Nuns’ story promises a memorable night at the opera

Francis Poulenc's luminously beautiful score of *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, with its memorable finale, is coming to the main stage of the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts in October.

Showcasing WAAPA’s Classical Vocal students under the direction of Sydney-based theatre director, Kate Gaul and with musical direction by David Wickham, *Dialogues of the Carmelites* will be performed for a week-long run from Saturday 10 October to Saturday 17 October at 7.30pm in the Geoff Gibbs Theatre.

Supporting the singers on stage will be the largest orchestra yet assembled in the Geoff Gibbs Theatre.

Based on historical events that befell the Carmelite monastery in Compiègne in 1794, *Dialogues of the Carmelites* is the compelling tale of a group of nuns struggling to survive persecution by the leaders of the French Revolution.

First performed in 1957, Poulenc's libretto follows Blanche de la Force, an innocent and oversensitive daughter of nobility, who leaves pre-Revolution French society to seek sanctuary in the Carmelite convent. As the Revolution’s Reign of Terror threatens to destroy the order itself, Blanche flees the convent and the remaining nuns take the vow of martyrdom. The opera’s powerful finale, as the voices of the nuns drown out the mob chorus in the shadow of the guillotine, is one of theatre’s great climaxes.

"Poulenc identified with the central character, Blanche, who feels out of place in the world," says David Wickham, WAAPA’s Senior Lecturer in Piano and the show’s Musical Director. “By the 1950s academic atonal music was in vogue and Poulenc’s heartfelt melodic style was passé, and he felt adrift and forgotten. Now, his songs and operas are much-loved by singers and audiences alike, for their human qualities as much as their sheer musical beauty.”

A graduate of the NIDA Director’s course, Kate Gaul has directed a number of critically acclaimed productions in Sydney, in particular for Company B and as Artistic Director of Siren Theatre Co. Past productions have been described as “directed with panache and compassion” – the perfect combination for WAAPA’s highly anticipated *Dialogues of the Carmelites*.

Performance Information: *Dialogues of the Carmelites*

Saturday 10 – Saturday 17 October at 7.30pm.

The Geoff Gibbs Theatre, WAAPA, Edith Cowan University, 2 Bradford St, Mt Lawley.

Tickets are $35 full/$29 concession. Bookings through WAAPA Box Office on 9370 6636.

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For complimentary tickets to this production or for further information, interviews or photo opportunities, please contact:
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Kate Gaul
Gaul is a 1996 graduate of the NIDA Director’s Course. In 2005 Gaul attended a month long Summer Intensive with Anne Bogart and the SITI Company in New York.

In 2004/5 Kate was the Associate Director at the Ensemble Theatre working on productions of The Violet Hour, Kimberly Akimbo and Lobby Hero. Other directing credits include Carmen (Oz Opera), The Altar Boyz (Ovations Live), Camarilla (Merrigong Theatre Co), Coup D’Etat (MTC), The Gates of Egypt, Our Lady of Sligo, Run Rabbit Run, The Laramie Project, Svetlana in Slingbacks (Company B), Wicked Sisters (national tour), Rabbit (Griffin Theatre) and projects for all major drama schools around Australia.

Kate is the Artistic Director of Siren Theatre Co: productions include Shakespeare’s Richard III and Twelfth Night, Human Resources by Chris Aronsten, Duck by Stella Feehily, eeni meeni mini mo (devised by the company), Hard Swallow by Mirra Todd, Polly Blue by Belinda Bradley, Wanna Go Home, Baby? (devised by the company), Connie and Kevin and the Secret Life of Groceries by Noelle Janaczweska, Blue Heart by Caryl Churchill and Frozen by Michael O’Brien. Gaul has also written and directed two short films, Embrace and Cake. Gaul is currently the Festival Director for World Interplay.

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