avoir parlé un peu longuement
mais il y a encor' là-bas un brasier où l'on abat des étoil's
toutes fumantes
Et ceux qui les rallument vous demandent
De vous hausser jusqu'à ces flammes sublimes
Et de flamber aussi
O public
Soyez la torche inextinguible du feu nouveau
Et faites des enfants vous qui n'en faisiez guère*

*Public, wait without impatience
I bring you a piece in which the purpose is to reform your morals
It concerns itself with families
It is a domestic subject
And this is why it is treated in a familiar tone
The actors will not adopt a sinister tone
They will appeal simply to your good sense
And will concern themselves above all to amuse you
So that, in a good mood, you should turn a profit from all of the
lessons contained in the piece
And may sunshine cover you with the gazes of infants
Still more numerous
Than the sparkles of stars
Listen, o France, to the lesson of war, and procreate as you never
have*

*You will find here some actions that add to the principal drama and
ornament it
Changes of tone from pathetic to burlesque
And reasonable usage of improbability
It is fair for the dramaturg to make use of all the mirages at his
disposal
As did Morgan le Fay on Mont Gibel
It is fair for him to make the crowd speak, even inanimate objects,
if it pleases him
And for him to not give more credit to time than to space
His universe is his piece
Inside which he is of God the creator, who favors, as he pleases,
the sounds, the gestures, the colors
To make arise life itself, in all its truth
For the piece must be a complete universe
With its creator*

*Pardon me, dear public, to have spoken to you a little too long, but
there's a fire in the depths where we keep those fallen,
smoldering stars
And those who rekindle them are asking you
To raise yourselves up to these sublime flames
And to blaze as well
O public
Be the extinguishable torch of a new fire
And procreate as you never have*

A sa guitare (Pierre Ronsard), 1935

(D'après la musique de scène la Reine Margot)

*Ma guitare, je te chante,
Par qui seule je déçois,
Je rompe, j'enchanter
Les amours que je reçois.*

*Au son de ton harmonie
Je rafraîchis ma chaleur,
Ma chaleur, flamme infinie,
Naissante d'un beau malheur.*

Mezzo-soprano **Kimberly Sogioka** is a versatile singer praised for her interpretation of new music, including the workshop of Michael Torke's opera *Senna* with the Metropolitan Opera in conjunction with the English National Opera, the world premiere of Clint Borzoni's *Margot Alone in the Light* and new scenes from Stephen Andrew Taylor's *Paradises Lost* with **operamission**.

My guitar, I sing to you,
For whom alone I deceive,
I break off, I delight
The lovers which I receive.

At the sound of your harmony
I refresh my ardor,
My ardor, infinite flame,
Borne of a beautiful misfortune.

Poulenc wrote this song for actress-singer Yvonne Printemps as part of the incidental music for the play *La Reine Margot* by Edoard Bourdet, which concerns the loves of Marguerite Valois. In the play, the character of Marguerite sang this song while accompanied by a harp.

Improvisation n° 15 (Hommage à Edith Piaf), 1959

While he most enjoys solo piano repertoire, pianist **Max Midroit** also plays well with others, performing chamber music, lieder, operatic and choral repertoire, as well as orchestral piano or music for film and dance. Hailing from the Côte d'Azur, he holds degrees from the Conservatoire de Marseille, the Juilliard School, Rice University, and New York University.

Three singers will share the next set of songs:

Banalités (Apollinaire), 1940

Chanson d'Orkenise - Nicholas Tamagna

Hôtel - Randal Turner

Fagnes de Wallonie - Mr. Tamagna

Voyage à Paris - Mr. Turner

Sanglots - Mr. Weyandt

Hudson Valley-native countertenor **Nicholas Tamagna** is the inaugural winner of the Nico Castel Mastersinger Competition 2011. As a frequent soloist with a wide variety of opera companies, orchestras, and early music ensembles, he enjoys breaking gender barriers in 19th century repertoire and creating roles in new works.

He co-publishes the online journal 'The Countertenor Voice.'

nicholastamagna.com

Baritone **Randal Turner** is currently singing the role of Philippe in the American premiere of Rufus Wainwright's *Prima Donna* at New York City Opera. He made his American debut in 2010 as Don Giovanni with Michigan Opera Theatre, and his European credits include the role of Alexandre in *La ville morte* by Nadia Boulanger at the Accademia Chigiana in Siena, as well as roles at Opernhaus Zürich, Opera de Monte-Carlo, Opera di Roma, Teatro Regio di Torino. Mr. Turner resides in Zürich, Switzerland.

randalturner.com

and **Mr. Weyandt**

In 1935, a short article by Poulenc appeared in the journal *Présence*, 'In Praise of Banality' in which he discussed gently his latest artistic concerns: "I admire this phrase of Picasso unreservedly: 'The truly original artist is one who never reaches the point of copying exactly'" calling "the *déjà entendu*" "a proof of impotence." and "For a long time now I have made it my cause to treat unusual harmonies and common cadences in the same way ... I equally hate synthetic cookery, synthetic perfume, and synthetic art ... I extol banality, and 'yes, why not', if it is intentional, keenly felt, full-blooded, and not a mere proof of deficiency."

Composer Ernst Krenek, who had just changed from the tonal/neoclassical idiom to embrace Schoenberg's techniques of serialism retorted in the same journal in December 1935, harshly deriding Poulenc's banality as "ingenuous" and indeed a "proof of deficiency." Poulenc's teacher Charles Koechlin quickly came to his defense in a passionate article called 'Tonal ou atonal?' in *Le Ménestrel*, and who knows if this skirmish over banality inspired the current song settings five years hence... We argue that 'Sanglots' is anything but.

I. Chanson d'Orkenise

*Par les portes d'Orkenise
Veut entre un charretier.
Par les portes d'Orkenise
Veut sortir un va-nu-pieds.*

*Et les gardes de la ville
Courant sus au va-nu-pieds:
"Qu'emportes-tu de la ville?"
"J'y laisse mon cœur entier."*

*Et les gardes de la ville
Courant sus au charretier:
"Qu'apportes-tu dans la ville?"
"Mon cœur pour me marier."*

*Que de cœurs dans Orkenise
Les gardes riaient
Va-nu-pieds la route est grise,
L'amour grise, ô charretier.*

*Les beaux gardes de la ville
Tricotaient superbement;
Puis les portes de la ville
Se fermèrent lentement.*

1. Song of Orkenise

Through the gates of Orkenise
a carter wants to enter.
Through the gates of Orkenise
a tramp wants to leave.

And the guards of the village,
running up to the tramp:
"What are you taking out of the village?"
"I am leaving me whole heart there."

And the guards of the village,
running over to the carter:
"What are you bringing into the village?"
"My heart, to be married."

So many hearts in Orkenise
The guards laughed
Tramp, the route is dull,
Love is dull, o carter.

The handsome guards of the village
Scuttled superbly;
Then the gates of the village
Closed slowly.

Poulenc founds this marvelous little poem in Apollinaire's prose work *Onirocritique*. It is an original (and fictional) little field-plowing labor song.

II. Hôtel

*Ma chambre a la forme d'une cage
Le soleil passe son bras par la fenêtre
Mais moi qui veux fumer pour faire des mirages
J'allume au feu du jour ma cigarette
Je ne veux pas travailler je veux fumer*

2. Hotel

My room has the form of a cage
The sun passes its arm through the window
But I, who wants to smoke in order to make mirages
I light at daylight my cigarette
I don't want to work, I want to smoke

In Pierre Bernac's words, "Without doubt the 'laziest' song ever written! But make no mistake, there must be no hint of sadness. On the contrary..."

III. Fagnes de Wallonie

*Tant de tristesses plénières
Prirent mon cœur aux fagnes désolées
Quand las j'ai reposé dans les sapinières
Le poids des kilomètres pendant que râlait
Le vent d'ouest*

*J'avais quitté le joli bois
Les écureuils y sont restés
Ma pipe essayait de faire des nuages
Au ciel
Qui restait pur obstinément*

*Je n'ai confié aucun secret sinon une chanson énigmatique
Aux tourbières humides*

*Les bruyères fleurant le miel
Attiraient les abeilles
Et mes pieds endoloris
Foulaient les myrtilles et les airelles
Tendrement mariée*

Nord

Nord

*La vie s'y tord
En arbres forts*

Et tors

La vie y mord

La mort

A belles dents

Quand bruit le vent

3. Uplands of Wallonie

So many overwhelming sorrows
Seize my heart in the desolate uplands
When weary I rested among the fir trees
The weight of the kilometers while groaned
The west wind

I had left the pretty forest
The squirrels stayed there
My pipe was trying to make clouds
In the sky
Which remained clear obstinately

I did not confide any secret with the exception of an enigmatic song
To the damp peat bogs

The heather, fragrant with honey
Attracted the bees
And my aching feet
Trampled on the bilberries and the blueberries
Tenderly united

North

North

Life twists itself there
In strong trees

And twisted

Life bites there

Death

Ravenously

When the wind howls

In Poulenc's words: "I have already spoken of my inveterate habit of putting certain poems on one side in advance. I had chosen 'Sanglots' a long time before, and the curious 'Fabnes de Wallonies'. Going through my library in October 1940, I turned the pages once again--and with how much emotion--of those literary reviews which in 1914 to 1923 had enchanted my adolescence. This time, the series of issues of *Littérature* particularly held my attention. could it be that so many beautiful poems had appeared there in such modest guise? But that is the unassuming privilege of this type of review."

IV. Voyage à Paris

*Ah ! la charmante chose
Quitter un pays morose
Pour Paris
Paris joli
Qu'un jour du créer l'Amour
Ah ! la charmante chose
Quitter un pays morose
Pour Paris*

4. Trip to Paris

Ah! the charming thing
To leave a dreary country
For Paris
Pretty Paris
Which, once upon a time, Love must have created

Again from Poulenc, "To anyone who knows me it will seem quite natural that I should open my mouth like a carp to snap up the deliciously stupid lines of 'Voyage à Paris'. Anything that concerns Paris I approach with tears in my eyes and my head full of music."

V. Sanglots

*Notre amour est réglé par les calmes étoiles
Or nous savons qu'en nous beaucoup d'hommes respirent
Qui vinrent de très loin et sont un sous nos fronts
C'est la chanson des rêveurs
Qui s'étaient arraché le cœur
Et le portaient dans la main droite
Souviens-t'en cher orgueil de tous ces souvenirs*

*Des marins qui chantaient comme des conquérants
Des gouffres de Thulé des tendres cieux d'Ophir
Des malades maudits de ceux qui fuient leur ombre
Et du retour joyeux des heureux émigrants
De ce cœur il coulait du sang
Et le rêveur allait pensant
A sa blessure délicate
Tu ne briseras pas la chaîne de ces causes
Et douloureuse et nous disait
Qui sont les effets d'autres causes
Mon pauvre cœur mon cœur brisé
Pareil au cœur de tous les hommes
Voici nos mains que la vie fit esclaves
Est mort d'amour ou c'est tout comme
Est mort d'amour et le voici
Ainsi vont toutes choses
Arrachez donc le vôtre aussi
Et rien ne sera libre jusqu'à la fin des temps
Laissons tout aux morts
Et cachons nos sanglots*

Our love is ruled by the calm stars
Now we know that among us, many men breathe
Who came from very far away, and are one amongst us
It is the song of the dreamers
Which was ripped out of the heart
And carried in the right hand
Do you remember in it, dear pride, all these memories

Of the sailors who would sing like conquerors
Of the gulfs of Thule, of the tender skies of Ophir
Of the sick cursed ones, of those who fled from their shadow
And of the joyful return of the happy emigrants
From this heart, blood flowed
And the dreamer went on thinking
Of his delicate wound
You will not break the chain of these causes
And sorrowful, and told us
Which are the effects of other causes
My poor heart, my broken heart
The same as the heart of all men
Here are our hands which life enslaved
Died of love, or so it seems
Died of love, and here it is
Such is the way of all things
Rip yours out also then
And nothing will be free until the end of time
Let us leave everything to the dead
And hide our sobs

La Grenouillère (Apollinaire), 1938 - 1'40"

Ms. Sogioka

*Au bord de l'île on voit
Les canots vides qui s'entre-cognent
Et maintenant
Ni le dimanche ni les jours de la semaine
Ni les peintres ni Maupassant ne se promènent
Bras nus sur leurs canots avec des femmes à grosses poitrines
Et bêtes comme chou
Petits bateaux vous me faites bien de la peine
Au bord de l'île*

(The Froggery)

On the shore of the island, you can see the empty boats that bump up against each other. And now, neither on Sundays nor weekdays, neither the painters nor Maupassant go for their walks, arms bare on their boats, with large-chested women, and silly as cabbage. Little boats, you do very well in making me sad, on the shore of the island.

From Bernac: "This was the name of a small island in the Seine on the outskirts of Paris, with a restaurant, where on Sundays at the end of the nineteenth century writers and painters came boating." Poulenc quotes Moussorgsky in the line, "Petits bateaux..." and admits it: "It would be childish to hide this influence, such a subterfuge would be repugnant to me. I despise sons who blush at their likeness to their father."

Chansons gaillardes, 1926
(Textes anonymes du XVII^e siècle)

Ross Benoiel, baritone, has performed with companies such as New York City Opera, Hong Kong Opera, and Glimmerglass. He was a winner of the Liederkrantz Vocal Foundation Competition and a regional finalist in the Metropolitan Opera Competition.
rossbenoiel.com

I. La Maîtresse volage

*Ma maîtresse est volage,
mon rival est heureux:
s'il a son pucelage,
c'est qu'elle en avait deux.*

*Et vogue la galère,
tant qu'ell' pourra voguer.*

II. Chanson à boire

*Les rois d'Egypte et de Syrie,
voulaien qu'on embaumât leurs corps,
pour durer, plus longtemps, morts.
Quelle folie!*

*Buvons donc selon notre envie,
il faut boire et reboire encore.
Buvons donc toute notre vie,
embaumons-nous avant la mort.
Embaumons-nous;
que ce baume est doux.*

III. Madrigal

*Vous êtes belle comme un ange,
douce comme un petit mouton:
il n'est point de cœur, Jeanneton,
qui sous votre loi ne se range;
mais une fille sans têtou,
est une perdrix sans orange.*

IV. Invocation aux Parques

*Je jure, tant que je vivrai,
de vous aimer Sylvie:
Parques, qui dans vos mains tenez
le fil de notre vie,
allongez, tant que vous pourrez,
le mien, je vous en prie.*

1. The fickle mistress

My mistress is fickle,
my rival is fortunate:
if he has her virginity,
she must have had two.

Let's chance our luck
as long as it will last.

2. Drinking song

The kings of Egypt and Syria,
wished to have their bodies embalmed,
to last for a longer time dead.
What folly!

Let us drink then as we will,
we must drink and drink again.
Let us drink our whole life long,
embalm ourselves before death.
Embalm ourselves;
since this balm is sweet.

3. Madrigal

You are as beautiful as an angel,
sweet as a little lamb:
there is not a heart, Jeanneton,
that has not fallen beneath your spell.
for a girl without tits
is a partridge without orange.

4. Invocation to the Fates

I swear, as long as I shall live,
to love you, Sylvie.
Fates, who hold in your hands
the thread of our life,
extend, as long as you can,
mine, I beg you.

V. Couplets bachiques

*Je suis tant que dure le jour(e),
et grave et badin tour à tour.
Quand je vois un flacon sans vin,
je suis grave;
est-il tout plein,
je suis badin.
Quand ma femm' me tient au lit,
je suis sage toute la nuit.
Si catin au lit me tient;
alors je suis badin.
Ah! belle hôtesse, versez-moi de vin.*

VI. L'Offrande

*Au Dieu d'Amour, une pucelle
offrit un jour une chandelle,
pour en obtenir un amant.
Le Dieu sourit de sa demande,
et lui dit: Belle, en attendant,
servez-vous toujours de l'offrande.*

VIII. La Belle jeunesse

*Il faut s'aimer toujours,
et ne s'épouser guère.
Il faut faire l'amour,
sans curé ni notaire.
Cessez, messieurs, d'être épouseurs,
ne visez qu'aux tirelires,
ne visez qu'aux tourelours
n'visez qu'aux cœurs.
Holà, messieurs, ne visez plus qu'aux cœurs.
Pourquoi ne marier,
quand les femmes des autres,
ne se font pas prier
pour devenir les nôtres.
Quand leurs ardeurs,
quand leurs faveurs,
cherchent nos tirelires,
cherchent nos tourelours;
cherchent nos cœurs.*

VIII. Sérénade

*Avec une si belle main,
que servent tant de charmes,
que vous devez, du Dieu malin,
bien manier les armes!
Et qund cet Enfant est chagrin,
bien essuyer ses larmes.*

5. Bacchic couplets

As long as day lasts I am
serious and merry by turns.
When I see a wine bottle empty,
I am serious;
when it is full,
I am merry.
When I am in bed with my wife,
I am serious all night long.
If I am in bed with a wench
then I am merry.
Ah! fair hostess, pour me some wine.

6. The offering

To the god of Love, a virgin
offered one day a candle,
thus to gain a lover.
The god smiled at her request,
and said to her: Fair one, while you wait
the offering always has its uses.

7. The beauty of youth

You should love always
and seldom marry.
You should make love
without priest or notary.
Cease, good Sirs, to be marrying men,
only aim at the tirelires,
only aim at the tourelours,
only aim at the hearts.
Enough, good Sirs, only aim at the hearts.
Why marry,
when the wives of others
need no persuasion
to become ours.
When their ardors,
when their favors,
seek our tirelires,
seek our tourelours,
seek our hearts.

8. Serenade

With so fair a hand,
possessed of so many charms,
that you must indeed
handle Cupid's darts,
And when this child is troubled
wipe away his tears.

Sonate pour clarinette et piano, 1962

Chicagoan **Cory Tiffin** is the principal clarinetist in the Green Bay Symphony and Las Vegas Philharmonic Orchestras, co-founder of Chicago-based chamber ensemble, Anaphora, and clarinet teacher at the Chicago High School for the Arts. anaphoraensemble.com

Clarinetist Benny Goodman, who commissioned the piece, was intended to premiere this sonata with the composer at the piano, but Poulenc died of a heart attack in Paris on January 30, 1963. The premiere was given on April 10, 1963 at New York City's Carnegie Hall by Benny Goodman and Leonard Bernstein. Poulenc left no unfinished work after his sudden and unexpected death.

Deux Poèmes de Louis Aragon, 1943

The Boston Globe has raved that soprano **Deborah van Renterghem** "brought an exhilaration, distinction of voice, style and personality" to her work. She is at home with works from Mozart to Britten, Schoenberg to Saariaho, having appeared in Wagner's *Parsifal* at the Palau de les Arts in Valencia, Spain, and will sing the role of Vitellia in Mozart's *La Clemenza di Tito* with Boston's Emmanuel Music this coming April.

Massachusetts native, tenor **John Carlo Pierce**, is an eleven-year veteran of the German opera house system, survived four snowy winters in Rochester, NY, and will soon add "Doctor" to his name.

C

Ms. van Renterghem

*J'ai traversé les ponts de Cé
C'est là que tout a commencé
Une chanson des temps passés
Parle d'un chevalier blessé
D'une rose sur la chaussée
Et d'un corsage délacé
Du château d'un duc insensé
Et des cygnes dans les fossés
De la prairie où vient danser
Une éternelle fiancée
Et j'ai bu comme un lait glacé
Le long lai des gloires faussées
La Loire emporte mes pensées
Avec les voitures versées
Et les armes désamorçees
Et les larmes mal effacées
O ma France, ô ma délaissée
J'ai traversé les ponts de Cé.*

I have crossed the bridges of Cé
it is there where everything began
a song of the past
tells of a wounded knight
of a rose on the roadway
and of an unlaced bodice
of the castle of a senseless duke
and of the swans in the moats
of the meadow where comes to dance
an eternal fiancée
and I drank like an ice milk
the long lay of falsified glories
the Loire carries my thoughts
with the abandoned cars
and the defused weapons
and the poorly-erased tears
o my France, o my deserted
I have crossed the bridges of Cé.

Fêtes galantes

Mr. Pierce

*On voit des marquis sur des bicyclettes
On voit des marlous en cheval-jupon
On voit des morveux avec des voilettes
On voit des pompiers brûler les pompons*

You see marquises on bicycles
You see pimps in kilts
You see snot-noses with little veils
You see firemen burning their pompons

*On voit des mots jetés à la voirie
On voit des mots élevés au pavois
On voit les pieds des enfants de Marie
On voit le dos des diseuses à voix*

You see words thrown into the trash
You see words extolled to the skies
You see the feet of the children of Mary
You see the back of the cabaret singers

*On voit des voitur' à gazogène (gazomètre)
On voit aussi des voitur' à bras
On voit des lascars que les longs nez gênent
On voit des coïons de dix huit carats*

You see diesel cars
You see also handcarts
You see clever fellows embarrassed by their long noses
You see eighteen-karat fools

*On voit ici ce que l'on voit ailleurs
On voit des demoiselles dévoyées
On voit des voyous, On voit des voyeurs
On voit sous les ponts passer les noyés*

You see here that which you see elsewhere
You see delinquent young ladies
You see hoodlums, you see voyeurs
You see the drowned people floating under the bridges

*On voit chômer les marchands de chaussures
On voit mourir d'ennui les mireurs d'œufs
On voit périliter les valeurs sûres
Et fuir la vie à la vie à la six quat' deux.*

You see the unemployed shoe merchants
You see the egg-candlers dying of boredom
You see the sound values going to ruin
And life flies by haphazardly.

Intermezzo en la bémol Majeur, 1943

Mr. Midroit

**from Henri Hell: "...an irony always veiled by tenderness, a mischievous mockery always close to tears,
a drollery always ready to change to lyricism."**

Le Pont

Ms. Sogioka

*Deux dames, le long le long du fleuve
Elles se parlent par dessus l'eau
Et sur le pont de leurs paroles
La foule passe et repasse en dansant.*

<i>un dieu</i>	<i>c'est</i>
	<i>pour</i>
<i>tu reviendras</i>	<i>toi</i>
	<i>seule</i>
<i>Hi ! oh ! Là-bas</i>	<i>que</i>
	<i>le</i>
<i>Là-bas</i>	<i>sang</i>
	<i>coule</i>

Tous les enfants savent pourquoi

Passe, mais passe donc

Ne te retourne pas

*Hi ! oh ! là-bas là-bas
Les jeunes filles qui passent sur le pont léger
Portent dans leurs mains
Le bouquet de demain
Et leurs regards s'écoulent
Dans ce fleuve à tous étranger
Qui vient de loin, qui va si loin
Et passe sous le pont léger de vos paroles
Ô Bavardes le long du fleuve
ô Bavardes ô folles le long du fleuve*

Two women, along the river, speak to each other over the water. And on the bridge of their words, the crowd passes back and forth, dancing. A god, it is for you alone that you would return to the bloodshed. All the children know why it passes, but then it passes, it does not return. The young girls who pass over the light bridge carry in their hands the bouquet of tomorrow, and their attentions are carried in this river to all foreign places. He who comes from far away, he who goes so far away passes under the light bridge of your words. O chatterers, o insanities, along the river.

Poulenc, constantly drawing analogies from painters, was fascinated with Henri Matisse's method. He applied it directly to his compositional technique in 'Le Pont'. When Matisse painted his illustration for 'The Swan' sonnet in *Poésies de Stéphane Mallarmé*, 1932, he made a series of preliminary drawings using a fascinating process distilling complex concept into its essence, in Poulenc's words, "...the maximum with the *minimum* of means."

Un Poème

Mr. Tamagna

*Il est entré,
Il s'est assis.
Il ne regarde pas le pyrogène à cheveux rouges
L'allumette flambe
Il est parti*

He came in,
He sat down.
He does not look at the red-headed Pyrogene
The match burns up
He left.

A "pyrogène" is a small ceramic vessel intended to hold (red-tipped) matches in the preparation of absinthe.

La courte paille (Maurice Carême), 1960

Le Sommeil
Quelle aventure!
La Reine de coeur
Ba, be, bi, bo, bu
Les Anges musiciens
Le Carafon
Lune d'avril

Originally from Grosse Pointe, Michigan and a graduate of Indiana University, Handel and Kurt Weill fanatic **Marcy Richardson** has performed with NYFOS Next, Princeton Festival, Opera Columbus, Toledo Opera, Vertical Player Repertory, Orlando Opera, Central City Opera, Lyrique-en-mer, and has won awards from the Kurt Weill Foundation and the Metropolitan Opera National Council.
marcyrichardson.com

Poulenc wrote these songs for soprano Denise Duval, who created the role of Elle in *La Voix Humaine*, Thérèse in *Les mamelles de Tirésias*, and Blanche de la Force in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, for her to sing to her small son, aged six. “Paille” literally means “straw,” “La courte paille” meaning “The short end of the stick.”

I. Le sommeil

*Le sommeil est en voyage,
Mon Dieu! où est-il parti?
J'ai beau bercer mon petit;
Il pleure dans son lit-cage,
Il pleure depuis midi.*

*Où le sommeil a-t-il mis
Son sable et ses rêves sages?
J'ai beau bercer mon petit;
Il se tourne tout en nage,
Il sanglote dans son lit.*

*Ah! reviens, sommeil,
Sur ton beau cheval de course!
Dans le ciel noir, la Grande Ourse
A enterré le soleil
Et rallumé ses abeilles.*

*Si l'enfant ne dort pas bien,
Il ne dira pas bonjour,
Il ne dira rien demain
A ses doigts, au lait, au pain
Qui l'accueillent dans le jour.*

II. Quelle aventure!

*Une puce, dans sa voiture,
Tirait un petit éléphant
En regardant les devantures
Où scintillaient les diamants.
Mon Dieu! quelle aventure!
Qui va me croire, s'il m'entend?
L'éléphanteau, d'un air absent,
Suçait un pot de confiture.
Mait la puce n'en avait cure,
Elle tirait en souriant.
Mon Dieu! que cela dure
Et je vais me croire dément!
Soudain, le long d'une clôture,
La puce fondit dans le vent
Et je vis le jeune éléphant
Se sauver en fendant les murs.
Mon Dieu! la chose est sure,
Mais comment le dire a maman?*

1. Sleep

Sleep has gone on a journey, my goodness, where has it gone? I cradled my little one well; he cried in his crib, he cried until noon.

Where has sleep taken its sable and its smart dreams? I cradled my little one well; he tossed and turned, he sobbed in his bed.

Ah, return, sleep, to your handsome racehorse! In the black sky, the big dipper has buried the sun and lit up its bees.

If the baby doesn't sleep well, he will not say hello, he will not say anything tomorrow to his fingers, to the milk, to the bread who greet him during the day.

2. What an adventure!

A flea, in its car, pulled a little elephant! Looking at the shop windows where the diamonds were sparkling. My goodness! what an adventure! Who is going to believe me if he hears me? The elephant absentmindedly was sucking a pot of jam. But the flea didn't care, she pulled while smiling. My goodness! if this goes on, I am going to believe I'm demented! Suddenly, along a fence, the flea disappeared in the wind and I saw the young elephant escape, breaking through the walls. My goodness! the thing is certain, but how to tell mother?

III. La reine de cœur

*Mollement accoudée
A ses vitres de lune,
La reine vous salue
D'une fleur d'amandier.*

*C'est la reine de cœur.
Elle peut, l'il lui plaît,
Vous mener en secret
Vers d'étranges demeures*

*Où il n'est plus de portes,
De salles ni de tours
Et où les jeunes mortes
Viennent parler d'amour.*

*La reine vous salue;
Hâtez-vous de la suivre
Dans son château de givre
Aux doux vitraux de lune.*

IV. Ba, Be, Bi, Bo, Bu

*Ba, be, bi, bo, bu, bé!
Le chat a mis ses bottés,
Il va de porte en porte
Jouer, danser, danser, chanter.*

*Pou, chou, genou, hibou.
"Tu dois apprendre à lire,
A compter, à écrire,"
Lui crie-t-on de partout.*

*Mais rikketiketau,
Le chat de s'esclaffer
En rentrant au château:
Il est le Chat botté!...*

V. Les anges musiciens

*Sur les fils de la pluie,
Les anges du jeudi
Jouent longtemps de la harpe.*

*Et sous leurs doigts, Mozart
Tinte, délicieux,
En gouttes de joie bleue*

*Car c'est toujours Mozart
Que reprennent sans fin
Les anges musiciens*

*Qui, au long du jeudi,
Font chanter sur la harpe
La douceur de la pluie.*

3. The queen of hearts

Gently leaning on her elbow at her moon windows, the queen waves to you with a flower of the almond tree.

She is the queen of hearts, she can, if she wishes, lead you in secret to strange dwellings.

Where there are no more doors, no rooms nor towers, and where the young who are dead come to speak of love.

The queen waves to you, hasten to follow her into her castle of frost, with the sweet moon windows.

4. Ba, be, bi, bo, bu

Ba, be, bi, bo, bu, be! The cat has put on his boots, he goes from door to door playing, dancing, singing.

Pou, chou, genou, hibou. "You must learn to read, to count, to write," they cry to him from everywhere.

But rikketiketau, the cat bursts out laughing, as he goes back to the castle: he is Puss in Boots!

5. The angel musicians

On the threads of the rain, the Thursday angels play for a long time on the harp.

And beneath their fingers, Mozart tinkles deliciously, in drops of blue joy.

For it is always Mozart that is repeated endlessly by the angel musicians.

Who, all day Thursday, make their harp sing the sweetness of the rain.

VI. Le carafon

*"Pourquoi, se plaignait la carafe,
N'aurais-je pas un carafon?
Au zoo, madame la girafe
N'a-t-elle pas un girafon?"*

*Un sorcier qui passait par là,
A cheval sur un phonographe,
Enregistra la belle voix
De soprano de la carafe*

*Et la fit entendre à Merlin.
"Fort bien, dit celui-ci, fort bien!"*

*Il frappa trois fois dans les mains
Et la dame de la maison
Se demande encore pourquoi
Elle trouva, ce matin-là,
Un joli petit carafon
Blotti tout contre la carafe
Ainsi qu'au zoo, le girafon
Pose son cou fragile et long
Sur le flanc clair de la girafe.*

VII. Lune d'Avril

*Lune, belle lune, lune d'Avril,
Faites-moi voir en mon dormant
Le pêcher au cœur de safran,
Le poisson qui rit du grésil,
L'oiseau qui, lointain comme un cor,
Doucement reveille les morts
Et surtout le pays
Où il fait joie, où il fait clair,
Où, soleilleux de primevères,
On a brisé tous les fusils.
Lune, belle lune d'avril.*

When asked by Claude Rostand if there were a sort of Mozart of painting that he preferred above all others, Poulenc replied, "No, there is no Mozart of painting for me, because there is only one Mozart, the musical one. Just as there is only one God."

Pierrot (Théodore de Banville), 1933

*Le bon Pierrot que la foule contemple
Ayant fini les noces d'Arlequin
Suite en songeant le boulevard du Temple
Une fillette au souple casaquin
En vain l'agace de son œil coquin
Et cependant mystérieuse et lisse
Faisant de lui sa plus chère délice
La blanche lune aux cornes de taureau
Jette un regard de son œil en coulisse
À son ami Jean Gaspard Debureau.*

6. The baby carafe

"Why, complained the carafe, should I not have a baby carafe? At the zoo, madame the giraffe, doesn't she have a baby giraffe?"

A sorcerer who was passing by astride a phonograph, recorded the lovely soprano voice of the carafe.

And let Merlin hear it. "Very good," said he, "very good."

He clapped his hands three times, and the lady of the house still asks herself why she found that very morning a pretty little baby carafe nestling close to the carafe, just as at the zoo, the baby giraffe rests its long fragile neck against the pale flank of the giraffe.

7. April moon

Moon, beautiful moon of April, let me see in my sleep the peach tree with the saffron heart, the fish who laughs at the sleet, the bird who, distant as a hunting horn, gently awakens the dead, and above all, the land where there is joy, where there is light, where sunny with primroses, all the guns have been destroyed. Moon, beautiful moon of April.

Mr. Tamagna

The good Pierrot at whom the crowd gazes
Having finished the wedding of Harlequin
Goes down the Boulevard du Temple dreaming
A little girl in a supple blouse
Annoys him in vain with her mischievous eye
And yet mysteriously and smoothly
Makes of him her most dear delight
The white moon with the horns of a bull
Throws a glance from eye behind the scenes
To her friend Jean Gaspard Debureau.

**Jean Gaspard Debureau was a celebrated Bohemian-French mime in the early 19th-century.
He created the character of Pierrot.**

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Les Chemins de l'amour, 1940

(Valse chantée tirée de la pièce de Jean Anouilh)

Soprano **Michelle Jennings** has sung jazz in Japan, musical theater in Hawaii, opera around the U.S., and she will next be seen with the McLean Orchestra's *A Night at the Opera* concert, and will be performing in her original show, *The Benefit*, with Divas Unleashed.

michelle-jennings.com

*Les chemins qui vont à la mer
Ont gardé de notre passage
Des fleurs effeuillées et l'écho sous leurs arbres de nos deux
rires clairs
Hélas des jours de bonheur
Radieuses joies envolées
Je vais sans retrouver traces dans mon cœur.*

*Si je dois l'oublier un jour
La vie effaçant toute chose
Je veux dans mon cœur qu'un souvenir repose plus fort que
l'autre amour
Le souvenir du chemin
Ou tremblante et toute éperdue
Un jour j'ai senti sur moi brûler tes mains.*

REFRAIN

*Chemins de mon amour
Je vous cherche toujours
Chemins perdus vous n'êtes plus
Et vos échos sont sourds
Chemins du désespoir
Chemins du souvenir
Chemins du premier jour
Divins chemins d'amour.*

The paths that lead to the sea have protected our journey from the plucked flowers and the echo under their trees of the laughter of the two of us. Alas, those days of happiness, radiant joys which have flown away, I can no longer find traces of them in my heart.

If I must forget it one day, life erasing everything, in my heart I want only one memory stronger than the other love. The memory of the path, where trembling and lost, I once felt your hands burning over me.

REFRAIN

Paths of my love
I seek you always
Lost paths, you are no more
And your echoes are silenced
Paths of desperation
Paths of memory
Paths of the first time
Divine paths of love.

...also written for Yvonne Printemps, from the incidental music for a play by Jean Anouilh called *Léocadia*.

Thank you for attending our Poulenc cabaret.

Please visit operamission.org to support future productions, including the North American professional staged premiere of Handel's first opera, *Almira*, in May of this year.