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CLASSICS

# FIGURE HUMAINE

CHORAL WORKS BY  
FRANCIS POULENC



TENEBRAE

NIGEL SHORT



## IN LOVING MEMORY

of Barbara Pollock 1956 - 2010

On behalf of myself and all those involved in Tenebrae this recording is dedicated to a very special and much loved friend, Barbara Pollock, without whose constant support, energy and enthusiasm Tenebrae would simply not exist. Anyone involved with the choir over these last ten years will know what a remarkable lady Barbara was, combining so many wonderful qualities – extraordinary generosity, intelligence, charm and beauty – that one can only feel truly privileged to have known her.

In fighting breast cancer for several years she also showed what incredible inner strength, determination and courage she had and will always serve as an inspiration to me both personally and in my work with Tenebrae. She was so proud of the choir and loved nothing more than to sit and listen to us sing.

We were proud of her too! We give thanks for such a wonderful lady to whom we owe so much but take comfort in knowing she is now finally at peace.

She will be sorely missed by us all.  
Nigel

# FIGURE HUMAINE

## FRANCIS POULENC

### **Mass in G**

1	Kyrie	[3.25]
2	Gloria	[4.09]
3	Sanctus	[2.26]
4	Benedictus	[3.46]
5	Agnus Dei	[4.56]

*Soloist: Natalie Clifton-Griffith, soprano*

6	<b>Litanies à la Vierge Noire</b>	[8.19]
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7	<b>Salve Regina</b>	[4.23]
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### **Un Soir de Neige**

8	De grandes cuillers de neige	[1.09]
9	La bonne neige le ciel noir	[1.37]
10	Bois meurtri	[2.12]
11	La nuit le froid la solitude	[1.05]

### **Figure Humaine**

12	I. Bientôt	[2.45]
13	II. Le Rôle des Femmes	[2.05]
14	III. Aussi bas que le silence	[1.34]
15	IV. Patience	[1.58]
16	V. Première Marche la voix d'un autre	[1.00]
17	VI. Un Loup	[1.42]
18	VII. Un feu sans tache	[3.49]
19	VIII. Liberté	[4.30]

### **Quatre petites prières de Saint François d'Assise**

20	Salut, Dame Sainte	[2.10]
21	Tout Puissant	[1.15]
22	Seigneur, je vous en prie	[1.21]
23	O mes très chers frères	[1.55]

Total Timings [63.33]

**TENEBRAE**  
**NIGEL SHORT DIRECTOR**

## **Figure Humaine, and the Awakening of Francis Poulenc**

*“With a courtyard in front, pink with oleanders in tubs, next to a simple chapel hollowed into the rock, shelters a miraculous figure of the Virgin, carved, according to tradition, in black wood by Saint Amadour, the little Zacchaeus of the gospel who had to climb a tree to see the Christ. That same evening I began my Litanies á la Vierge Noire ...”*

Francis Poulenc is now considered to be among the most important composers of choral music of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Yet his early career reveals no trace of the dazzling and idiosyncratic unaccompanied choral textures so abundantly produced in the second half of his life. Poulenc's Parisian forebears were often reluctant choralists, and his contemporaries in the modernist world were disinclined to explore an antiquated and even discredited form associated most recently with the German Romantics. Up until 1936, Poulenc wrote only one piece of choral music, and even that is a slight and whimsical offering for male voices – the *Chanson á Boire* of 1922. Yet by the end of his life Poulenc had so fully embraced the idiom that he felt able to assert: “I think I've put the best and most genuine part of myself into my choral music ... If people are still interested in my

music fifty years from now it will be more in the *Stabat Mater* than in the *Mouvements Perpétuels*”.

A gradual reawakening of Poulenc's dormant Catholicism (handed down by his father but neglected in the Parisian social whirl of the 1920s) was suddenly intensified after one of his closest friends, the composer Pierre-Octave Ferroud, was killed in a road accident in 1936. Poulenc was devastated, the more so after the gruesome details of the accident were disclosed (Ferroud was apparently decapitated), and he travelled to the great Catholic pilgrimage site of Rocamadour in the Pyrenées in search of consolation. At the foot of the famous statue of the black virgin he found it, and from this point embarked on a decade-long period of almost exclusive choral and vocal writing. Appropriately given the source of his inspiration, this period began with the *Litanies á la Vierge Noire* (1936) originally composed for female voices and organ and later adapted for female voices and orchestra, and followed soon after with his first works for full SATB chorus – the *Sept Chansons*, and the *Mass in G* (1937), composed in memory of his father now 20 years deceased, but exerting renewed spiritual influence over his son. Here we experience for the first time that fusion of playfulness and devotion which characterizes Poulenc's sacred music. Listening

to the juxtaposition of the comically *marcato* bass part in the “qui tollis peccata mundi” section of the *Gloria*, alongside the chant-like three-part setting of “qui sedes ad dexteram patris” which immediately follows, it is hard to imagine the composer writing without a little smirk on his face.

Poulenc's awakening to choral music (and to Catholicism) naturally brought with it new explorations in the world of sacred and secular literature and poetry. For his sacred music, he was drawn to poetic non-biblical texts (the words of St Francis inspired his setting for mens' voices of the *Quatre petits prières de Saint François d'Assise* in 1948), as well as liturgical texts which reflected his continued devotion to the statue of the black virgin, as with the marian motet *Salve Regina* (1941). Amongst the secular French poets, Poulenc explored Charles d'Orléans, and the naturalist works of Maurice Fombeure, but he found most inspiration in the surrealist works of contemporary writers Guillaume Apollinaire and Paul Eluard, discovering that their synthesis of levity and profundity matched his compositional style perfectly. Sadly, Apollinaire died too young to have a meaningful influence on Poulenc during his lifetime, but with Eluard the relationship was more organic, and yielded much more choral music. Poulenc was one of a select few who

received the works of Eluard under plain cover during the Second World War, including the collection *Poésie et Vérité 42*. One of the poems from this collection, *Liberté*, was dropped in leaflet form over occupied France by the British Royal Air Force so as to boost morale among the civilian population and within the French Resistance. Poulenc was so captivated by this particular volume, and so intent on setting it to music right away, that he abandoned (and never revisited) the violin concerto he was working on, and instead set about composing his great choral cantata *Figure Humaine* in 1943.

Poulenc's social and creative circle was destroyed by the war. The status of Paris as the cultural capital of the world had been rudely revoked, so Poulenc retreated to his country residence at Noizay. He grew paranoid about what was happening to Paris in his absence, and fell victim to every rumour going. In his search to find a good creative outlet for his feelings, these years became fruitful ones for composition. He revealed something of his motives in a letter sent after the armistice: “When I think that Noizay is so completely untouched I almost feel ashamed. I trust that *Figure Humaine* will be a sufficient tribute from a Frenchman”. With the statue of the black virgin continuing to exert a powerful

influence over his conscience, he visited Rocamadour again before beginning work on the piece (even though the subject matter is earthly, he saw *Figure Humaine* as the fulfillment of a sacred duty as well as a patriotic one). His initial plan was for the work to be clandestinely rehearsed and premiered on the day of liberation in Paris. However, Parisian liberation came quicker (in 1944) than he had been expecting, so after the score was complete he gave agreement for a first performance to be given by the BBC Singers in London (in an English translation) after the BBC expressed great interest in the unpublished score. Naturally Poulenc still wanted to make some sort of symbolic gesture with his work to mark the day when the Nazis were driven out of Paris, so as he wrote in a letter to the singer Pierre Bernac: “The day the Americans arrived, I triumphantly placed my cantata on the studio desk, beneath my flag, at the window”.

The eight movements of *Figure Humaine* are scored for double SMATBB choir, with frequent *divisi*, so that up to 14 parts are often heard. Poulenc himself recommended a large choir of 84 for the premiere, with seven singers to a part. In a large body of frequently very difficult choral works, it is undoubtedly the most challenging of all his works in the genre – not inappropriate given the

terrible struggle which Europe was engaged in for *Liberté*. Even though it is only 20 minutes in length, the work is a supreme test of stamina, technical agility, range, aural skill and musicianship. Poulenc maintains a basic antiphonal structure in each of the movements, juxtaposing the two choirs in virtuosic ways (at various times suggesting argument, distance, amplification etc) and bringing them together at moments of particular textual significance. Poulenc’s rigid belief in the primacy of text is apparent throughout, as amongst all the complications of the score there is not a single moment where the lines of text risk being clouded by excessive polyphonic writing. Even in the fugal sections he is careful to repeat lines of text a sufficient number of times to ensure their absorption.

The first seven poems are clearly intended to form a sequence, capped by a longer epilogue (the eighth). The overarching dramatic thread seems to be one of gathering madness, brought about by the combination of long-suffered oppression and long-desired liberty. In common with many of his choral works, Poulenc juxtaposes mood to great effect, placing the most furiously agitated sections next to the most becalmed, and the most dissonant next to the most soothingly consonant. Here we also find a

preoccupation with analogies from the world of nature. Wolves (thought to represent the German SS) rampage through another cantata composed during this period, *Un Soir de Neige* (1944), but the bestiary contained within *Figure Humaine* is rather more diverse (and sometimes fantastical), since Eluard presents *all* of humanity not only as perpetrator, but also as potential saviour at this dark hour in its history. Birds and beasts abound, and the constellations have their say along with diurnal and seasonal cycles, with none of them bearing much comfort. Most often Eluard prefers to leave the descriptions incomplete to deepen the sense of what lies in the sinister darkness, and what terrifies us most. The monsters introduced in the first movement become menacing, scaly beasts with powerful jaws by the seventh movement, and the unnamed animal leaving its tracks in the snow in the sixth movement seems to represent humanity stripped of humanity – a march of cattle towards death. Poulenc's musical response is carefully designed to match the shape of the text, and displays all of the composer's extraordinary harmonic deftness and imagination. Trademark cycles of fifths and jarring tritones propel the music into unrelated keys, and his favourite modes, *Phrygian* and *Aeolian*, combine with 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> chords to blur the edges between minor

and major and infuse everything with a delicious bipolarity, as monastic as it is jazzy.

After the desperate, ecstatic declamation of man's indestructibility which concludes the extraordinary seventh movement, Poulenc instructs the singers to pause for a while before the finale, as if in contemplation of the 24 stanzas still to come. This is the climax of the work, and these are the words which had been scattered over the French countryside and imprinted on Poulenc's conscience. Where does one begin this revolution, this declaration of freedom? Eluard begins at his desk, with the everyday objects in front of him, and Poulenc obliges with a simple, easy-paced setting of gently swaying homophony. Eluard moves his gaze out to the world, taking in warriors and kings, animals and birds, and then reaches beyond to the ether and the stars, before drawing back to the foreheads and hands of those dear to him (presumably Poulenc himself was touched by Eluard's pen). On every object which Eluard sees or imagines, he daubs it with the word which is now haunting him, and he is determined to continue until he has covered the whole world with its seven letters. Poulenc captures the excitement and insane optimism perfectly, beginning in the E major key which has by now become associated with redemption in this

work, but lurching from key to key, often without preparation, as the poet switches dimensions from micro to macro, and from abstract to concrete. The antiphonally-apportioned singers serve Poulenc especially well here, as the first choir takes the role of searching the world for writing surfaces, and the second choir obliges each time with the refrain “J’écris ton nom”. The momentum builds perpetually, the tempo gradually quickens and at the ear-splitting climax where the word “Liberté!” is finally sung by the entire choir, the *tessitura* rises almost beyond the range of earthly singers.

The reviewer of the first performance, WR Anderson, wrote in the Musical Times that the piece contained ‘dubious structure’ and ‘evasive harmony’, and concluded that he would ‘need to see the score to get at it’. One cannot help but wonder if a choir assembled barely two weeks before the first performance in the immediate aftermath of the armistice might have needed a little more exposure to the score to ‘get at it’ themselves (sadly, the original recording does not survive). But in spite, or perhaps even because of the fierce battles which must be fought and won in staging a performance of this work it remains synonymous with the zealous efforts made by some French artists to make a meaningful contribution

to Europe’s struggle for freedom in the 1940s. Elizabeth Poston, European Music Supervisor at the BBC during the 1940s, advised her commissioning editor that the work symbolized French fortitude and suffering during the war, and was thus an important work for the BBC to disseminate; and today, its reputation has grown (despite the relative infrequency of performances) to the point where it is universally acknowledged as Poulenc’s crowning achievement in the realm of unaccompanied choral music.

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## TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

### 1 - 5 **Mass in G**

#### 1 **Kyrie**

Kyrie eleison.

Christe eleison.

Kyrie eleison.

*Lord, have mercy upon us.*

*Christ, have mercy upon us.*

*Lord, have mercy upon us.*

#### 2 **Gloria**

Gloria in excelsis Deo.

et in terra pax hominibus

bonæ voluntatis.

Laudamus te. Benedicimus te

Adoramus te. Glorificamus te.

Gratias agimus tibi

propter magnam gloriam tuam.

Domine Deus, Rex cœlestis,

Deus Pater omnipotens.

Domine Fili unigenite Jesu Christe,

Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris.

Qui tollis peccata mundi,

miserere nobis.

Qui tollis peccata mundi,

suscipe deprecationem nostram.

Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris,

miserere nobis.

*Glory be to God on high,*

*and on earth peace and*

*goodwill towards men.*

*We praise Thee, we bless Thee,*

*we worship Thee, we glorify Thee.*

*We give thanks to Thee*

*For Thy great glory.*

*O Lord God, heavenly King,*

*God the Father Almighty,*

*the only begotten Son, Jesus Christ,*

*Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father.*

*Thou that takest away the sins of the world,*

*have mercy upon us.*

*Thou that takest away the sins of the world,*

*receive our prayer.*

*thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father*

*Have mercy upon us.*

Quoniam tu solus Sanctus,  
Tu solus Dominus,  
Tu solus Altissimus.  
Jesu Christe.  
cum Sancto Spiritu  
in gloria Dei Patris,  
Amen.

*For Thou only art holy,  
Thou only art the Lord,  
Thou only art most high.  
Jesu Christ.  
With the Holy Spirit  
In the glory of God the Father,  
Amen.*

### 3 Sanctus

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus,  
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.  
Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua.  
Hosanna in excelsis.

*Holy, holy, holy,  
Lord God of Sabaoth.  
Heaven and earth are full of thy glory  
Hosanna in the highest.*

### 4 Benedictus

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.  
Hosanna in excelsis.

*Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.*

### 5 Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi,  
miserere nobis.

*O Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world,  
Have mercy upon us.*

Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi,  
miserere nobis.

*O Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world,  
Have mercy upon us.*

Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi,  
dona nobis pacem.

## 6 Litanies á la Vierge Noire

Seigneur, ayez pitié de nous,  
Jésus-Christ, ayez pitié de nous.  
Jésus-Christ, écoutez-nous.  
Jésus-Christ, exaucez-nous.

Dieu le père, créateur, ayez pitié de nous.  
Dieu le fils, rédempteur, ayez pitié de nous.  
Dieu le Saint-Esprit, sanctificateur, ayez pitié de nous.  
Trinité Sainte, qui êtes un seul Dieu, ayez pitié  
de nous.

Sainte Vierge Marie, priez pour nous,  
Vierge, reine et patronne, priez pour nous.  
Vierge que Zachée le publicain nous a fait  
connaître et aimer,  
Vierge à qui Zachée ou Saint Amadour Eleva  
ce sanctuaire,  
Priez pour nous.

Reine du sanctuaire, que consacra Saint Martial,  
Et où il célébra ses saints mystères,  
Reine, près de laquelle s'agenouilla Saint Louis  
Vous demandant le bonheur de la France,  
Priez pour nous, priez pour nous.

*O Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world,  
Grant us thy peace.*

## *Prayers to the Black Virgin*

*Lord, have pity on us.  
Jesus Christ, have pity on us.  
Jesus Christ, hear us.  
Jesus Christ, grant our prayers.*

*God the Father, creator, have pity on us.  
God the Son, redeemer, have pity on us.  
God the Holy Spirit, sanctifier, have pity on us.  
Holy Trinity, who are one single God, have pity  
on us.*

*Holy Virgin Mary, pray for us.  
Virgin, queen and patron, pray for us.  
Virgin, whom Zacchaeus the tax-collector made  
us know and love,  
Virgin, to whom Zacchaeus or Saint Amadour  
raised this sanctuary,  
Pray for us.*

*Queen of the sanctuary, which Saint Martial  
consecrated,  
And where he celebrated his holy mysteries,  
Queen, before whom knelt Saint Louis  
Asking of you good fortune for France,  
Pray for us, pray for us.*

Reine, à qui Roland consacra son épée, priez pour nous.  
Reine, dont la bannière gagna les batailles, priez pour nous.  
Reine, dont la main délivrait les captifs, priez pour nous.

Notre-Dame, dont le pèlerinage est enrichi de faveurs spéciales,  
Notre-Dame, que l'impiété et la haine ont voulu souvent détruire,  
Notre-Dame, que les peuples visitent comme autrefois,  
Priez pour nous, priez pour nous.

Agneau de Dieu, qui effacez les péchés du monde, pardonnez-nous.  
Agneau de Dieu, qui effacez les péchés du monde, exaucez-nous.  
Agneau de Dieu, qui effacez les péchés du monde, ayez pitié de nous.

Notre-Dame, priez pour nous,  
Afin que nous soyons dignes de Jésus-Christ.

#### **7** **Salve Regina**

Salve, Regina, Mater misericordiæ,  
vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra salve.

*Queen, to whom Roland consecrated his sword, pray for us.  
Queen, whose banner won the battles, pray for us.  
Queen, whose hand delivered the captives, pray for us.*

*Our Lady, whose pilgrimage is enriched by special favours,  
Our Lady, whom impiety and hate have often wished to destroy,  
Our Lady, whom the peoples visit as of old, pray for us, pray for us.*

*Lamb of God, who wipes out the sins of the world, pardon us.  
Lamb of God, who wipes out the sins of the world, grant our prayers.  
Lamb of God, who wipes out the sins of the world, have pity on us.*

*Our Lady, pray for us,  
To the end that we may be worthy of Jesus Christ.*

#### **Hail, Holy Queen**

*Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy,  
our life, our sweetness and our hope.*

Ad te clamamus exules filii Evae,  
Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes  
in hac lacrymarum valle.

Eja, ergo, Advocata nostra, illos tuos  
miseriordes oculos ad nos converte;  
Et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,  
nobis post hoc exilium ostende.  
O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria.

8 - 11 **Un Soir de Neige**

*Paul Éluard (1895–1952)*

8 **De grandes cuillers de neige**

De grandes cuillers de neige  
Ramassent nos pieds glacés  
Et d'une dure parole  
Nous heurtons l'hiver têtù  
Chaque arbre a sa place en l'air  
Chaque roc son poids sur terre  
Chaque ruisseau son eau vive  
Nous nous n'avons pas de feu

9 **La bonne neige le ciel noir**

La bonne neige le ciel noir  
Les branches mortes la détresse  
De la forêt pleine de pièges

*To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve;  
to thee do we send up our sighs,  
mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.*

*Turn then, most gracious advocate,  
thine eyes of mercy toward us;  
and after this our exile,  
show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.  
O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.*

**A Night of Snow**

**Great clods of snow**

*Our frozen feet pick up  
Great clods of snow  
And with deep sighs  
We face the coming winter  
Each tree has its place in the air  
Each rock its place on the earth  
Each brook its rushing water  
But as for us, we have no fire*

**The pristine snow, the black sky**

*The pristine snow, the black sky  
The dead branches, the agony  
Of the forest full of snares*

Honte à la bête pourchassée  
La fuite en flèche dans le cœur.  
Les traces d'une proie atroce  
Hardi au loup et c'est toujours  
Le plus beau loup et c'est toujours  
Le dernier vivant que menace  
La masse absolue de la mort

#### 10 Bois meurtri

Bois meurtri, bois perdu d'un voyage en hiver  
Navire où la neige prend pied  
Bois d'asile bois mort, où sans espoir je rêve  
De la mer aux miroirs crevés  
Un grand moment d'eau froide a saisi les noyés  
La foule de mon corps en souffre  
Je m'affaiblis je me disperse  
J'avoue ma vie j'avoue ma mort j'avoue autrui

#### 11 La nuit le froid la solitude

La nuit le froid la solitude  
On m'enferma soigneusement  
Mais les branches cherchaient leur voie dans la prison  
Autour de moi l'herbe trouva le ciel  
On verrouilla le ciel ma prison s'écroula  
Le froid vivant le froid brûlant m'eut bien en main

*Shame on the hunted animal  
Whose flight is like an arrow in the heart  
The tracks of a cruel pursuit  
Strength to the wolf, always  
The most magnificent wolf and always  
The last survivor to suffer  
The irresistible force of death*

#### *Woods ruined*

*Woods ruined, woods robbed by the ravages of winter  
Vessel where the snows amass  
Sheltering woods, dead woods, where without hope  
I dream  
Of a sea made of shattered mirrors  
A surge of cold water seized the drowning victims  
My whole body suffering  
I grow feeble, I am undone  
I face my life, my death, and everything*

#### *The night the cold the loneliness*

*The night the cold the loneliness  
They shut me in tightly  
But the branches sought a way into my prison  
Around me the grass found the sky  
The sky was locked up, My prison crumbled  
The living, burning cold had me in its clutches*

12 - 19 **Figure Humaine**

Paul Éluard

12 **I. Bientôt**

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

13 **II. Le Rôle des Femmes**

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

**The Human Face**

**I. Soon**

*Of all the springtimes in history  
This one is the most vile  
Of all the ways of being  
My trusting nature is the best  
The grass pushes up the snow  
As if it were a tombstone  
But I sleep through the storm  
And awake with eyes brightened  
Slow and quick time passes  
Where all routes must end  
Through my most intimate secrets  
So that I might meet someone  
I do not hear what the monsters are saying  
But I know them, and they have said everything before  
I see only beautiful faces  
The good faces of those who truly know themselves.  
Certain soon to ruin their owners*

**II. The Women's role**

*As they sing, the housemaids hurtle forwards  
To clean the spot where a man was killed  
Cute powdered girls swiftly to their knees  
Their hands stretched out to the fresh air*

Sont bleues comme une expérience  
Un grand matin joyeux  
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  
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.

**14 III. Aussi bas que le silence**

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

*Unspoilt like the first experience  
Of a day of ecstatic joy  
Turn to look at their hands, the dead  
Turn to see their watery eyes  
It is the ritual of may-flies  
The final ritual of life  
The stones fall and disappear  
In the vast eternal deep  
The final ritual of time  
Barely a memory remains  
The wells of virtue have dried up  
The long, unbearable absences  
And the surrendering of delicate flesh  
To the triumph of weakness*

**III. As deep as the silence**

*As deep as the silence  
Of a corpse buried under ground  
Nothing but shadows in his head  
As monotonous and deaf  
As autumn in a lake  
Shrouded with stale shame  
Poison robbed of its flower  
And of its gilded beasts  
Spews its blackness over mankind*

15 **IV. Patience**

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 naîtrai

16 **V. Première Marche la voix d'un autre**

Riant du ciel et des planètes  
La bouche imbibée de confiance  
Les sages veulent des fils  
Et des fils de leurs fils  
Jusqu'à périr d'usure  
Le temps ne pèse que les fous  
L'abîme est seul à verdoyer  
Et les sages sont ridicules

17 **VI. Un Loup**

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

**IV. Patience**

*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*

**V. First march, the voice of another**

*Laughing at the sky and planets  
Mouths dripping with arrogance  
The wise men wish for sons  
And for sons for their sons  
Until they die in vain  
The march of time burdens not only the foolish  
Hell alone flourishes  
And the wise men are made foolish*

**VI. A Wolf**

*The day shocks me and the night terrifies me  
Summer haunts me and winter chases 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*

18 VII. Un feu sans tache

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 effaçà  
Les tombes creusées d'avance  
Les enfants n'eurent plus peur  
Des profondeurs maternelles

Et la bêtise et la démente  
Et la bassesse firent place

VII. A flawless fire

*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*

A des hommes frères des hommes  
Ne luttant plus contre la vie

*To humanity and brotherhood  
No longer set against life*

A des hommes indestructibles

*But to an indestructible human race*

**19 VIII. Liberté**

**VIII. Liberty**

Sur mes cahiers d'écolier  
Sur mon pupitre et les arbres  
Sur le sable sur la neige  
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*

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sur les merveilles des nuits  
Sur le pain blanc des journées

*On the wonders of the night  
On the daily bread*

Sur les saisons fiancées  
J'écris ton nom

*On the conjoined seasons  
I write your name*

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

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

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

*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 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 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 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 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 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*

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*

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*

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 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 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 l'absence sans désirs  
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 santé revenue  
Sur le risque disparu  
Sur l'espoir sans souvenir  
J'écris ton nom

*On health restored  
On risk disappeared  
On hope without memory  
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*

Liberté

*Liberty*

**20 - 23** **Quatre petites prières de Saint François d'Assise**

**20** **Salut, Dame Sainte**

Salut, Dame Sainte, reine très sainte, Mère de Dieu,  
ô Marie qui êtes vierge perpétuellement,  
élue par le très saint Père du Ciel,  
consacré par Lui avec son très saint Fils bien aimé  
et l'Esprit Paraclet, vous en qui fut et demeure  
toute plénitude de grace e tout bien!

Salut, palais; salut, tabernacle;  
salut maison; salut vêtement;  
salut servante; salut mere de Dieu!  
Et salut à vous toutes, saintes vertus  
qui par la grace et l'illumination du Saint Esprit,  
Êtes verse es dans les cœurs des fidèles et,  
d'infidèles que nous sommes, nous rendez fidèles  
à Dieu.

**21** **Tout Puissant**

Tout puissant, très saint, très haut et souverain Dieu;  
Souverain bien, bien universel, bien total; toi qui  
seul es bon; Puisseons-nous te rendre toute louange,  
toute gloire, toute reconnaissance, tout honneur,  
toute benediction;

**Four short prayers by Saint Francis of Assisi**

**Hail, Holy Lady**

*Hail, holy Lady, most holy Queen, Mothers of God,  
O Mary, you who are forever virgin,  
chosen by the most holy heavenly Father,  
sanctified by Him and His most holy and beloved Son  
and the Paraclet, you who were and shall remain  
in the complete fullness of grace and perfect  
goodness!*

*Hail to the palace; hail to the tabernacle;  
hail to the house; hail to the vestments;  
hail, handmaiden; hail, Mother of God!  
And hail to all you holy virtues  
which through grace and light of the Holy Spirit  
are poured into the hearts of the faithful, and  
make us,  
who are unfaithful, faithful unto God.*

**All Powerful**

*All powerful, most holy, most high and sovereign God;  
Sovereign goodness, universal goodness, complete  
goodness;  
you who alone are good; let us render to you all praise,  
all glory, all thankfulness, all honor, all blessing;*

puissions-nous rapporter toujours à toi tous les biens.  
Amen.

**22 Seigneur, je vous en prie**

Seigneur, je vous en prie, que la force brûlante  
et douce  
de votre amour absorbe mon âme et la retire  
de tout ce  
qui est sous le ciel.  
Afin que je meure par amour de votre  
amour, puisque vous avez  
daigné mourir par amour de mon amour.

**23 O mes très chers frères**

O mes très chers frères et mes enfants bénis pour  
toute l'éternité,  
écoutez-moi, écoutez la voix de votre Père:  
Nous avons promis de grandes choses,  
on nous en a promis de plus grandes;  
gardons les unes et soupignons après les autres;  
Le plaisir est court, la peine éternelle.  
la souffrance est légère, la gloire infinie.  
Beaucoup sont appelés, peu sont élus tous recevront  
ce qu'ils auront mérité. Ainsi soit-il.

*Let us yield to you always all that is good.  
Amen.*

***Lord, I beg of You***

*Lord, I beg you, let the burning and tender power  
of your love consume my soul and remove it  
from all that is  
beneath the heavens.  
And so I may die thorough love for your love,  
as you  
submitted yourself to die through love for  
my love.*

***O my dearest bretheren***

*O my dearest bretheren, my children blessed for  
all eternity,  
hear me; hear the voice of your father:  
We have promised great things,  
yet greater things have been promised to us;  
let us hold the one and aspire after the other.  
Pleasure is brief; pain is eternal.  
Suffering is light. Glory is infinite.  
Many are called; few are chosen.  
All will receive that which they have deserved.*

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# BIOGRAPHIES

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## TENEBRAE

Tenebrae is a professional chamber choir, founded and directed by Nigel Short in 2001. Often performing by candlelight, the choir creates an atmosphere of spiritual and musical reflection, where medieval chant and renaissance works are interspersed with contemporary compositions. The carefully selected team of singers use the acoustic and atmosphere of the building to enable the audience to experience the power and intimacy of the human voice.

Singers are drawn from outstanding musical backgrounds – King’s College, Cambridge, Westminster Abbey and Cathedral, St Paul’s Cathedral, The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden and English National Opera – to create a unique vocal mix with an extraordinary range of vocal power and color.

Tenebrae has an exceptionally wide repertoire, from early, through renaissance, baroque and classical music, to romantic and twentieth century works, plus a range of specially commissioned pieces,

the most recent of which is Joby Talbot’s Path of Miracles. Tenebrae’s unique virtuosity and style are exemplified on CD recordings, including Mozart’s Requiem with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Sir John Tavener’s Mother and Child, Gaudete, a Christmas disc in association with Karl Jenkins and Joby Talbot’s Path of Miracles.

Recording work is complemented by a schedule of regular performances for festivals and venues throughout the UK, Europe and the world. December 2006 saw the commencement of Tenebrae’s artistic association with the London Symphony Orchestra, Sir Colin Davies and LSO Live with a series of critically and publicly acclaimed performances and recordings at the Barbican, London.

Tenebrae was nominated for a Royal Philharmonic Society Award in 2007.

**[www.tenebrae-choir.com](http://www.tenebrae-choir.com)**

**SOPRANO:** Ildiko Allen, Natalie Clifton-Griffith, Anna Crookes, Joanna Forbes, Alice Gribbin, Micela Haslam, Katy Hill, Amy Moore, Laura Oldfield, Katie Trethewey

**ALTO:** David Allsopp, Stephen Burrows, Mark Chambers, Christopher Field, Anne Jones, Clare Wilkinson

**TENOR:** Ben Alden, Jeremy Budd, Jonathan Bungard, Richard Butler, Matthew Long, Christopher Watson

**BARITONE:** Matthew Brook, Gabriel Crouch, William Gaunt, Ben Parry, Andrew Rupp

**BASS:** Joseph Cullen, Simon Grant, Edward Grint, Adrian Peacock, Richard Savage, Lawrence Wallington



Photo by Eric Richmond



## NIGEL SHORT

Nigel began his musical life as a chorister at Solihull Parish Church going on to study singing and piano at the Royal College of Music in London. He began his career as a soloist in opera and oratorio and as a member of specialist vocal ensembles such as The Tallis Scholars whilst maintaining a regular involvement in church music, firstly as a member of Westminster Abbey Choir then Westminster Cathedral. He joined The King's Singers when he was 27 and stayed with them for seven years.

After a short break of about one ski season in the Swiss Alps he set about founding his own group, Tenebrae, aiming to bring together what he loved best as a singer – namely the more passionate sounds of large Cathedral choirs and the precision of ensembles like The King's Singers – to create a new kind of choral group. Whilst embracing an eclectic repertoire, he wanted to have some 'signature' works that would make Tenebrae different, adding a theatrical element that would involve singers moving around as if on stage. To that end he wrote *The Dream of Herod*, with a central role for baritone Colin Campbell, and commissioned Joby Talbot to write *Path of Miracles*, premiered in July 2005.

Since its debut performance in 2001 Tenebrae has given concerts all over the world, including Spain, Italy, Germany, France, Switzerland, UK, USA and Bermuda.

Nigel and the group have performed and recorded live with The Chamber Orchestra of Europe for Warner Classics and have given several performances with The English Concert. They record regularly with Signum Classics.

In December 2006, Sir Colin Davis and the LSO chose Tenebrae to perform Handel's *Messiah* and Berlioz' *L'Enfance du Christ* to a sold-out audience at the Barbican. Additional performances with Sir Colin Davis are planned.

Nigel divides his time between directing Tenebrae and giving an ever-increasing number of masterclasses and workshops for both professional and amateur vocal groups and choirs throughout Europe.

Nigel is Director of Music at St Bartholomew The Great, London.





Tenebrae perform Poulenc's *Mass in G* at the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Times Square, New York City, USA.

Recorded at St Bartholomew the Great, West Smithfield, London on 22 – 24 June 2009.

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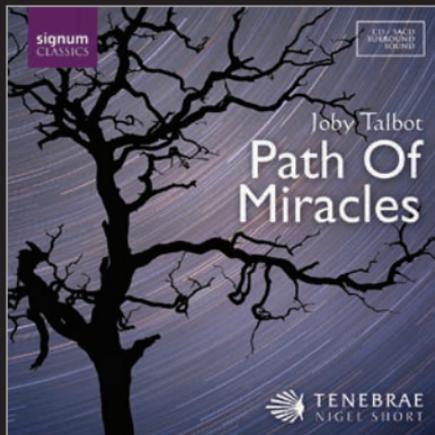
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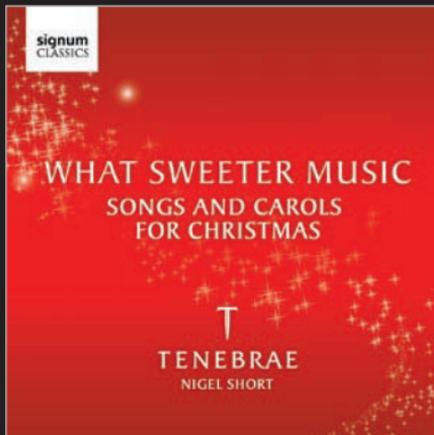


## Path of Miracles: Joby Talbot Tenebrae

SIGCD078

Path of Miracles, for a cappella choir, was commissioned by Tenebrae from Joby Talbot and premiered in 2005. The work is based on the most enduring route of Catholic pilgrimage – the great pilgrimage to Santiago along the ‘Camino Frances’. This SACD Hybrid CD can also be played as a 4.0 surround-sound mix

*“Joby Talbot has been making quite a name for himself recently. Path of miracles can only add to that reputation: it’s a real achievement”* **International Record Review**



## What Sweeter Music: Songs & Carols for Christmas Tenebrae

SIGCD182

What Sweeter Music is a real festive treat, with a sumptuous collection of songs and carols for Christmas - touching on traditional favourites (Silent Night, Away in a Manger), modern classics (The Lamb, What Sweeter Music) and some new light-hearted arrangements (Jingle Bells, We Wish You a Merry Christmas).

*“A jazzy Jingle Bells launches this varied and seductively sung programme”* **The Telegraph, Best Christmas Discs 2009**