

OPERA FOR EARTH

PRESENTS...

DIALOGUES **of the** **Carmelites**

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16

2:00 PM

**MOCCASIN LAKE NATURE PARK
2750 PARK TRAIL LANE
CLEARWATER
FREE ADMISSION**

MORE INFO:

WWW.OPERAFOREARTHCORPORATION.ORG

CONTACT:

OPERAFOREARTH@GMAIL.COM



SPONSORS

We thank you

KEITH KENNEY PHOTOGRAPHY:

803-553-1806

EMAIL: KEITHKENNEYPHOTO@GMAIL.COM

[HTTPS://KEITHKENNEYPHOTO.COM/](https://KEITHKENNEYPHOTO.COM/)

PINELLAS OPERA LEAGUE:

[HTTPS://SITES.GOOGLE.COM/VIEW/PINELLAS-OPERA-LEAGUE/HOME](https://SITES.GOOGLE.COM/VIEW/PINELLAS-OPERA-LEAGUE/HOME)

CITY OF CLEARWATER

MOCCASIN LAKE NATURE PARK:

[HTTPS://WWW.MYCLEARWATERPARKS.COM/PARKS-AND-TRAILS/MOCCASIN-LAKE-NATURE-PARK](https://WWW.MYCLEARWATERPARKS.COM/PARKS-AND-TRAILS/MOCCASIN-LAKE-NATURE-PARK)

**A BIG 'THANK YOU' TO FR. ADRIAN WILDE FOR DOING OUR PRE-
PERFORMANCE TALK**

AND THANK YOU TO OUR LADY OF MT. CARMEL:

[HTTPS://OLMC-OSPREY.ORG/](https://OLMC-OSPREY.ORG/)

DIALOGUES OF THE CARMELITES

GET THE STORY . . .

In July of 1794, during the French Revolution, 16 Carmelite nuns (Carmel of Compeigne) were executed by guillotine for refusing to comply with the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. The nuns were brought to Paris by carriage, tried and executed to an eerily silent crowd, watching them go to their death as they sang Salve Regina.

Who are Carmelite nuns and how did they begin?

Carmelite nuns were established in 1200 by a group of Hermits dedicated to the worship of the Virgin Mary. Carmelite nuns are cloistered and live in enclosed monasteries. They live lives of contemplation, they are dedicated to a life of prayer, a close union with God and a reverence for the Virgin Mary.

Why were the nuns executed?

They were tried and found to be guilty of treason and declared enemies of the state for their radical renunciation of worldly concerns, their humble service of Christ and their dedication to prayer.

Interesting facts about Carmelite nuns:

Do Carmelite nuns still exist today?

Yes. There are many monasteries today, even throughout Florida.

Are Carmelite nuns allowed to speak?

Yes. Primarily during recreation, which is twice daily and on recreation days. Throughout the day, focus is on completing tasks and prayer.

Do Carmelite nuns eat meat?

They abstain from meat, except for a remedy for sickness or feebleness.

What do Carmelites do all day?

Eight hours per day is spent in prayer and two hours in recreation. Five hours are for manual work, reading and study. Their day ends at 10:30.

Can Carmelites see their family?

They can write to them or see them at the monastery parlor once per month.

What are the three vows the nuns take?

Poverty, chastity and obedience.

Can a married woman become a Carmelite nun?

Formerly married women can become a Carmelite nun.

SYNOPSIS

French Revolution: Paris and Compiègne 1789 - 1794

ACT 1

The Marquis de la Force and his son, the Chevalier are discussing Blanche, the Chevalier's younger, timid sister. They fear for her safety, as it is the beginning of the French Revolution in Paris, 1789, and her carriage was held up by a mob. Seemingly unshaken by this incident, Blanche retires to her room, only to return when she was frightened by the shadow of a servant. When she returns to her father, she tells him that she wants to become a nun.

Sometime later at the Convent of the Carmelite Order in Compiègne, Blanche is speaking with Madame de Croissy, the Prioress of the Convent. Mme. de Croissy explains to Blanche that the convent is a place of prayer, and not a hiding place. Mme. de Croissy is touched deeply by Blanche's desire for her new life.

Blanche and Sister Constance are discussing their fear of death, and Sister Constance tells Blanche that she has overcome this fear. Blanche talks about how she does envy Sister Constance's ease of heart about life. Sister Constance tells Blanche that she knows that they will both die young and on the same day.

Mme. de Crossy is lying on her deathbed trying to appear at peace. She gives her blessing to Blanche, and gives her over to the care of Mère Marie. As death approaches, Mme. de Croissy confesses her fear of death and dies.

ACT 2

The evening of Mme. de Crossy's death, Blanche and Constance are keeping a vigil in the chapel, when Blanche almost runs from the chapel out of fear. When Mère Marie appears and sees Blanche's fear, she consoles her.

Constance speaks of her desire for Mère Marie to be the next Prioress, and speaks of the agonizing death of Mme. de Croissy. She questions why she would have to die such an agonizing death, and says that perhaps she died painfully for someone else to have an easy death.

Mme. Lidoine has been announced as the new Prioress. As she is giving blessings and advice of prayer and humility to the members of the convent, she asks Mère Marie to close her talk with them. Mère Marie and the entire convent sing *Ave Maria*. The Chevalier, Blanche's brother, is announced at the gate. He desires to speak to his sister about fleeing the convent and returning to their father, as there is unrest. Blanche refuses and says that her place is at the convent.

The priest performs his last mass, as it is now forbidden. Soon after, as the nuns are discussing the violence that is happening, Mère Marie questions whether martyrdom is their way out. Mme. Lidoine reminds her that only God Himself can appoint martyrs. Knocking is heard at the door and 2 Commissioners enter, telling the nuns that they are being expelled from the convent. One commissioner ensures Mère Marie that he will do his best for their safety. Just then, one of the sisters gives Blanche a figurine of the Blessed Mary. Upon hearing a crowd calling out at the gate, Blanche becomes frightened and drops the figurine. She is fearful of the bad omen.

ACT III

In the ruins of the convent, Mère Marie suggests to the sisters that they take a vow of martyrdom. When the votes are counted, and there is one dissenter, Sister Constance says it is her, and asks to change it so the vow can move forward. Blanche becomes fearful and runs away. The nuns are then lead away from the convent.

Blanche is forced to work as a servant in the home of her father because he has been lead off to the guillotine. Mère Marie finds her at this mansion and takes her back to the rest of the sisters. On the way back, they learn that the sisters have been arrested.

The nuns have been imprisoned. Mme. Lidoine has joined them in their vow of martyrdom. Sister Constance says that she dreamed of Blanche's return to them. Just then, a jailer enters their cell and reads their sentence of death. Mme. Lidoine then gives a blessing to the sisters and expresses that she loves them as a mother loves her children. Upon hearing about the sentence from the priest, Mère Marie wants to join them, but the priest reminds her that martyrdom is not her choice, but God's.

At the Place de la Révolution, a crowd has gathered to watch the execution. The Carmelites walk to the guillotine, lead by Mme. Lidoine and singing *Salve Regina*. With now only Constance left, she sees Blanche step out of the crowd and join her in singing, following her to her death.

Meet the Cast

For more details about the cast, click [HERE](#)



Gregory Buchalter is currently Music Director of Varna International and Muzika! The Grand Strand Music Festival. He has been a regular conductor with Florida Grand Opera where he has conducted Andre Previn's A Streetcar Named Desire, Jake Heggie's Three Decembers and Tosca and I Pagliacci. He is Music Director of Vero Beach Opera where he has conducted L'Elisir d'amore, Don Giovanni and next season will lead La Traviata and I Pagliacci.



Blanche de la Force

A Tampa Bay native, lyric coloratura soprano **Jennifer Lamont** is known for her "captivatingly charismatic" stage presence, "rich, golden" voice, and signature arpeggio laugh. This season, Jennifer will be making her chorus debut in La Traviata with Opera Tampa, after recently performing in St. Pete Opera's Turandot, and South Florida Lyric Opera's Pierrette et Jacquot/Un mari a la porte and Acis and Galatea.



Marquis de la Force

Anthony Offerle's credits include performances with the Opera Estate in Rome, The Cincinnati Opera, Opera Mississippi, International Chamber Orchestra, Dayton Opera, Wyoming Opera, Intermountain Opera, Pacific Opera, and the Spoleto Festival USA. Mr. Offerle has sung over 30 leading roles including the title roles in Don Giovanni and Don Pasquale, Scarpia in Tosca, Papageno in Die Zauberflöte, and Bartolo in both Il Barbiere di Siviglia and Le Nozze di Figaro. Equally at home with musical theater repertoire, Mr. Offerle has performed the Major General in The Pirates of Penzance, Sir Despard Murgatroyd in Ruddigore, and Riff in West Side Story.



Chevalier de la Force

Stephen Fee is grateful and blessed to make his debut with Opera for Earth. He was last seen in the Offenbach comedy "A Husband at the Door", in the role of Florestan with South Florida Lyric Opera (SFLO) in his triumphant return to the Opera stage; prior to that he was seen as Alfred in "Die Fledermaus" also with SFLO. A St. Pete native and USF graduate, he has spent the last decade raising a family and growing a financial services business.



Mme. de Croissy

Heidi Skok made her Contralto debut in February of 2023 as Madame Flora with First Coast Opera in St. Augustine, FL to six performances of standing ovations, alongside a stellar cast. After pursuing a twenty plus year career in the wrong vocal range for her voice as a Soprano, Heidi Skok has now successfully found her way as a Contralto. In her early Soprano career, Skok did yet even still reach some of the highest levels, singing mostly at the Metropolitan Opera in German, Czech, Russian and English operas, and primarily under the direction and baton of Maestro James Levine.



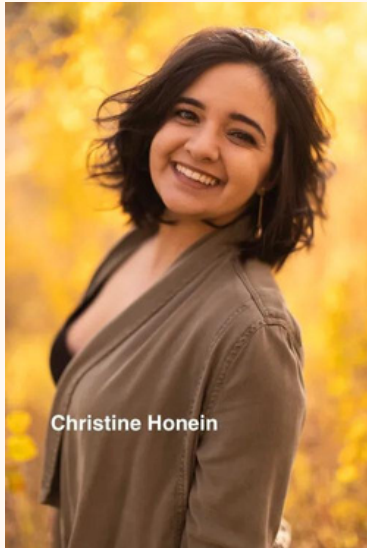
Mère Marie

Monica Camafreita made her role debut as The Mother in Amahl and the Night Visitors with Opera for Earth in Tampa, Florida and performed Wellgunde in Das Rheingold, with SAS Performing Arts Company. She also jumped in as Donna Elvira (Don Giovanni) with SAS and debuted the title role in Suor Angelica with the Varna International Festival in Bulgaria and Italy. Monica's extensive repertoire includes la Ciesca (Gianni Schicchi), Elisabetta (Maria Stuarda), Tisbe (La Cenerentola), Mrs. Gobineau (The Medium), The Nursing Sister (Suor Angelica), Dama (Macbeth), and many others.

Sister Constance

Christine Honein has been featured on stages in the United States and the Middle East performing concert work as well as opera. Most recently, Christine performed the roles of the Second Woman and the First Witch in the Baroque Chamber Orchestra of Colorado's production of *Dido and Aeneas*.

In the Fall of 2019, Christine was the featured soloist in Imant Raminsh's *Missa Brevis* with the ASTER choir and CU Women's choir, and premiered the role of Miriam in a workshop of the chamber opera *Friday After Friday*, by Leanna Kirchoff, which addresses Syrian women's unique experiences of living through the war crisis. In November, Christine appeared in Boulder Opera's *Carmen Highlights* as Frasquita.



Mme. Lidoine

In 2024, **Jodi Karem** performed the role of Miss Havisham (*Miss Havisham's Wedding Night*) and at OperaFest Dunedin and at St. John's in the Village in NYC in 2024.

In 2023, Ms. Karem had the opportunity to cover the role of Leonore (*Fidelio*) with St. Petersburg Opera under the baton of Maestro Mark Sforzini and perform in several preview concerts of this wonderful opera. She also performed with South Florida Lyric Opera in the roles of Mme. Patacha (*Pierrette et Jacquot*) and the title role Herminie (*Berlioz*). In 2022, Ms. Karem performed in music festivals such as Music @ Moccasin Lake and Arts Earth Festival in Mississippi. In 2021, Ms. Karem performed the role of Lady Macbeth both in Opera for Earth's New York City production and in Austin, TX for the Neill Cochran House Museum's Porch Concerts Series.



Sister Mathilde /

Mère Marie Cover

Peilu Ni moved to Florence Italy to pursue opera career in 2014. She then enrolled in the Italian language school, Istituto Europeo Firenze, while taking private singing lessons with Maestro Franco Pagliazzi and singing in churches.

Due to several personal reasons, Peilu stopped singing in 2005 for 10 years. In 2014, she relocated with her family of 4 in Tampa, Florida, taking private lessons with Stella Zambali and Melody Aristo. She participated in opera idol contest and master classes at St. Petersburg Opera Company in 2015. Ms. Ni played the role of the aunt in Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* and appeared in several concerts and master classes as an emerging artist and in the chorus with the company.



Father Confessor of the Covenant



Andy Morales has an MM in vocal performance from Kent State University. He has a BM in guitar and vocal performance from Mount Union college. Andy has performed with several Opera companies in Cleveland Ohio, Indianapolis Indiana, and Tampa Florida. A truck driver by day, Andy considers himself a blue collar opera singer moonlighting as a performer and private music teacher in the Tampa area. When he's not hard at work, you can find him on his boat fishing, at the gun range, or at home listening to heavy metal while petting his 2 cats.

1st Commissioner



Guillermo Lopez has been hailed as one of the promising voices in Mexico and the US. He participated as a soloist in the International Festival Alfonso Ortiz Tirado. Mr. Lopez got third place in the NATS competition of the Great Lakes, and he was a semifinalist in the first edition of the International Francisco Araiza Vocal Competition. In 2014 he performed in the world-premiere of the opera *Illegal Alien* by the Mexican composer Alfonso Molina.

Blanche Cover



Winner of the 2021 Louis Sudler Prize in the Performing and Creative Arts from Yale University and recipient of a 2020 Encouragement Award from the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, **Lisl Wangermann** is a soprano who has performed with the CIM Opera Theater, Opera Western Reserve, the Norwalk Symphony Orchestra, the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, the Opera Theatre of Yale College, and the Yale Baroque Opera Project. In 2023, Lisl was a semifinalist for the Dallas Opera's Lone Star Vocal Competition.



Jenna Armstrong

Sister Geraldine

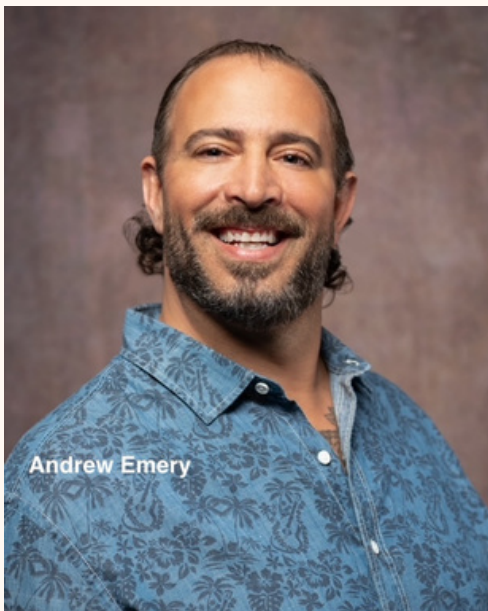
Jenna Armstrong's experience extends internationally, having performed with the Assisi International Music Festival in Italy. Most recently, she appeared in the chorus of "Samson et Dalila" with St. Pete Opera. Jenna is also deeply passionate about directing. She is currently directing multiple opera scenes in USF's Opera Workshop, serving as the director of the children's chorus at Hillsdale Baptist Church, and as the musical director for Plant City Entertainment's production "Jinglebell Jukebox"



Imelda Franklin Bogue

Mother Jeanne / Prioress Cover

Emerging dramatic contralto **Imelda Franklin Bogue** sang Erda and Waltraute for Boulder Opera's concert Der Ring des Niebelungen in 2023 and covered Azucena for Boulder's Il Trovatore the previous season. Other recent engagements include Herodias for Madison's Lyric Stage's Salome (cover), Mrs. Sedley for MLS' Peter Grimes, and Mama McCourt for Loveland Opera's The Ballad of Baby Doe.



Andrew Emery

Jailer / M. Javelinot

Andrew Emery received a Bachelor of Arts in Voice Performance from Westminster Choir College in Princeton, NJ. Mr. Emery has enjoyed performing with multiple companies in diverse settings, including Walt Disney's "Beauty and the Beast" through AEA. He has been a part of multiple performances and recordings with the New York Choral Artists at Lincoln Center, Philadelphia Orchestra at the Academy of Music, San Francisco Symphony, and the Mid-America Productions at Carnegie Hall. Andrew teaches music in Tampa at his private practice focusing on vocal technique and piano. He is continuing his performance career in the Tampa Bay area with the St. Petersburg Opera Co., Opera Tampa and Opera Orlando.

Jens Maithre
Benjamin Spierman
Jenna Andrews
Angelina Kargapolova
Serena Hu
Victoria Zisi
Maija Salo
Sandra Rogers
Ashley Hoon

2nd Commissioner
Thierry
Mother Gerald
Sister Alice
Sister Gertrude
Sister Antoine
Sister Valentine
Sister Martha
Sister St. Charles



Chorus Master

Teresa Ancaya, Chorus Master

DIRECTOR'S PERSPECTIVE



Stage Director **Benjamin Spierman** has seen his productions praised by audiences and critics across the United States. His work includes critically acclaimed productions of both familiar and unfamiliar pieces. Opera Today praised his production of Lucia di Lammermoor for Opera San José as “imaginative, fluid, and chockful of fresh ideas. Other regional work has included La bohème for Syracuse Opera (“great visual appeal” - CNY Café Momus); The Magic Flute for Opera Idaho – Idaho Statesman); Roméo et Juliette for St. Petersburg Opera (“a spine- tingling success” - Tampa Bay Times), Turandot for Dayton Opera (“the most intimate, best- characterized production I’ve seen” – Dayton City Paper). He currently serves as General Director at Bronx Opera, where he has led numerous productions,

DIALOGUES OF THE CARMELITES is one of the most compelling operas to come out of the 20th Century. Like many great works, it was inspired by its creator’s reaction to

events, both external and internal. In this case, Francis Poulenc was creating CARMELITES in the wake of the general devastation of France during World War II, as he was recommitting to Catholicism while striving to reconcile his religious devotion with his open homosexuality. How much and how specifically these factors impacted CARMELITES is hard to say, but it seems obvious that the intricacy of the musical character development shows how personally Poulenc took the story of the real-life Martyrs of Compiègne.

Although the opera is in three acts, the story is in two parts. Part one is full of more intimate scenes: we see the de la Force family at home, Blanche's one-on-one "entrance interview" with the First Prioress, the dynamics of Blanche's relationship with the young nun Constance, the wrenching death of the Prioress and the nuns' reactions to her death, and the extensive introduction of the new Prioress. Part two begins with the appearance of Blanche's brother at the convent (the 3rd scene of Act II), first to try to persuade Blanche to leave the nunnery and then to share a final farewell as he escapes France. It is at this point that the Reign of Terror truly intrudes into the cloistered world of these women. Officers of the Revolution arrive to tell the nuns that they must put off their habits, adopt civilian attire, and vacate their convent, and that they may no longer live communally or be in contact with religious authorities. In the temporary absence of the Prioress, Marie (the assistant Prioress) leads the nuns into a vow of martyrdom, which causes a terrified Blanche to flee the community. We then see Blanche (working as a servant in what was once her father's house) reject Marie's entreaties to come with her to safety. We then see Marie's misery as she realizes that she won't reach martyrdom with her sister nuns: in Marie's absence, despite their compliance with the orders of the Officers of the Revolution, the nuns have been arrested, imprisoned, and condemned to die.

Life is a series of choices, and great drama is no different. Starting from the opening scene, in which Blanche tells her father that she has decided to become a nun, CARMELITES follows the choices, both large and small, which led these nuns (in the opera and in reality) to the guillotine. Art is also a series of choices: Poulenc's choice to tell this particular story; his choice to make it known that he wanted this opera produced in the vernacular of the audience; our choice to present it at a time when we are just coming to grips with changes in this country which threaten to strip some people of the various "rights to choose"; and, finally, your choice to join us today. We are glad you chose to be with us here in Clearwater today in this unique setting, for this unique masterpiece of music theatre.

OUR FABULOUS ORCHESTRA

OUR MAESTRO

Gregory Buchalter

VIOLIN

Julie Paradies, Concertmaster

Iris Jones, violin

Miles Serrano, violin

VIOLIN II

Joan M. Lenahan-Bernard, 1st Chair

Zoe Rivera, violin II

VIOLA

Maribeth Radtke, 1st Chair

Jacob Rodriguez, viola

Javier Quiles, viola

CELLO

Jeff Leisinger

BASS

Luke Kopicki

OBOE

Khoury Youness

FLUTE

Italee Philom

CLARINET

Stacey McColley

BASSOON

Brianna Pols

HORN

Don Grammer

TRUMPET

Nevin Seeger

TROMBONE

Alexander Couchman Cabral

PERCUSSION

Kelsey Bannon

PIANO

Wesley Ducote

Teresa Ancaya

OPERA FOR EARTH

What we do...

Opera for Earth was conceived during the Covid - 19 pandemic in my Brooklyn apartment when I was recovering from an illness. During this pandemic, I had a lot of reflection time, as all of NYC was shut down. As the opera world was shut down for a solid year, I had an opportunity to go work for film production, and saw how much waste there was in that industry with the overuse of plastics, disposal of perfectly good building materials and flagrant purchases of set products that were simply thrown away. I began thinking about opera and how much waste there is with the building of costumes (very toxic for the environment), building of sets and the printing of thousands of programs that just end up in the garbage. I wanted to get opera singers together who cared about the environment, but weren't crazy enough to lie in the streets and block cars. I wanted singers who were thoughtful on how to teach audiences how to care for the environment because when our world around us thrives, the arts thrive. Art is inspired by the very nature around us, and so we must care for our planet so arts can grow.

We decided to begin educating children and audiences about opera. We received funding to take an opera workshop to a small town in the Delta in Mississippi. We worked with a group of middle school children, taught them singing technique, repertoire, and even sang for them. We prepared a show for the rest of the community that was a combination of professional singers and middle school children, and it gave this community its first glance into opera. We made a documentary of this experience that has been featured in 3 film festivals. Please view this documentary [HERE](#).

When I was so over living in NYC, I decided to move to the fabulous Tampa Bay area, and the Opera for Earth team was on board with moving our nonprofit too. While power walking through the neighborhood which houses Moccasin Lake Nature Park, I just so happened upon the amazingly beautiful park. The park director was very supportive of music at this park, and this music festival was born. Opera for Earth also found various venues to sing concerts and do education programs for kids. We have reached so many wonderful audience members who experienced opera for the very first time. It's been life - changing.

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED...

Opera for Earth needs **sponsors** to move forward. We need the community to get involved in raising money to bring more free and low - cost programming to educate community members in Pinellas County about this beautiful and inspiring art form. Will you be a part of this? Will you consider giving a [donation](#)? If you would like to get involved, please contact: **Operaforearth@gmail.com**

Thank you,
Jodi Karem