



# Sydney Conservatorium of Music Opera School

## *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*

(The Breasts of Tiresias)

**Francis Poulenc**

Saturday 19 May, 6.30pm

Tuesday 22 May, 6.30pm

Thursday 24 May, 11.30am

Saturday 26 May, 2.00pm

Music Workshop, Sydney Conservatorium of Music



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SYDNEY**



SYDNEY  
CONSERVATORIUM  
OF MUSIC

# Sydney Conservatorium of Music Opera School presents

*Les Mamelles de Tirésias*  
(The Breasts of Tiresias)  
Francis Poulenc

**Original play by Guillaume Apollinaire**

Opera in one act

Sung in French  
with English surtitles

Approximately 1 hour (without interval)

**Director** Kate Gaul

**Music Director** Dr Stephen Mould

**Producer** Scott Ryan

**Set and Costume Designer** Kate Gaul

**Lighting Designer** Fausto Brusamolino

**Hair and makeup design** Rachel Dal Santo

*Les Mamelles de Tirésias* is published by  
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and supplied by Music Sales Group.

For his first foray into opera, Francis Poulenc chose a play by Guillaume Apollinaire, a zany drama *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, which was premiered in 1903, for which the playwright coined the term *drame surréaliste*.

Poulenc began to compose his opera in 1945, and it premiered in Paris in 1947. This was a particularly grim period in French history. It seems that Poulenc saw the need to laugh in the face of adversity and portray the occupation of France as an event with Dadaistic overtones.

We acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional owners of the land on which we meet; the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. It is upon their ancestral lands that the University of Sydney is built.

As we share our own knowledge, teaching, learning and research practices within this university, may we also pay respect to the knowledge embedded forever within the Aboriginal Custodianship of Country.

# Synopsis

## Act 1

Set in Zanzibar, an imaginary town somewhere on the French Riviera, between Nice and Monte Carlo, the opera opens with a prologue in which the Theatre Director addresses the audience in an extended aria.

Thérèse, a feminist with military ambitions, appears, denying her husband. Her breasts, represented by balloons, escape from her blouse and float upwards and she starts to grow a beard. Her husband, coming out of the house, thinks that the stranger that he sees has killed his wife and donned her clothes, until she explains to him that she is no longer Thérèse, but now Tirésias.

Lacouf and Presto emerge from a café, quarrelling and finally shooting each other, mourned by Thérèse-Tirésias in elegant male clothing and her husband dressed as a housewife, now courted by the Gendarme and proclaiming the fertility of men.

In the second part of the work, the husband has achieved remarkable success, with 40,000 babies in a day, and is interviewed by a journalist. The husband boasts that one of his children has already written a bestseller. When the journalist asks for a small loan, he is quickly sent packing. It seems that the more children you have, the richer you will be, but the creation of a journalist he tries to make, turns out badly.

The Gendarme complains about the sudden increase in population needing to be fed, so the husband suggests to take ration cards from a fortune teller. When the fortune teller appears, she advises against further children, reproaching the Gendarme with sterility and finally strangling him, before revealing herself as Thérèse. Her husband is pleased, the Gendarme comes to life again and buys some balloons. Thérèse and her husband waltz together.

**Francis Poulenc** (born Paris, 7 January 1899; died Paris, 30 January 1963) was a French composer and pianist. During the first half of his career the simplicity and directness of his writing led many critics away from thinking of him as a serious composer. Gradually, since World War II, it has become clear that the absence from his music of linguistic complexity in no way argues a corresponding absence of feeling or technique; and that while, in the field of French religious music, he disputes supremacy with Messiaen, in that of the *mélodie* he is the most distinguished composer since the death of Fauré.

(Source *Oxford Music Online*)



## Music Director's Note

### *Poulenc and Les Mamelles de Tirésias*

Francis Poulenc has often been maligned by musical history, particularly those histories created by the French postwar musical intelligentsia. Perhaps they were jealous that Poulenc had the luxury of composing according to his whim – he was independently wealthy and able to create according to his personal taste rather than any ideology. He was also a musical bowerbird – a characteristic awoken in him by his first teacher, his mother, who would play the musical classics on the piano for him, interspersed with popular hits of the day. Poulenc studied the musical classics, revered church music, and accepted the music of the opera house, the operetta theatre, the cabaret, the café and the world of jazz as equal partners in his musical style. *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* is an extraordinary melting pot in which the composer gathered and displayed all of the disparate elements of his eclectic musical taste. For this he was long criticised, though his music is more regularly performed than that of his nemesis, Pierre Boulez. His works have continued to be performed where those of his colleagues of the *Les Six* movement have long fallen into neglect.

Although he composed in a wide variety of genres, Poulenc's most memorable work is perhaps to be found in those works that employ a text. His output of over 120 songs are testament to Poulenc's extraordinary ability to imagine the inner world of a poem in music, and further reveal him as a discerning connoisseur of poets, including contemporaries such as Max Jacob, Louise de Vilmorin, Paul Eluard, Jean Cocteau, Louis Aragon, Robert Desnos, Lean Anouilh and Guillaume Apollinaire.

In addition to song, Poulenc also composed three operas, *La Voix Humaine* (1958, based on a 1928 monodrama by Cocteau), *The Dialogues of the Carmelites* (1953–6, based on a screenplay by Georges Bernanos) and *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, composed in 1945 and based on a play by Guillaume Apollinaire that had received its premiere in 1917 to which Poulenc along with many other luminaries of the period attended. It was billed as a 'drame surréaliste', and Poulenc turned to the play for an operatic subject towards the close of World War II, when its surrealist/dada aesthetic masked the tragic realities of the Nazi occupation of France. The absurd scene that occurs at the opening of the second half of the opera, where the birth of dozens and dozens of babies creates a seemingly ridiculous situation, takes on other overtones in the context of the harsh reality of the severely diminished population in post-war Europe.

*Les Mamelles de Tirésias* is a bewildering mélange of the unlikely, the absurd, and the hysterical, all woven together by Poulenc's rich and irreverent score. To direct this extraordinary work, we are delighted to welcome back to the Conservatorium our director and designer, Kate Gaul, who has already created several exceptional productions for us. I hope that you will enjoy this operatic rarity.

**Dr Stephen Mould**  
**Artistic Director, Con Opera**

# Biographies

## Dr Stephen Mould, Artistic Director of Con Opera, Music Director

Sydney-born Stephen Mould is a graduate of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. In 1985, he moved to London to continue his studies at the Royal Academy of Music. During this time, he was active as an orchestral and choral conductor and as a freelance répétiteur. In 1988, he was appointed Head of Music at the Lyric Opera of Queensland, in Brisbane and, in addition to conducting several productions for that company, was also engaged for concerts with the Queensland Philharmonic Orchestra, the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, and conducted opera productions with the Queensland Conservatorium of Music. In 1990, Dr Mould returned to Europe and was engaged as a conductor and musical assistant by a number of opera houses and festivals in Germany, Belgium, Norway and Italy. In 1990, he was engaged as an assistant at the Théâtre de la Monnaie, Brussels and in 1992 was appointed to the staff of Opera Frankfurt as assistant to the Music Director. During this time, he was also engaged as a

teacher at the music conservatorium in Frankfurt. In 1996, he joined the music staff of Opera Australia.

Dr Mould has undertaken engagements for the Sydney Festival, the Melbourne Festival, Symphony Australia and the Sydney Philharmonic Choirs. He was also engaged for State Opera of South Australia's productions of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (1998 and 2004) and *Parsifal* (2002). Stephen Mould was Head of Music at Opera Australia between 2004 and 2008 and, since 1998, has regularly appeared as conductor for the Company. His repertoire includes *La Bohème*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *La Voix Humaine*, *Rusalka*, *Carmen* and *The Makropulos Secret*. In addition, he has appeared with the Sydney and Queensland Symphony Orchestras, the SBS Youth Orchestra, and is a regular guest with Willoughby Symphony Orchestra. In 2006, he conducted *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci* for the Macau International Music Festival and, in 2008, made his American debut for Baltimore Opera conducting *Madama Butterfly*. He also appeared in New Zealand with the Auckland Philharmonia.



Dr Mould is currently Artistic Director of Con Opera and Senior Lecturer in Operatic Studies at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music while continuing his freelance activities as a conductor and accompanist. Recent operatic engagements have included *The Mikado* and a new production of *Le nozze di Figaro* for Opera Australia and *Così fan tutte* for Opera Queensland. 2014/2015 performances included concerts with the Queensland, Canberra and Willoughby Symphony Orchestras, *Messiah* for New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and Assistant Conductor for *Elektra* with the Sydney Symphony. [sydney.edu.au/music/staff-profiles/stephen.mould.php](http://sydney.edu.au/music/staff-profiles/stephen.mould.php)

**Kate Gaul**  
**Director and Designer**

Freelance Theatre Director/Designer. NIDA 1996 (Directing Course), Anne Bogart SIT1 Company 2005. Associate Director Ensemble Theatre 2004/5. Festival Director World Interplay 2009/11. Festival Director Short Play Festival Canberra 2013-2015, Cabaret

Sydney 2014, Mardi Gras Parade Creative Director 2015/16. Kate's directing credits include plays, opera, physical theatre, devised works and classics for all major theatre companies and schools in Australia.

Kate has won numerous awards across the fields of directing and design. She is Artistic Director of Siren Theatre Co where her passion is for text based drama challenges artists and audiences to have bold imaginative experiences. Kate's play *Fatboy* has been produced twice and she has written and directed two short films – *Embrace* and *Cake*. In 2017 Kate produced and directed *The Trouble with Harry* (by Lachlan Philpott) and *The Ham Funeral* (by Patrick White). *Misterman* (by Enda Walsh), *Good With Maps* (by Noelle Janaszewska) both toured internationally.

[www.sirentheatreco.com](http://www.sirentheatreco.com)



**Fausto Brusamolino**  
**Lighting Designer**

Fausto Brusamolino is a lighting designer and creative coder based in Sydney, Australia. Fausto designs lighting for live performances and filming, creates his own lighting installations, and provides lighting designs and consultation for other artists' artworks and exhibitions.

Fausto has lit productions in conventional venues like theatres, studios and galleries, as well as less conventional locations like multilevel car parks and large outdoor installations.

Creative coding is used as a ground for personal research, for prototyping visual solutions, and for building user interfaces to control clusters of lighting or other scenic effects. Creative coding and video design are also implemented as an organic element of the show, and become distinctive production assets to create stunning and unique aesthetics.

Fausto received the 2018 Green Room Award for Best Visual Design for Tangiwai,

directed by Victoria Hunt, which he designed the lighting and implemented the water effects.

[lightingdarknessbydesign.squarespace.com](http://lightingdarknessbydesign.squarespace.com)

**Rachel Dal Santo**  
**Hair and Makeup Designer**

Rachel Dal Santo trained at the 3 Arts Make-up Centre from 1981 to 1982. Her early career focused in theatre before an opportunity to join the makeup department of ATN Channel 7 was to afford her 17 years in television. The last 10 of those years was spent as the Head of the Makeup Department. A freelance career followed working on such films as *The Matrix* and *Mao's Last Dancer*. Rachel's focus is now teaching her skills and has recently written a complete Makeup Artistry course for Online Education Pty Ltd. Working at the Conservatorium has given Rachel the opportunity to return to her first love – theatre and in particular opera.



# Production Credits and Acknowledgments

**Director** Kate Gaul

**Music Director** Dr Stephen Mould

**Producer** Scott Ryan

**Set and Costume Designer** Kate Gaul

**Lighting Designer** Fausto Brusamolino

**Hair and Makeup Designer**

Rachel Dal Santo

**Production Manager** Eva Tilley,

Nicola Sinclair

**Stage Manager** Cecilia Nelson

**Stage Assistants** Ellen O'Neill

**Lighting Board Operator** Sophie Parker

**Assistant Conductors** Warwick Tyrell,

Rachelle Anne Elliot

**Chorus Preparation** Julie de Plater,

Ingrid Sakurovs

**Repetiteurs** Russell Hodges,

Ingrid Sakurovs

**French Language Coach**

Simon Lobelson

**Surtitles Preparation and Operation**

Lachlan Foster

**Orchestral Management** Scott Ryan,  
Tom Westley

**Score and Music Preparation**

Stephen Yates

**Program**

Jacqui Smith

**Publicity** Renae Coles, Jacqui Smith,

Helen Loughlin

**Production Photography**

Clare Hawley

**SCM Library Assistance**

John Wu, Nick Tesoriero,

Montserrat Vigo Montes

**Thank you to:** Adrienne Sach, Dr David Kim-Boyle, Jarrad Salmon, Lee Edwards, Guy McEwan, Rodney Boatwright, Kate Drain, Jacqui Smith, Felicity Knibbs, Marylou Kay, Stephen Yates, Tanya Woodland, Amber Watson, Jacqui Lucey and all of our wonderful library staff.



## Cast

### ***Therese***

Esther Song\*  
Jessica Blunt†

### ***Le mari***

Gavin Brown

### ***Le gendarme***

Jeremy Dubé

### ***La marchande***

Gabrielle Penney

### ***La journaliste***

Sitong Liu\*  
Josi Ann Ellem†

### ***La fille***

Victoria Bromberger

### ***Director***

Haotian Qi

### ***Lacouf***

Joseph Raso

### ***Presto***

Haotian Qi

### ***La dame élégante***

Georgia Melville

### ***La grosse dame***

Stella Hannock

### ***Mlle Barbue***

Madeleine O’Dea

† Sat 19 and Thurs 24 May

\* Tues 22 and Sat 26 May

## Chorus

### **Soprano**

Georgia Melville  
Sandra Xinze Liu  
Madeleine O’Dea  
Aimee O’Neill

### **Alto**

Ellen O’Neil  
Jane Anderson  
Stella Hannock  
Cassidy Lobb  
Robert Adam

### **Tenor**

Oscar Balle-Bowness  
Dominic Lui  
Hamish James

### **Baritone**

Henry Wright



# Orchestra

## Violin 1

Seamus MacNamara, *concertmaster*

Tim Yu

Marrienne Liu

Marta Davis

Jia Gu

Mateja Primorac

Mitzi Gardner

Catherine Jang

## Violin 2

Annastasia Milwain\*

Lydia Sawires

Lucy Macourt

Maxine Poon

Regina Buenaventura

Natalie Mavridis

Katarina Popovic

## Viola

Dana Lee\*

Sophie Nickel

Heejin Kwen

Benjamin Tao

## Cello

Emma Rayner\*

Angela (Song Yi) Shin

Alisdair Guiney

Ruby Jeon

## Double Bass

Linh Nguyen\*

Hayley Witmore

## Flute

Andrew Collins\*

Rebekah House

## Oboe

Mikaela Sukkar\*

Joshua Ning

## Clarinet

Jialing Yu\*

Yeri Kim

Claudia Jelic

## Bassoon

Nicholas Zengoski\*

Tiger Chou

## Horn

Gemma Lawton\*

Paddy Reynolds

## Trumpet

Robin Park\*

Raphael Harvey

## Trombone

William Kinmont\*

## Harp

Rowan Phemister\*

## Percussion

Salina Myat\*

Mathew Levy

## Piano

Russell Hodges\*

\* Section leader



# Vocal and Opera Studies Division

## **Artistic Director, Con Opera, Unit of Study Coordinator, Opera Repertoire**

Dr Stephen Mould

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Anke Hoepfner-Ryan

Simon Lobelson

Maree Ryan AM

Barry Ryan OAM

Robyn Wells

Dr Narelle Yeo

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Siro Battaglin

Julia de Plater

Kate Johnson

Ingrid Sakurovs

Robert Greene

Alan Hicks

## **Opera Language and Diction**

Alan Hicks (Italian)

Anke Hoepfner-Ryan (German)

Simon Lobelson (French)

## **Dance and Movement**

Olivia Ansell

Jo Ansell

## **Stagecraft**

Dr Narelle Yeo

## **Acting**

Paige Gardiner

## **Theatre Studies**

Simon Lobelson

Andy Morton

## **Ensemble**

Dr Stephen Mould

Ingrid Sakurovs

## **Opera Performance Class**

Barry Ryan OAM

## **Opera History**

Associate Professor Michael Halliwell

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Both courses emphasise the practice of opera performance to a professional standard to prepare for a career in opera in Australia and internationally. **Scholarship support is available on a competitive basis.**

## Partnerships

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## Auditions and Further Information

Early round auditions will be held in September 2018 (later round audition will be held in November 2018) for entry in 2019. For more information about our opera and vocal studies programs, please visit:

[music.sydney.edu.au/opera](http://music.sydney.edu.au/opera)

