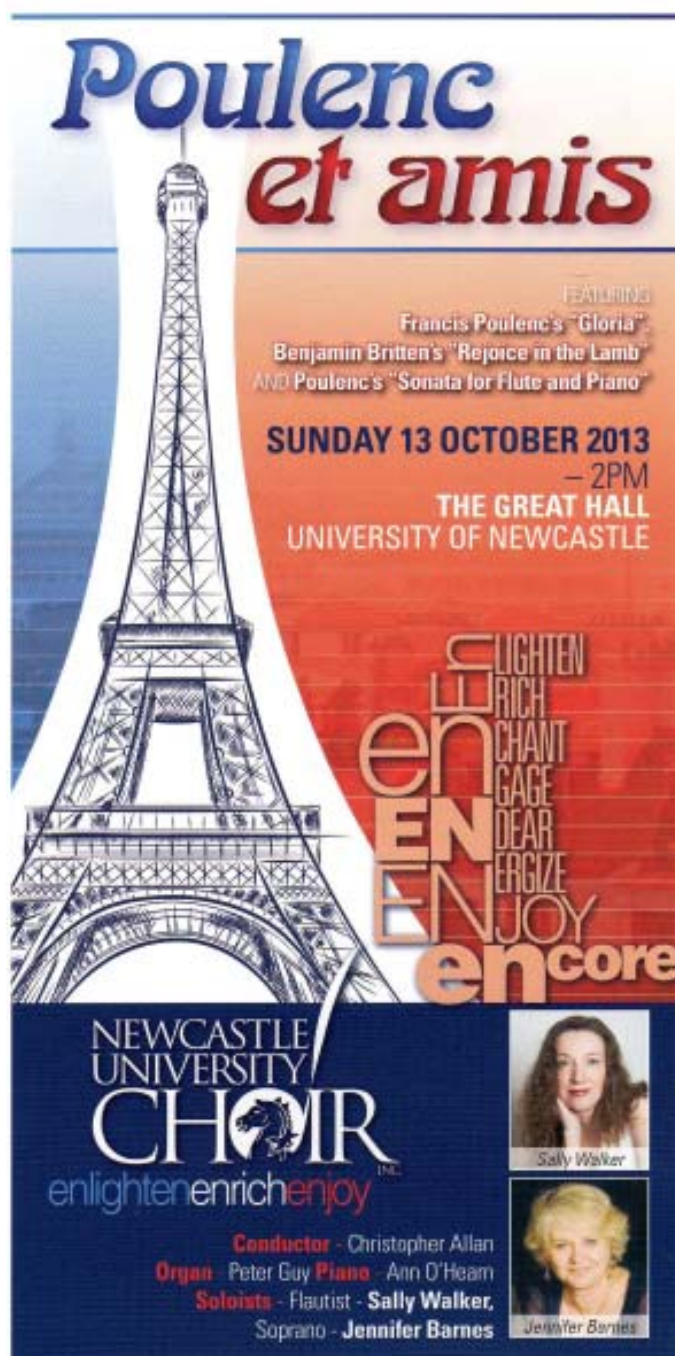


"Beneath the cacophony of sound generated by our world lies the quiet whisper of universal intelligence. Allow it to be heard..." - Simon Boylan



Poulenc et amis

FEATURING:
Francis Poulenc's "Gloria"
Benjamin Britten's "Rejoice in the Lamb"
AND Poulenc's "Sonata for Flute and Piano"

SUNDAY 13 OCTOBER 2013
- 2PM
THE GREAT HALL
UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE

enlighten enrich enjoy encore

NEWCASTLE
UNIVERSITY
CHOIR

enlighten enrich enjoy

Conductor - Christopher Allan
Organ - Peter Guy Piano - Ann O'Heam
Soloists - Flautist - Sally Walker,
Soprano - Jennifer Barnes

Sally Walker
Jennifer Barnes

Adults \$25 Concession \$20 Students \$15
Free Parking

Tickets at MacLean's Booksellers Hamilton,
Music Solutions Warners Bay, through
Stickytickets, or on our website or by phoning
4954 8781

Bienvenue au XXe siècle...

Grove's Dictionary is often the primary source of information for those researching music. First published in four volumes in 1878, it was most recently republished in 2001, and now consists of 29 volumes, with 29,499 articles including 20,374 biographies of composers, performers and writers on music.

My own more modest set is the third edition in five volumes published in 1949. Still, it's full of useful information, and it was the first place I went to when preparing this issue of *Cacophony*.

In 1949 Benjamin Britten was obviously yet to attain fame as a composer – he doesn't even rate a mention in my *Grove's*. Francis Poulenc was still alive (he died in 1963), but was yet to compose his *Gloria*. Our concert on October 13, *Poulenc et Amis*, will feature the music of contemporary composers, that is, composers of the twentieth century.

Introducing... Les Six



Charlotte Higgins writes: "Every Saturday night for two years, at the beginning of the 20s in Paris, a little restaurant at the top of the Rue Blanche would always be full. The customers all arrived together, already merry from the cocktails they had been drinking; later, this crowd of musicians, painters and poets would leave for Montmartre fair and amuse themselves among the carousels,

shooting galleries and gambling games. There was a mechanical organ that blared out all the latest tunes from the music hall, tunes that would sometimes find their way into the music of the six composers at the heart of the group.”



Poulenc et ami

The group became known as *Les Six*, and Francis Poulenc was one of them. Their music was a strong reaction against German Romanticism, especially Wagner, and also against the lush style of French Impressionism, exemplified by the work of Debussy. Eric Satie was their mentor, and the poet Jean Cocteau their spokesman.

Satie was a rebel. He wrote his scores in red ink without bar lines, with punning titles – *Pieces in the Shape of a Pear*, *Limp Preludes for a Dog*. The title of his ballet *Relâche* was a practical joke to confuse members of the audience arriving at the theatre – *relâche* is the French word used on posters to indicate that a show is cancelled, or the theatre is closed.

At the premiere of his ballet *Parade* in 1919 a lady was heard to say, “If I’d known it was so silly I’d have brought the children.”

Critic Claude Rostand described Poulenc as ‘half bad boy, half monk’. In his *Gloria* the words from the Mass are set to music which some critics suggested bordered on the sacrilegious. Poulenc replied, ‘While writing it I had in mind those Crozzoli frescoes with angels sticking out their tongues, and also some solemn-looking Benedictine monks that I saw playing football one day.’

Poulenc’s sense of humour and love of life are obvious, however solemn the text might be. My *Grove* describes his music as being “characterised by a love of plain statement and a frankness of humour sometimes bordering on pretension and vulgarity, but often not without a certain youthful charm.”

In *Classical Music* John Burrows writes : “As a master of natural, unpretentious melody, Poulenc

has few rivals; his manner of blending Neo-Classical harmonies with the bitter-sweet touches of French popular song gives his music a distinct and subtle charm, even when it touches on tragedy.

“By turns joyous and melancholy, sacred and profane, Poulenc’s music faithfully reflects its composer – a manic depressive, a devout Catholic, and one of the few public figures of his time to be openly (and often turbulently) gay.”

A critic described a performance of this piece as “...that exuberant masterpiece... showering Southwark Cathedral in roses and gold.” That’s our challenge!

Il y a plus!



Jean-Pierre Rampal et ami

James Galway says : “I do not consider myself as having mastered the flute, but I get a real kick out of trying.”

Jean-Pierre Rampal is credited with popularizing the flute as a solo instrument, paving the way for flautists including Galway, Jane Rutter and our own Sally Walker. He also encouraged composers like Poulenc to write for the instrument.

In his autobiography Rampal recalls a phone call from the composer : “Jean-Pierre,” said Poulenc: “You know you’ve always wanted me to write a sonata for flute and piano? Well, I’m going to,” he said. “And the best thing is that the Americans will pay for it! I’ve been commissioned by the Coolidge Foundation to write a chamber piece in memory of Elizabeth Coolidge. I never knew her, so I think the piece is yours.”

Orrin Howard annotated Los Angeles Philharmonic programs for more than 20 years. Here’s what he wrote about Poulenc’s *Sonata* : “The in-turn breathy sensuousness and penetrating brilliance of the flute, an instrument beloved by French composers, are perfect timbral qualities for music by Poulenc. No French composer epitomized the elegance, clarity, and droll wit of the 20th-century Gallic spirit better

than Poulenc, and it is not surprising that he came around to expressing these national characteristics in a work for an instrument that can delineate them so well.

"The Flute Sonata is as typical of Poulenc as anything he ever wrote, combining as it does elegant charm and brashness, and embodying a disarming combination of innocence and sophistication and a naturalness that seems to stem directly from the boulevard cafés...

"Everyone knows that Poulenc can be, among other things, suave, sensuous, and slapstick; the Flute Sonata is a three-movement confirmation of this character description."



Poulenc et amis

"If wind and water could write music, it would sound like Ben's," wrote Yehudi Menuhin.

Ben, of course, is Benjamin Britten, pictured above with Poulenc and Peter Pears.

2013 marks the fiftieth anniversary of Poulenc's death, and the 100th anniversary of Britten's birth.

The two composers first met in London in 1945, when they were the soloists in Poulenc's *Concerto for Two Pianos*. They remained good friends until Poulenc's death.

Britten wrote in 1964 that his friend "was too innocent to be insincere...incapable of being anything but himself – a delightful friend and a lovable musician."

Britten drew on many sources for his compositions, including Shakespeare, Melville, Henry James, Thomas Mann, Guy de Maupassant and others. In 1945 he chose a poem of the 18th-

century poet Christopher Smart for a work commissioned to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of St. Matthew's Church in Northampton.

The Anglican priest who commissioned the piece, Walter Hussey, comments in his introduction : "The writer was Christopher Smart, an eighteenth century poet, deeply religious, but of a strange and unbalanced mind. 'Rejoice in the Lamb' was written while Smart was in an asylum, and is chaotic in form but contains many flashes of genius."

Britten movingly encapsulates the poem's delightfully ecstatic religious spirit.

An anonymous writer penned some appropriate remarks : "For some reason, this music brings to mind the description that Betsy Wyeth used for her husband, the artist Andrew Wyeth: 'Wondrous strange.' Britten doesn't shy from Smart's eccentricity, but, rather, serves it up for the listener, so that we might experience the crackling brilliance of his imagination. Strange, to be sure, but much like Wyeth's paintings, there is so much wonder in which to share and so large a measure of beauty to ponder in this striking fusion of music and poetry."

This will be a most interesting concert, featuring music that will be new to many – it certainly was to me – and highly enjoyable.

I'll leave the last word to Poulenc : "Above all do not analyse my music. . . Love it!"

Présentation de nos solistes

Gloria is written "pour Soprano solo, Chœur et Orchestre", and who better for our Soprano soloist than Jennifer Barnes. Jenny has been our musical director, a guest soloist, and *Notre ami* for many years.

Ann O'Hearn, our very talented, very patient, very helpful répétiteur, is on piano.

Peter Guy makes a welcome return on the organ.

Sally Walker is our guest flautist. Sally has been described as "a young master of both the early wooden as well as the silver flute...atmospheric, fine musicianship... a godly flexibility and colouring in her most soul-stirring tone formation ... breathtaking musicality"

Sally returned to Newcastle seven years ago, after nine years performing in more than 20 countries. Numerous composers have dedicated works to her, including Michael Askill, Jim Chapman, Andrew Ford, Elena Kats-Chernin, Knut Mueller, Coco Nelegatti, Colin Spiers and Paul Stanhope.