

**Eastman Philharmonia
Eastman-Rochester Chorus
Eastman Chorale**

Jerry Blackstone, conductor
Colin Mann, conductor

Catherine Creed, soprano
Allyson Arenson, soprano
Holden Turner, baritone

Friday, May 3, 2024
Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre
7:30 PM



EASTMAN
SCHOOL OF MUSIC
UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

**Eastman-Rochester Chorus
Eastman Chorale
Eastman Philharmonia**

~ PROGRAM ~

Gloria, FP 177 (1959)

- I. Gloria in excelsis Deo
- II. Laudamus te
- III. Domine Deus
- IV. Domine Fili unigenite
- V. Domine Deus, Agnus Dei
- VI. Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris

Francis Poulenc
(1899-1963)
25'

Catherine Creed, soprano
Colin Mann, conductor

~ INTERMISSION ~

Dona Nobis Pacem (1936)

- I. Agnus Dei
- II. Beat! Beat! Drums!
- III. Reconciliation
- IV. Dirge for Two Veterans
- V. The Angel of Death has been abroad
- VI. O man, greatly beloved

Ralph Vaughan Williams
(1872-1958)
40'

Allyson Arenson, soprano
Holden Turner, baritone
Jerry Blackstone, conductor

~ PROGRAM NOTES, TEXTS, AND TRANSLATIONS ~

Gloria

In August 1936 Poulenc was a successful composer of witty instrumental compositions and attractive songs, about to take a working vacation in the small French town of Uzerche, when he learned of the sudden death of a friend, composer Pierre-Octave Ferroud. On arrival in Uzerche, Poulenc visited the nearby pilgrimage church of Rocamadour to see its famous statue of the Black Virgin. This visit, at a time of emotional vulnerability, prompted two major changes in Poulenc's life: he re-embraced Catholicism, and he embarked on the series of choral compositions that play such an important part in his output. Almost immediately he produced his *Litanies à la vierge noire* for women's voices (1936), followed shortly thereafter by the *Mass in G* (1937) and the *Quatre motets pour un temps de pénitance* (1938–1939). He continued to write choral music for the remainder of his life, and the most popular piece he ever composed was his *Gloria*.

The work was written in the latter part of 1959 on a commission from the Koussevitsky Foundation. It premiered on 20 January 1961 in a performance by the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Chorus Pro Musica, conducted by Charles Munch; the piece rapidly became a standard work in the choral repertoire. Poulenc chose the most joyful text from the Catholic Mass for his composition and wrote accordingly. As one writer has noted, the “choral writing is unsanctimonious to the point of willfulness.” Given that Poulenc said he wrote the second movement thinking about frescos where angels stuck out their tongues, and about monks he had seen playing soccer, it is not surprising that the *Gloria* was his own personal favorite among his choral works.

Because the *Gloria* is one of the longest texts in the Mass, it is normally subdivided in musical settings. Poulenc created six very unequal divisions textually: the fourth movement, for example, sets a mere five words. Yet while the movements are uneven in the amount of text they use, they generate three pairs in terms of character: the opening and closing movements each commence “majestically” and move to steady rhythms thereafter; movements two and four are fleet (four, with its single phrase of text, zips by in a flash), and three and five provide the necessary slow contrast, where Poulenc changes the orchestration by cutting back the brass. Those two movements feature the soprano soloist, who returns at the end of movement six when the tempo shifts to “Extraordinairement calme, sans traîner” (extraordinarily calm, without dragging) to provide a serene conclusion to the work.

Honey Meconi

I.

Gloria in excelsis Deo
Et in terra pax
hominibus bonae voluntatis

*Glory to God in the highest
And on earth peace
To men of good will*

II.

Laudamus te
Benedicimus te
Adoramus te
Glorificamus te
Gratias agimus tibi
Propter magnam gloriam tuam

*We praise you
We bless you
We adore you
We glorify you
We give you thanks
For your great glory*

III.

Domine Deus, Rex coelestis,
Deus Pater omnipotens

*Lord God, heavenly King,
God the Father almighty*

IV.

Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe

Lord, the only begotten son, Jesus Christ

V.

Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris,
Qui tollis peccata mundi
Miserere nobis
Qui tollis peccata mundi
Suscipe deprecationem nostram

*Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
Who takes away the sins of the world,
Have mercy on us
Who takes away the sins of the world,
Receive our prayer*

VI.

Qui sedes ad dexteram patris,
Miserere nobis
Quoniam tu solus sanctus,
Tu solus Dominus
Tu solus altissimus, Jesu Christe,
Cum sancto spirito
In gloria dei patris
Amen

*You who sit at the right hand of the Father,
Have mercy on us
For you alone are holy
You alone are the Lord
You alone are most high, Jesus Christ
With the holy spirit
In the glory of God the father
Amen*

Dona Nobis Pacem

The year that Poulenc had his conversion experience was the same year that Ralph Vaughan Williams wrote the *Dona nobis pacem*. Anyone paying attention in 1936 knew that war was on the horizon. Vaughan Williams, who had served in World War I, was all too cognizant of the horrors of conflict, and *Dona nobis pacem* is one attempt to warn others. In terms of his choral output, it comes one year after the suite *Five Tudor Portraits* and two years before the exquisite *Serenade to Music*. The premiere took place on 2 October 1936, in Huddersfield, as part of the celebration of the Huddersfield Choral Society's centennial.

The six movements flow together without pause. The words “dona nobis pacem”—grant us peace—conclude the tripartite Agnus Dei portion of the Catholic Mass. Vaughan Williams's work, however, is innovative in mingling Latin and English, sacred and secular texts—a precursor to Britten's practice in the *War Requiem*. In the opening movement the choral text is restricted to “dona nobis pacem,” but the soprano soloist, who begins the piece, also sings the words that precedes it in the mass: “Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi.” For the next three movements Vaughan Williams turned to American poet Walt Whitman, who had worked as a nurse during the Civil War and was deeply familiar with war's evils. The all-choral second movement expresses the madness of calls for war in its jagged harmonies and insistent rhythms; the harmonic chaos mirrors war's chaos.

The third movement provides a sharp contrast. The baritone solo introduces this aching beautiful movement that uses Whitman's “Reconciliation.” The final choral line conjures the astonishingly poignant images of “the sisters Death and Night” washing “again and ever again this soiled world,” interrupted by the solo soprano's “dona nobis pacem.” Her solo leads in turn to the fourth movement, a funeral march setting of Whitman's “Dirge for Two Veterans.” This extremely effective movement was not created for *Dona nobis pacem*, however. Vaughan Williams composed the work before the first World War and never published it, possibly because both his teacher Charles Wood and his good friend Gustav Holst also set the text.

The somber fifth movement combines three different texts. The first, sung by the solo baritone, comes from an extremely unlikely source: a speech given by John Bright in the House of Commons immediately before the Crimean War. The almost monotone setting of this text gives way to a crashing choral return of “dona nobis pacem,” joined by the soprano soloist, before the mood shifts again for verses from the biblical book of Jeremiah (8:15–22), bewailing the woes fallen upon the land. But in a typical Vaughan Williams move, sunshine breaks forth from the clouds for the final movement. The text is an aggregate of biblical excerpts—Daniel, Haggai, Micah, Leviticus, the Psalms, Isaiah, and Luke—set to a corresponding aggregate of keys, until we reach a bright C major for “good will toward men.” At this point the soprano solo returns, as does the “dona nobis pacem” text. By the close, the chorus dynamic has faded away to *ppp*, but it is the soprano who concludes the work—not on the tonic pitch C, however, but rather on the third, E, for a touch of incompleteness, as if Vaughan Williams knew that uncertainty lay ahead for all. It is unbearably sad that this incredible work remains so relevant today.

Honey Meconi

I. Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei,
Qui tollis peccata mundi,
Dona nobis pacem.

*Lamb of God,
That taketh away the sin of the world,
Grant us peace.*

II. Beat! Beat! Drums!

Beat! beat! drums! —blow! bugles! blow!
Through the windows—through the doors—burst like a ruthless force,
Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation,
Into the school where the scholar is studying;
Leave not the bridegroom quiet—no happiness must he have now with his bride,
Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, ploughing his field, or gathering in his grain,
So fierce you whirr and pound you drums—so shrill you bugles blow.
Beat! beat! drums!—Blow! bugles! blow!
Over the traffic of cities—over the rumble of wheels in the streets:
Are beds prepared for sleepers at night in the houses?
No sleepers must sleep in those beds;
No bargainers’ bargains by day—Would they continue?
Would the talkers be talking? would the singer attempt to sing?
Then rattle quicker, heavier drums—you bugles wilder blow.
Beat! beat! drums!—Blow! bugles! blow!
Make no parley—stop for no expostulation;
Mind not the timid—mind not the weeper or prayer;
Mind not the old man beseeching the young man;
Let not the child’s voice be heard, nor the mother’s entreaties;
Make even the trestles to shake the dead, where they lie awaiting the hearses,
So strong you thump, O terrible drums—so loud you bugles blow.

Walt Whitman
first published in *Drum-Taps* (1865)

III. Reconciliation

Word over all, beautiful as the sky,
Beautiful that war and all its deeds of carnage must in time be utterly lost,
That the hands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly, softly,
wash again and ever again this soiled world;
For my enemy is dead, a man divine as myself is dead,
I look where he lies white-faced and still in the coffin—I draw near,
Bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the coffin.

Walt Whitman

first published in *When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom’d* (1865), later in *Drum-Taps*

IV. Dirge for Two Veterans

The last sunbeam
Lightly falls from the finished Sabbath,
On the pavement here, and there beyond it is looking
Down a new-made double grave.
Lo, the moon ascending,
Up from the east the silvery round moon,
Beautiful over the house-tops, ghastly, phantom moon,
Immense and silent moon.
I see a sad procession,
And I hear the sound of coming full-keyed bugles,
All the channels of the city streets they’re flooding
As with voices and with tears.
I hear the great drums pounding,
And the small drums steady whirring,
And every blow of the great convulsive drums
Strikes me through and through.
For the son is brought with the father,
In the foremost ranks of the fierce assault they fell,
Two veterans, son and father, dropped together,
And the double grave awaits them.
Now nearer blow the bugles,
And the drums strike more convulsive,
And the daylight o’er the pavement quite has faded,
And the strong dead-march enwraps me.
In the eastern sky up-buoying,
The sorrowful vast phantom moves illumined,
’Tis some mother’s large transparent face,
In heaven brighter growing.
O strong dead-march you please me!
O moon immense with your silvery face you soothe me!
O my soldiers twain! O my veterans passing to burial!
What I have I also give you.
The moon gives you light,
And the bugles and the drums give you music,
And my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans,
My heart gives you love.

Walt Whitman

first published in *When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom’d* (1865), later in *Drum-Taps*

V. The Angel of Death has been abroad

The Angel of Death has been abroad throughout the land; you may almost hear the beating of his wings. There is no one as of old... to sprinkle with blood the lintel and the two side-posts of our doors, that he may spare and pass on.

John Bright (1811–1889)

Dona nobis pacem.

We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble! The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan; the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come, and have devoured the land... and those that dwell therein...

The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved...

Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

Jeremiah 8:15–22

VI. O man, greatly beloved

O man greatly beloved, fear not, peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong.

Daniel 10:19

The glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former...and in this place will I give peace.

Haggai 2:9

Nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. And none shall make them afraid, neither shall the sword go through their land. Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Open to me the gates of righteousness, I will go into them. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled; and let them hear and say, it is the truth. And it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and see my glory. And I will set a sign among them, and they shall declare my glory among the nations. For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, so shall your seed and your name remain for ever.

Adapted from Micah 4:3, Leviticus 26:6, Psalms 85:10 and 118:19,
Isaiah 43:9 and 56:18–22, Luke 2:14



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