



SONO
LUMINUS

SKYLARK
Clear Voices In The Dark

POULENC | FIGURE HUMAINE
SONGS OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

Figure Humaine

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

Poetry by Paul Éluard (1895-1952)

Civil War Soundscapes

1861-1865

1|. When this Cruel War is Over – Weeping, Sad and Lonely 4:05

Henry L. Tucker (1826-1882), Arr. Matthew Guard

Soloist: Carrie Cheron

2|. I. De tous les printemps du monde... 2:39

3|. Johnny has gone for a soldier 1:55

Irish Traditional, Arr. Ron Jeffers (1943-2017)

4|. II. En chantant les servantes s'élancent... 1:54

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Clear Voices In The Dark

“After a pilgrimage to Rocamadour I had the idea of composing a clandestine work which could be prepared in secret and then performed on the long-awaited day of liberation. With great enthusiasm I began *Figure Humaine* and completed it by the end of the summer. I composed the work for unaccompanied choir because I wanted this act of faith to be performed without instrumental aid, by sole means of the human voice.”

–Francis Poulenc

“The day the Americans arrived, I triumphantly placed my cantata on the studio desk, beneath my flag, at the window.”

–Francis Poulenc

“Francis, I never heard myself.

Francis, I needed you to understand me.”

–Paul Éluard

I believe that great art is often the product of great difficulty and tribulation, in many cases for the artist themselves. I also think art borne out of a time of societal turmoil can be even more profound, and can shed light today on what it was like to live and endure through tragedies of the past.

Figure Humaine is one of the ultimate artistic achievements from a time of turmoil. Composed by Francis Poulenc in 1943 in occupied France, it was composed in secret, inspired by the resistance poems of the surrealist poet Paul Éluard (poems that were distributed under plain cover during the occupation). It is one of the most profound pieces in the a cappella choral repertoire, if also one of the most difficult. Scored for double choir in six parts each, it is a vocal gauntlet which requires unmatched concentration and musicianship from every singer involved to mount a successful performance. Given that the piece was written at a time when victory was by no means assured, I believe that the difficulty of the work was intentional; to be worthy of the expressive task of communicating Éluard’s wartime thoughts, I think

Poulenc believed that a choir must possess outstanding commitment, dedication, and skill.

Because of its challenges, *Figure Humaine* is rarely performed. Soon after founding Skylark, I began to feel that this was a piece we simply had to share. But at only 20 minutes in length, I struggled to find the appropriate way to present it to allow people to truly engage with the work. While on a walk in 2014, I realized that we were approaching the 150th anniversary of the end of the Civil War, as well as the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, occasions that presented a unique opportunity to share music of both time periods.

I set out on a journey to find the appropriate Civil War-era songs to pair with the Poulenc movements. *Figure Humaine* sets forth an intense emotional progression, cycling between despair and optimism against a backdrop of gathering madness. It was critical to find pieces that would make sense musically and textually in the context of Poulenc’s work.

It was a fascinating journey. Through exploring my own musical heritage, I soon discovered that Alice Parker arranged *Johnny I Hardly Knew Ye* for the Robert Shaw Chorale in the late 1960s. Consultation with other Skylarks revealed several brilliant arrangements from Ron Jeffers, and a search through the Duke University Historical Sheet Music Archives uncovered several pieces that I never knew existed. The discovery that *Abide with me* (one of my favorite hymns) was written during 1861 was particularly poignant. Where no appropriate arrangement existed, I filled in myself with very simple editions. In all cases, the goal was to create as simple and honest an expression of the songs as possible. Against the foil of Poulenc’s monumental achievement of the choral art, we aim to juxtapose the simple, the familiar, the universal.

Through sharing this program, we hope to take you on an emotional and historical journey, a journey that we hope will illuminate the struggles of people who endured these two great wars, a journey that can shed light on nightmares of the past through the art that emerged from them, and most importantly, a journey that will affirm the incredible power of the human spirit to endure in times of tragedy.

–Matthew Guard, Artistic Director

Skylark

Three-time GRAMMY®-nominee Skylark, “the cream of the American crop” (BBC Radio 3), is a premier chamber choir comprised of leading American vocal soloists, chamber musicians, and music educators. Skylark’s dramatic performances have been described as “gripping” (The Times of London), “exquisite...thrilling” (Gramophone Magazine), and “awe-inspiring” (Boston Music Intelligencer). Skylark’s mission is to be the most exciting and innovative vocal ensemble for audiences and artists alike, and to provide inspiring educational activities that positively impact students’ lives. Skylark sets the standard for innovative and engaging programs that re-define the choral experience for audiences and singers alike – three of its most recent albums have received GRAMMY® nominations, and Artistic Director Matthew Guard’s well-researched and creative programs have been described as “engrossing” (WQXR-NY) and “original, stimulating, and beautiful” (BBC Radio 3).

Soprano

Sarah Moyer
Fotina Naumenko
Alissa Ruth Suver
Janet Stone

Alto

Carrie Cheron
Carolyn Guard
Helen Karloski
Clare McNamara
Megan Roth

Tenor

John K. Cox
Paul D’Arcy
Erik Gustafson
Nathan Hodgson

Bass

Eric Alatorre
Nathan Halbur
Christopher Jackson
Sam Kreidenweis
Andrew Padgett

Matthew Guard, Artistic Director

Three-time GRAMMY®-nominee Matthew Guard is widely regarded as one of the most innovative and thoughtful programmers in American choral music. Praised for his “catalyzing leadership” (Q2/WQXR-NY) and “musically creative and intellectually rich” programming (Opera Obsession), Matthew is passionate about communicating something unique in each concert and recording. He scours the world of available repertoire for each program, exhaustively researches each piece, and crafts concerts and printed programs that captivate audiences with their hidden connections and seamless artistry. Matthew lives in Bedford, NY, with his wife Carolyn and sons Harry and Arthur.



When this Cruel War is over – Weeping, Sad and Lonely

Henry L. Tucker (1826-1882), Arr. Matthew Guard

Lyrics by Charles Carroll Sawyer (1833-1890)

We open this program with a single female voice, who will give life to one of the most popular songs of the Civil War in both the Union and the Confederacy. The simple, yet hauntingly melancholic melody perfectly captures one of the central themes of all wars: departure from a loved one with the fervent hope to one day see him or her again.

Dearest Love, do you remember, when we last did meet,
How you told me that you loved me, kneeling at my feet?
Oh! How proud you stood before me, in your suit of blue,
When you vow'd to me and country, ever to be true.

*Weeping, sad and lonely, hopes and fears how vain!
When this cruel war is over, praying that we meet again.*

When the summer breeze is sighing, mournfully along,
Or when autumn leaves are falling, sadly breathes the song.
Oft in dreams I see thee lying on the battle plain,
Lonely, wounded, even dying, calling but in vain.

Weeping, sad and lonely...

Weeping, sad and lonely, hopes and fears how vain!
When this cruel war is over, praying that we meet again.
But our Country called you, Darling, angels cheer your way;
While our nation's sons are fighting, we can only pray.
With our hopes in God and Liberty, let all nations see
How we loved the starry banner, emblem of the free.

Weeping, sad and lonely...

I. De tous les printemps du monde...

Figure Humaine's opening movement introduces the deep conflict between the reality of the present and hope for the future that plays out through the entire piece. Each stanza of Éluard's poem alternates between two poles of grim reality and glimmers of hope, and Poulenc's antiphonal setting elegantly uses alternation between the two choirs to dramatize this internal struggle. The movement ends with a dissonant and unconventional cadence back into the opening key of B minor, on the text "sure to ruin their masters." This may represent Poulenc's hope that France would overcome its occupation, but with the knowledge that the painful struggle would never fully banish the destruction already underway.

De tous les printemps du monde,
Celui-ci est le plus laid
Entre toutes mes façons d'être
La confiante est la meilleure

L'herbe soulève la neige
Comme la pierre d'un tombeau
Moi je dors dans la tempête
Et je m'éveille les yeux clairs

Le lent le petit temps s'achève
Où toute rue devait passer
Par mes plus intimes retraites
Pour que je rencontre quelqu'un
Je n'entends pas parler les monstres
Je les connais ils ont tout dit
Je ne vois que les beaux visages
Les bons visages sûrs d'eux-mêmes

Sûrs de ruiner bientôt leurs maîtres

Of all the springtimes of the world
Never was there one so vile
I may have many ways of being
but the best is the most trusting

See how the grass lifts the snow
As if it were a graveyard stone
I myself sleep through the tempest
And awake with undimmed eyes

Slow moving time comes to an end
Where all streets had to pass
traversing all my most secret places
So that I could meet someone
I do not hear the monsters talking
I know them well, and all they have said before
I see only lovely faces
Good faces of those self-assured

Certain soon to ruin their masters

Johnny has gone for a soldier

Irish Traditional, Arr. Ron Jeffers (1943-2017)

Many songs popular during the Civil War had origins elsewhere. Our next piece is believed to have originated as an Irish folk song in the early 18th century. It soon migrated to the United States, and was paired with these words by John Allison during the American Revolutionary War. *Johnny has gone for a soldier* became popular again during the Civil War, as a timeless expression of the universal feelings of loss and anxiety when loved ones leave home. Many of you may be familiar with the melody because of Jacqueline Schwab's haunting piano improvisation featured in the Ken Burns documentary *The Civil War*.

There I sat on Butternut Hill, who could blame me, cry my fill,
And every tear would turn a mill, Johnny has gone for a soldier.

Me, oh my I loved him so, broke my heart to see him go,
and only time will heal my woe, O Johnny has gone for a soldier.

O I will sell my flax, I'll sell my wheel, buy my love a sword of steel,
so it in battle he may wield, Johnny has gone for a soldier.

II. En chantant les servantes s'élancent...

In this movement, Poulenc thrusts us into an explicit horror film that unapologetically reveals the realities of combat through the eyes of young women attempting to clean up the battlefield. Poulenc's frantic tempo begins the movement in chaotic fashion, and his angular Phrygian melodies suddenly modulate by half step, creating the unsettling feeling that the ground is shifting beneath our feet. Soon, the ground does move, as the poem shifts to images of the apocalypse, potentially a commentary on how war pulls all involved into the depravity of violence. Of particular note is the vivid sonic imagery as the walls crumble and the stones sink into the waters: one can almost see the ripples in the primordial ocean as the altos slowly finish their phrase. After the chaos, the movement ends with a pessimistic commentary on the nature of humanity in times of bloodshed. When the full choir stunningly resolves into E major on the text "surrendering...to the spell of human weakness," it feels like an artificial high: an unstable moment of seeming relief or escape that cannot overcome the true calamities at hand.

En chantant les servantes s'élancent
Pour rafraîchir la place où l'on tuait
Petites filles en poudre vite agenouillées
Leurs mains aux soupiraux de la fraîcheur
Sont bleues comme une expérience
Un grand matin joyeux

Singing, the maidens rush forward to
tidy up the place where blood has flowed,
and little powdered girls kneel,
their hands held out towards fresher air
colored like a new sensation
Of some great joyous day

Faites face à leurs mains les morts
Faites face à leurs yeux liquides
C'est la toilette des éphémères
La dernière toilette de la vie
Les pierres descendent disparaissent
Dans l'eau vaste essentielle

Face their hands, o ye dead,
And their eyes that are liquefying
This is the ritual of mayflies,
The final ritual of this mortal life
The stones descend, disappearing
Into the vast, primal waters

La dernière toilette des heures
A peine un souvenir ému
Aux puits taris de la vertu
Aux longues absences encombrantes
Et l'on s'abandonne à la chair très tendre
Aux prestiges de la faiblesse.

For the ultimate ritual of time
No poignant memory remains
At those dry wells devoid of virtue
At long uncomfortable absences
And the surrendering of tender flesh
To the spell of human weakness.

Break it Gently to My Mother

Frederick Buckley (1833-1864)
Lyrics by Mary A. Griffith (fl. 1863)

The historic sheet music of our next piece, composed in 1863, bears the following inscription: *This ballad was suggested by the following incident. On the battle-field of Gettysburg, among many wounded soldiers was a young man the only son of an aged mother. Hearing the surgeon*

tell his companions that he could not survive the ensuing night, he placed his hand upon his forehead, talking continually of his mother and sister, and said to his comrades assembled around him, "Break it gently to my mother."

See! ere the sun sinks behind those hills,
Ere darkness the earth doth cover,
You will lay me low, in the cold, damp ground,
Break it gently to my mother!
I see her sweet sad face on me now,
And a smile doth o'er it hover;
Oh God! I would spare the tears that will flow;
Break it gently to my mother.

Good bye, my mother ever dear;
sister, you loved your brother;
Comrades, I take a last farewell;
Break it gently to my mother.

Oh, say that in battle I've nobly died,
For Right and our Country's honor;
Like the reaper's grain fell the leaden rain,
Yet God saved our starry banner!
My sister, playmate of boyhood's years,
Will lament her fallen brother;
She must try to soothe our parent's woe;
Break it gently to my mother.

III. Aussi bas que le silence...

Poulenc's third movement paints a dim picture of a country that has been laid low by an occupation. He begins the piece in E-flat minor, a dismal and disoriented key in the context of the overall work. Two long opening phrases illustrate cold images of inactivity and desolation. Notably, Poulenc never allows all voices in either choir to sing together, perhaps an illustration of the absence of loved ones who might be away or lost in battle. One can almost see the burned out buildings of a village razed by combat, with survivors quietly huddled around a flickering hearth. Shortly before the end, the movement suddenly becomes active, with a chilling harmonization of Eluard's words that personify the occupation as "poison" itself. Poulenc's setting of the final two words, which translate to "all humanity," are particularly poignant. He places the upper voices of the first choir at the extreme top of their range, and provides a glimmer of a major sonority in E-flat, before resolving to a weak unison. In a piece where the key of E major ultimately represents redemption for humanity, a high and weak cadence in E-flat illustrates the image of an occupied people who are only a shadow of their true selves.

Aussi bas que le silence
D'un mort planté dans la terre
Rien que ténèbres en tête
Aussi monotone et sourd
Que l'automne dans la mare
Couverte de honte mate
Le poison veuf de sa fleur
Et de ses bêtes dorées
Crache sa nuit sur les hommes.

Hushed and still in silence wrapt
Like a corpse that lies in the earth
Head full of darkness and shadows
As deaf and monotonous
As autumn in the pond
Covered with dull shame
Poison bereft of its flower
And of its golden monsters
Spits out its night over all men.

Johnny, I hardly knew ye

Irish Traditional, Arr. Alice Parker (1925-2023)

While many American Civil War songs repurposed music from elsewhere, in some cases the situation worked in reverse. Johnny I hardly knew ye, published in London in 1867, is a repurposing of the American Civil War Song When Johnny Came Marching Home (1863). While the original American version was decidedly pro-war, this version from only a few years later takes a definite anti-war stance, transporting the melody and the central story line to Ireland. This evening we perform an arrangement by Alice Parker that was first recorded by the Robert Shaw Chorale in 1969 during another time of powerful anti-war sentiment.

While goin' the road to sweet Athy, hurroo, hurroo
While goin' the road to sweet Athy,
A stick in me hand and a drop in me eye,
A doleful damsel I heard cry:
Johnny, I hardly knew ye.

With your drums and guns and guns and drums, hurroo, hurroo
With your drums and guns and guns and drums,
The enemy nearly slew ye
Oh my darling dear, Ye look so queer
Faith Johnny, I hardly knew ye.

Where are the eyes that looked so mild, hurroo, hurroo
Where are the eyes that looked so mild
When my poor heart you first beguiled
Why did ye skedaddle from me and the child
Why Johnny, I hardly knew ye. *With your drums...*

Where are the legs with which you run, hurroo, hurroo
Where are the legs with which you run
When you went for to carry a gun
Indeed, your dancin' days are done
Why Johnny, I hardly knew ye. *With your drums...*

I'm happy for to see ye home, hurroo, hurroo
I'm happy for to see ye home
All from the island of Ceylon
So low in the flesh, so high in the bone
Oh Johnny, I hardly knew ye. *With your drums...*

IV. Toi ma patiente...

By this point in *Figure Humaine*, it is clear that the first choir often plays the role of the optimistic protagonist, in stark contrast to the second choir's harsh reality. This movement continues that trend, featuring the first choir in the bright, optimistic key of A Major. However, Poulenc's harmonization morphs into jarring dissonance each time the disturbing final line of the text is repeated "Prepare for vengeance, a bed where I will be born." Perhaps the bed represents a deathbed of a people who can only be born into freedom through the ultimate sacrifice. It is likely that this movement had a deeper, personal meaning to Poulenc. Harmonically, this movement bears a striking resemblance to *Une Barque sur l'Océan*, a piece composed in 1905 by Maurice Ravel and premiered by pianist Ricardo Viñes. Viñes was Poulenc's music teacher, mentor, and became a father-like figure to him after Poulenc's parents died. Poulenc later wrote: "I owe him everything ... In reality it is to Viñes that I owe my fledgling efforts in music and everything I know about the piano." Viñes passed away in April, 1943, just three months before Poulenc composed *Figure Humaine*. It seems likely that when he composed the optimistic harmonic repetitions of *Toi ma patiente* (which includes the word "parent"), Poulenc was imagining his spiritual and musical mentor playing the rich harmonies of Ravel.

Toi ma patiente
ma patience ma parente
Gorge haut suspendue
orgue de la nuit lente
Révérence cachant
tous les ciels dans sa grâce
Prépare à la vengeance
un lit d'où je naîtraî.

You, my patient one,
my patience, my guardian
Throat held high,
organ of the calm night
Reverence cloaking
all of heaven in its grace
Prepare, for vengeance,
a bed where I may be born.

Soldier's Memorial Day

William Oscar Perkins (1831-1902), Arr. Matthew Guard
Lyrics by Mary B.C. Slade (1826-1882)

The first Memorial Day holiday in the United States was declared in 1868, three years after the end of the Civil War. Originally called Decoration Day, General John Logan's order declared "The 30th of May, 1868, is designated for the purpose of strewing with flowers, or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country." Our next piece was written for the occasion in 1870, and was performed at remembrances on the third Memorial Day.

When flow'ry Summer is at hand,
And Spring has gemm'd the earth with bloom, We hither bring, with loving hand,
Bright flow'rs to deck our soldier's tomb.

With snowy hawthorn, clusters white, Fair violets of heav'nly blue,
And early roses, fresh and bright,
We wreath the red, and white, and blue.

*Gentle birds above are sweetly singing
O'er the graves of heroes brave and true; While the sweetest flow'rs we are bringing,
Wreath'd in garlands of red, white and blue.*

But purer than the fairest flowers, We strew above the honored dead, The tender
changeless love of ours, That decks the soldier's lowly bed. *Gentle birds...*

V. Riant du ciel et des planètes...

Poulenc's next movement plunges us into the chaos of battle. He pits the two choirs in virtual combat for the entire movement, desperately firing the same biting text at each other at breakneck speed. The two choirs switch textual roles for the final repeat, illustrating Éluard's allusion to implicit guilt on any side of a conflict. Most significantly, the choirs never sing at the same time except on the crucial last line of text. This short, jarring movement leaves one feeling disturbed, tense, and unsatisfied – a masterful musical expression of Éluard's statement on the futility of violence.

Riant du ciel et des planètes	Laughing at the sky and planets
La bouche imbibée de confiance	Mouths dripping with arrogance
Les sages Veulent des fils	The wise men wish for sons
Et des fils de leurs fils	And for sons for their sons
Jusqu'à périr d'usure	Until they die in vain
Le temps ne pèse que les fous	The march of time burdens not only the foolish
L'abîme est seul à verdoyer	Hell alone flourishes
Et les sages sont ridicules.	And the wise men are made foolish.

Workin' for the dawn of peace

Irving Gordon (1915-1996), Walter Kittredge (1834-1905), Arr. Ron Jeffers

Our next piece, set for men's voices alone, combines two civil war songs from different eras. *Two Brothers*, a well-known ballad that tells the tragic story of a family divided between North and South, was written in 1951 by American songwriter Irving Gordon. Ron Jeffers poignantly juxtaposes this 20th century piece with *Tenting on the Old Camp Ground*, written in 1863 by Walter Kittredge. After the retrospective *Two Brothers*, *Tenting on the Old Camp Ground* perfectly captures the weariness and hope that must have been so common on late nights in a camp of exhausted soldiers.

Two brothers on their way, One wore blue and one wore gray.
One wore blue and one wore gray, as they marched along their way,
the fife and drum began to play, all on a beautiful mornin'.
One was gentle, one was kind, One came home, one stayed behind.

One wore blue and one wore gray, as they marched along their way,
the fife and drum began to play, all on a beautiful mornin'.

Mournin', mournin'...
Many are the hearts that are weary tonight,
waitin' for the war to cease, many are the hopes,
the hopes once high and bright that sleep with those at peace.
Waitin' tonight, workin' tonight, workin' that the war might cease!
O many are the hearts that are working for the right,
Waitin' for the dawn of peace.

VI. Le jour m'étonne et la nuit me fait peur...

This movement features the second choir alone, playing their role as the more pessimistic voice. Set in the somber key of A minor (in contrast to the first choir's solo movement in A major), Éluard's text speaks of being pursued by an invisible animal (a wolf, in the original poem's title). Poulenc's setting is simple and lyrical, but somehow also unrelenting and bleak. For much of the movement, Poulenc only has a few voices sing together, which gives the feeling that our singers are wandering alone in the woods, being pursued by a monster in the shadows. When all the voices do join together for the final repetition of "winter pursues me," Poulenc notes "Surtout sans ralentir" ("above all without slowing down"), a brilliant musical gesture that expresses the inescapable fear of the text.

Le jour m'étonne
et la nuit me fait peur
L'été me hante
et l'hiver me poursuit
Un animal sur la neige a posé
Ses pattes sur le sable ou dans la boue
Ses pattes venues de plus loin
que mes pas
Sur une piste où la mort
A les empreintes de la vie.

The day shocks me
and the night terrifies me
Summer haunts me
and winter pursues me
An animal has imprinted its paws
In the snow, in the sand or in the mud
Its pawprints have come further
than my own steps
On a path where death
Bears the imprint of life.

Abide with me

*William Henry Monk (1823-1889), Arr. Matthew Guard
Lyrics by Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847)*

The text for Abide with me was written by Scottish Anglican Henry Francis Lyte in 1847. It was not until 1861 that British composer William Henry Monk paired Lyte's words with his own hymn tune, Eventide. The hymn migrated across the Atlantic, becoming a hymn of particular poignancy for Americans enduring the Civil War.

Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim; its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.

I need Thy presence every passing hour.
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who, like Thyself, my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me.

I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.

Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

VII. La menace sous le ciel rouge...

After the introspective fear of the sixth movement, *Figure Humaine's* penultimate movement opens in outwardly terrifying fashion as Eluard's predatory wolf transforms into an even more horrifying vision, and Poulenc's music undergoes a similarly horrible metamorphosis. As an agitated fugue cycles through a bizarre spiral of downward fifths and tritones, it feels as if the choir is being pulled into the underworld. Soon after, hell itself seems to be rising to earth, as the choir slowly ascends through a wild series of minor chords. Eventually the tempest slows, and seems to reach an unsatisfying end on the grim text "Decay held the heart." At this point in *Figure Humaine*, a glimmer of true hope begins to emerge for the first time. In a haunting passage, altos from both choirs sing a duet that transforms the original fugue subject into something less terrifying. The second choir, typically the bearer of bleak news, then offers the phrase "beneath the dismal hunger, the cavern closed up." On this text, Poulenc ends his downward cycle, bringing the second choir into a single chord that rises through several inversions. You can almost hear the cave close and see the horrifying dragon disappear. For the final passage of the movement, Poulenc brings all twelve voices together for an extended period, ending with a call for solidarity and determination. As Eluard's text turns outwardly hopeful, Poulenc's music captures the spirit of a people joining together to overcome their fears in the face of oppression.

La menace sous le ciel rouge
Venait d'en bas des mâchoires
Des écailles des anneaux
D'une chaîne glissante et lourde
La vie était distribuée
Largement pour que la mort
Prît au sérieux le tribut
Qu'on lui payait sans compter
La mort était le dieu d'amour
Et les vainqueurs dans un baiser
S'évanouissaient sur leurs victimes
La pourriture avait du cœur
Et pourtant sous le ciel rouge
Sous les appétits de sang
Sous la famine lugubre
La caverne se ferma
La terre utile effaça
Les tombes creusées d'avance
Les enfants n'eurent plus peur
Des profondeurs maternelles
Et la bêtise et la démençe
Et la bassesse firent place
A des hommes frères des hommes
Ne luttant plus contre la vie
A des hommes indestructibles.

The menace under the red sky
Came from under the jaws
The scales and links
Of a slippery and heavy chain
Life was dispersed
Widely so that death
Could gravely take the dues
Which were paid without a thought
Death was the God of love
And the victors with a kiss
Swoon over their victims
Decay held the heart
And yet under the red sky
Beneath the lust for blood
Beneath the dismal hunger
The cavern closed up
The useful earth covered over
The graves dug in advance
The children no longer fearing
The maternal depths
And stupidity, dementia
And vulgarity gave way
To humanity and brotherhood
No longer set against life
But to an indestructible human race.

The Battle Hymn of the Republic

Julia Ward Howe (1819-1910), Arr. Matthew Guard

The tune we now associate with The Battle Hymn of the Republic and its "Glory, Glory, Hallelujah" refrain had its origins in a traditional American camp meeting song say, Brothers, Will You Meet Us. By May 1861, the tune had been appropriated for the song John Brown's Body, a favorite of Union soldiers during their marches. That fall, prominent abolitionist Julia Ward Howe attended a public review of soldiers in Washington. After hearing the brigades sing the tune that day, one of Howe's friends suggested that she write new lyrics for the song. Years later, Howe described her night at the Willard Hotel on November 18, 1861:

I went to bed that night as usual, and slept, according to my wont, quite soundly. I awoke in the gray of the morning twilight; and as I lay waiting for the dawn, the long lines of the desired poem began to twine themselves in my mind. Having thought out all the stanzas, I said to myself, 'I must get up and write these verses down, lest I fall asleep again and forget them.' So, with a sudden effort, I sprang out of bed, and found in the dimness an old stump of a pen which I remembered to have used the day before. I scrawled the verses almost without looking at the paper.

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword:
His truth is marching on.

Glory, glory, hallelujah! His truth is marching on.

I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps,
They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps;
I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps:
His day is marching on. *Glory, glory...*

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment-seat:
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him! Be jubilant, my feet!
Our God is marching on. *Glory, glory...*

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me.
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,
While God is marching on. *Glory, glory...*

VIII. LIBERTÉ

Poulenc's final movement is the only one in his manuscript that bears a true title, emblazoned in all capital letters in the score (the rest of the movements simply quote the opening of the respective poem as a shorthand title). This is fitting, as this poem (dropped into occupied France via airlift) was the inspiration for the piece, and is the ultimate destination of the work as a whole.

Éluard's spectacular 21 stanza poem is a cry for freedom, expressed through an inexhaustible list of things and ideas that would be meaningless without it. As Éluard bounces from item to item, from concrete to abstract, from the trivial to the sublime, Poulenc's constantly morphing harmonic language masterfully conveys the text. Poulenc incredibly cycles through some form of every key, major and minor, with the notable exception of E-flat minor (the key of "occupation" throughout the work).

After being at odds for much of the work, the two choirs work together brilliantly in this movement, seemingly part of a single mind that flits from idea to idea, always pausing to write the name of "Liberty" on everything. As the two choirs approach the thrilling end of the piece, their exhortations amplify each other, culminating in a shocking and embattled cry that stretches the human voice to the extremes of its range.

Poulenc composed *Figure Humaine* in an apartment in the village of Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne in the summer of 1943. In a letter to a friend that August, he described the view from his room, which looked directly out on the bell tower in the center of the village. He wrote: "While beholding this [tower], so strong and so very French, I composed the music of LIBERTÉ."

Sur mes cahiers d'écolier
Sur mon pupitre et les arbres
Sur le sable sur la neige
J'écris ton nom

Sur toutes les pages lues
Sur toutes les pages blanches
Pierre sang papier ou cendre
J'écris ton nom

Sur les images dorées
Sur les armes des guerriers
Sur la couronne des rois
J'écris ton nom

Sur la jungle et le désert
Sur les nids sur les genêts
Sur l'écho de mon enfance
J'écris ton nom

Sur les merveilles des nuits
Sur le pain blanc des journées
Sur les saisons fiancées
J'écris ton nom

Sur tous mes chiffons d'azur
Sur l'étang soleil moi
Sur le lac lune vivante
J'écris ton nom

Sur les champs sur l'horizon
Sur les ailes des oiseaux
Et sur le moulin des ombres
J'écris ton nom

On my school books
On my desk and on the trees
On the sand and in the snow
I write your name

On every page that is read
On all blank pages
Stone blood paper or ashes
I write your name

On gilded pictures
On the weapons of warriors
On the crown of kings
I write your name

Over the jungle and the desert
On the nests on the brooms
On the echo of my infancy
I write your name

On the wonders of the night
On the daily bread
On the conjoined seasons
I write your name

On all my blue scarves
On the pond grown moldy in the sun
On the lake alive in the moonlight
I write your name

On fields on the horizon
On the wings of birds
And on the mill of shadows
I write your name

Sur chaque bouffée d'aurore
Sur la mer sur les bateaux
Sur la montagne démente
J'écris ton nom

On each rising dawn
On the sea on the boats
On the wild mountain
I write your name

Sur toute chair accordée
Sur le front de mes amis
Sur chaque main qui se tend
J'écris ton nom

On all united flesh
On the faces of my friends
On each hand held out
I write your name

Sur la mousse des nuages
Sur les sueurs de l'orage
Sur la pluie épaisse et fade
J'écris ton nom

On the foamy clouds
In the sweat-filled storm
On the rain heavy and relentless
I write your name

Sur la vitre des surprises
Sur les lèvres attentives
Bien au-dessus du silence
J'écris ton nom

On the window of surprises
On the attentive lips
Well above silence
I write your name

Sur les formes scintillantes
Sur les cloches des couleurs
Sur la vérité physique
J'écris ton nom

On shimmering figures
On bells of many colours
On undeniable truth
I write your name

Sur mes refuges détruits
Sur mes phares écroulés
Sur les murs de mon ennui
J'écris ton nom

On my destroyed safehouses
On my collapsed beacons
On the walls of my boredom
I write your name

Sur les sentiers éveillés
Sur les routes déployées
Sur les places qui débordent
J'écris ton nom

On the living pathways
On the roads stretched out
On the bustling places
I write your name

Sur l'absence sans désir
Sur la solitude nue
Sur les marches de la mort
J'écris ton nom

On absence without desire
On naked solitude
On the death marches
I write your name

Sur la lampe qui s'allume
Sur la lampe qui s'éteint
Sur mes maisons réunies
J'écris ton nom

On the lamp which is ignited
On the lamp which is extinguished
My reunited households
I write your name

Sur la santé revenue
Sur le risque disparu
Sur l'espoir sans souvenirs
J'écris ton nom

On health restored
On risk disappeared
On hope without memory
I write your name

Sur le fruit coupé en deux
Du miroir et de ma chambre
Sur mon lit coquille vide
J'écris ton nom

On the fruit cut in two
The mirror and my bedroom
On my bed an empty shell
I write your name

Et par le pouvoir d'un mot
Je recommence ma vie
Je suis né pour te connaître
Pour te nommer

And through the power of one word
I recommence my life
I was born to know you
To give a name to you

Sur mon chien gourmand et tendre
Sur ses oreilles dressées
Sur sa patte maladroite
J'écris ton nom

On my dog greedy and loving
On his alert ears
On his clumsy paw
I write your name

Liberté

Liberty

Sur le tremplin de ma porte
Sur les objets familiers
Sur le flot du feu béni
J'écris ton nom

On the springboard of my door
On the familiar objects
On the stream of the sacred flame
I write your name

Skylark

Clear Voices In The Dark



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