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Francis Poulenc and Robert Shaw: A Remarkable Symbiotic Relationship

Carl B. Schmidt

Throughout his career Francis Poulenc (1899–1963) coveted friendships with individuals in Europe and, later in life, the United States.¹ An extensive correspondence, some of it still unpublished, provides eloquent testimony to his almost paranoiac need to contact his friends when apart from them.² In many cases he knew his correspondent well, and the letters simply served to keep in touch with his “extended family.” Some letters, particularly those to and from Pierre Bernac (the distinguished baritone with whom he concertized for decades) or Denise Duval (his favorite soprano), show Poulenc in the throes of making artistic decisions about compositions in progress such as *Dialogues des Carmélites* and *La voix humaine* or planning repertory for upcoming concert tours. Poulenc was also an expert proselytizer who worked diligently at promoting his music. He wrote a modicum of letters to performers (Vladimir Horowitz and Georges Prêtre, among others) informing them of his new works or reminding them of older ones. There are also individuals whom Poulenc admired and whose names were treated with great reverence in his correspondence and published writings, but with whom no direct correspondence was thought to exist. Previously one was the renowned American conductor Robert Shaw (1916–99), with whose work Poulenc first became acquainted in the later 1940s. Poulenc lavished praise on Shaw’s performances of his choral music, and Shaw was in large part responsible for programming Poulenc’s choral music in America at a time when it was not well known across the Atlantic. The apparent lack of any written communication between the two, especially given the large quantity of Poulenc’s letters that have come to light, represents an unfortunate lacuna in Poulenc scholarship that can now be filled.

Some years after Shaw died during a visit to New Haven in 1999, his personal papers and impressive collection of scores and recordings were donated to the Irving S. Gilmore Music Library at Yale University, where they are currently being processed. Among them are thirteen

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letters between Poulenc, or his representative, and Shaw, annotated scores of selected choral works by Poulenc, and recordings. The letters amplify remarks found in Poulenc's writings and allow us to document the difficulties they had trying to make personal contact during Poulenc's initial American tours. They also make clear that Poulenc found Shaw's interpretations of his choral music virtually without peer. This esteem places Shaw in rarified air because Poulenc had worked with many excellent conductors of international reputation.³

By the time Poulenc first mentions Shaw in writing—in a 21 August 1946 letter to his friend, the violinist Yvonne de Casa Fuerte then living in America—he was already aware of Shaw's interest in his music. Only a few months earlier, on 14 May 1946, Shaw had conducted his Collegiate Chorale in a performance of Poulenc's *Litanies à la Vierge noire* in an orchestral version especially made for him by Louise Talma.⁴ Poulenc informs "la Marquise" that he planned to write to Shaw and to send him some music.⁵ In spite of Poulenc's intention to write to Shaw in 1946, however, he almost certainly did not do so at the time because an undated letter among Shaw's papers, which context suggests was written in late summer 1948, reads as follows:

5 rue de Médicis, Paris

Dear Monsieur Shaw,

For a long time I have wanted to write thanking you for the effort you have made on behalf of my choral music, but a winter divided between innumerable European tours and too-rare moments of creation made me postpone my old project until this vacation. I learned from Doda [Conrad] what you have already done for my *Mass*, my motets, my *Sept chansons*, and I am profoundly touched.⁶ Doda tells me that you are preparing *Figure humaine*. This gives me great joy because I tried to put the best of myself into this work that was conceived and realized at a time when I was a very disconsolate Frenchman.

Initially I saw that two very large choirs were indispensable. But, upon reflection, I think that two choirs of thirty would suffice on the condition that the basses be very solid. What is lacking at so many choral performances is anchoring the ensemble on powerful feet. From all sides I have been told of the purity of your performances, and it is why I am so happy that you are interested in my a cappella works that contain, I am sure, my most authentic musical invention. Doubtless this results from my boundless love for poetry and the great good fortune I had of being born in the epoch of Apollinaire and Eluard.

You surely know that I am going to America this winter. I have tried to present myself to the American public in a manner that will seem modest but that for me, on the contrary, displays pride. While my contemporaries from all countries outbid each other as much as they can in the domain of instrumental music, I, faithful to the tradition of a Schumann, a Schubert, a Musorgsky, or of a Fauré, wanted to prove that the lied is not an extinct genre. The extreme subtlety of modern poetry makes the musician's task difficult, but happily I believe I am able to pretend that Apollinaire, Eluard, Max Jacob, Louise de Vilmorin are without secrets for me and this is *my pride*.

I am actually completing a cycle of seven *mélodies* after Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*, in which I want to demonstrate that a vocal cycle can have the framework of a symphonic work. I am counting on giving the world premiere in New York on 20 November. I hope that you will give me the pleasure of attending.

I will arrive in New York on 29 October with Doda and my "teammate" Pierre Bernac. I hope that our mutual friends will get us together quickly.

Between now and then I beg of you to believe, sir, that from afar I already consider myself as your friend.

Believe therefore in my sincerest sentiments,

Francis Poulenc.⁷

Shaw was quick to respond to Poulenc's overture, saying how much he appreciated the warm praise for the work of his choirs and anticipated his arrival.⁸

Poulenc also prepared for his reception in America by nudging friends in important positions. In a 15 September 1948 letter to Virgil Thomson, the influential *New York Herald Tribune* critic whom Poulenc had known since the early 1920s, Poulenc noted that on this trip he would present only his *mélodies*. "Explain clearly to everyone," he wrote to Thomson, "that Poupoule [Poulenc's nickname] is a Parisian type, who speaks English badly, is unsociable, but is full of good will." Then he added pensively: "I would like everyone to think of me as 'the poet's musician.'" ⁹

Though the Bernac/Poulenc Duo toured as far north as Québec, Canada, and as far west as California, two New York concerts were clearly the focal points of the tour. While in New York on 20 November (the date of the Duo's second Town Hall concert), Poulenc reported meeting longtime friends, including Casa Fuerte, the composer Vittorio Rieti, and Nathalie Paley (then married to the theater producer John

Wilson), plus luminaries such as Vladimir Horowitz, Nathan Milstein, and Zino Francescatti, but his letters home to niece Brigitte Manceaux and friend Denise Bourdet breathe not a word about a meeting with Shaw. Apparently their paths failed to cross, and Poulenc returned to France with this significant goal of his trip unfulfilled. However, Poulenc must have left a score of *Figure humaine* inscribed “à Robert Shaw avec un immense merci pour son attachement à ma musique chorale[,] très affectueusement Poulenc N.Y.[.] 48,” with one of these friends as a memento for Shaw.¹⁰

Half a year later Shaw, squarely facing his own perceptions of inadequacy as an orchestral conductor and score reader, requested leave of absence from his posts at Juilliard, Tanglewood, and with the Collegiate Chorale, to go to Paris to study under the legendary Nadia Boulanger.¹¹ He took with him a pre-release copy of his RCA Victor recording of Poulenc’s a cappella Mass in G Major.¹²

Shaw embarked for Europe by ship in mid-June 1949 and once in Paris met with Boulanger, most likely at her apartment in the rue Ballou. She quickly set up his work in solfège with an assistant, and Shaw began to attend concerts and meet composers, one of whom was Poulenc. Shaw’s biographer John Mussulman recounts their first meeting:

One evening he met Poulenc and received an invitation to visit the composer a few mornings later in his apartment on Rue de Médicis. Shaw arrived at the appointed hour, but was surprised to find the composer had not yet arisen, and then embarrassed to learn he had come on the wrong day. While waiting for Monsieur Poulenc to shave and dress, he put on the record player a pre-release copy of the Mass in G major that he had brought along. Poulenc rushed back into the room at the sound of the first Kyrie and sat transfixed, shaving lather drying on his face, listening tearfully until the end. Then, as if unburdened of thirty years of reputation as one of the more witty and sophisticated members of *Les Six*, he exclaimed: “At last, the world will now know that I am a *serious* composer!”¹³

Poulenc does not mention Shaw’s name again in his extant correspondence until he writes to Darius Milhaud on 18 September 1949, wishing him bon voyage and updating him on his own plans for a second American tour. After having met Shaw and hearing the magic of Shaw’s interpretations of his compositions, Poulenc writes “After the [Piano] Concerto I am going to compose . . . a *Stabat mater* in [Christian] Bérard’s memory[,] of which I will give the first performance during the winter of 50–51 to Shaw in N. York.”¹⁴

Before beginning the *Stabat mater*, FP 148, however, Poulenc left for his second American tour on 28 January 1950 and did not return to Paris until 29 March.¹⁵ On 10 March, midway through the trip, Poulenc wrote to Shaw from the Hotel Antlers in Colorado Springs:

My dear, dear Shaw,

You are the despair of my American tour. I missed you in New York in January and February. I missed you by three days in San Francisco, and I will miss you by two in New York because I fly the 29th for Paris. I would have so, so much liked to see you, to have talked with you at length, and to have told you again that the recording of my Mass has been the *delight* of my summer. The days when I doubt myself (and they are numerous) I would play your *admirable* recording and I would feel comforted. *Why haven't they been issued?* You have given me one of the great pleasures of my life as a musician.

Continue to love my music. You make me perfectly happy.

Please believe, my dear Shaw, in my grateful and admiring friendship.

Francis Poulenc

21–29 March at the St. Moritz Hotel, New York¹⁶

Once again, however, the schedules of the two busy performers did not mesh, and Poulenc returned home a second time without having met up with Shaw in America. Shortly after his return (probably in April), Poulenc wrote:

5 rue de Médicis, Paris

My dear Shaw,

I was completely in despair not having seen you in America. It is such bad luck, but the day on which you asked me to go to Washington I was recording with Bernac at Columbia.¹⁷ You cannot know my impatience to see the Mass released by Victor.

I can never tell you enough *the profound emotion* that it gives me, each time I listen to your performance of this work. Thanks to you I think of myself as a great musician for a few minutes: a very pleasant illusion. I hope that some time you can do *Figure humaine*. I was very pleased with Hugh Ross, but *you* would know how to discover my secrets.

Dear friend, I shake both your hands with great affection and much, much gratitude.

Francis Poulenc¹⁸

Poulenc's disappointment was quickly overcome as he set aside his performer's persona for that of a composer.¹⁹ Between April and July he wrote a song cycle on poems by Paul Eluard entitled *La fraîcheur et le feu*, FP 147. Then, after a performance of his "Boston" piano concerto at Aix-en-Provence and a side trip to his beloved Rocamadour for inspiration, he traveled to his sister's home at Le Tremblay, Eure, where he worked feverishly on the *Stabat mater*. He finished the piano-vocal score in early October 1950, but work on the orchestration was sandwiched between numerous performances across fall and winter 1950–51. The premiere of the *Stabat mater* by Fritz Munch in Strasbourg on 13 June 1951 was a resounding success. Henri Hell, Poulenc's future biographer, told him, "It is a magnificent work, your masterpiece up to the present."²⁰ Similar praise arrived in other letters, and Poulenc began to anticipate future performances.²¹ His thoughts turned to America, where he felt his "most faithful audience" was, and on 10 August he brought Shaw up to date on the availability of scores and parts for the new work:

10 August [1951]

5 rue de Médicis, Paris

My dear Shaw,

As Paffratti must have told you, you can have the piano score and choral parts for the *Stabat* around 15 September. The orchestral parts will be ready around 15 November. It is useless to tell you how much I rejoice to see you interested in this work. The recording of the Mass never ceases to amaze me, to move me, to enchant me. That is to say I await your performance of the *Stabat* with impatience. You have an amazing sense of my music and you predict me which is most pleasant. I will be returning to America during the first trimester of [19]52.

Keep in close touch with Mr. Schang, the Columbia [Records] manager, so I can attend the *Stabat* premiere. Immediately after the completion of my tour would be perfect.

I will be in N.Y. to record. Send me news of yourself and believe in my very profound affection.

Francis Poulenc²²

This letter was followed by one informing Shaw that he would soon receive a proof copy of the *Stabat mater* piano-vocal score and announcing Poulenc's third American tour:

5 rue de Médicis, Paris

My dear Shaw,

I must tell you once more the great happiness, my happiness without reservation for your prodigious discs of the Mass. The interpretation is wonderful and the recording perfect.

What a joy it is to entrust you with my new child: the *Stabat* of which you are going to receive a proof copy. The very simple piano reduction will give you, I believe, only a very approximate idea of the work but it has the advantage of being playable for study purposes.

Having penetrated all the secrets of my choral music, you will be at home with it. I return to America, next winter, with Bernac. I do not yet know my itinerary but Schang will communicate it to you. I would very much like to be in New York for the premiere. Perhaps it could be put just before my return to France.

See to that.

While waiting, I express to you once again my happiness and friendship.

Francis Poulenc²³

Poulenc also sent Shaw a Christmas greeting on the back of a lovely hand-painted card created by his neighbor Marie-Thérèse Mabilie depicting an obelisk in the yard of his estate Le Grand Coteau at Noizay in the Loire Valley.²⁴ This undated card (most probably written the month before Poulenc embarked on his third North American tour in early January 1952) is one of the rare examples of Poulenc writing in English. There could be no greater compliment to Shaw than Poulenc's words: "I love you as you like my music. Please record my *Stabat*! My English is very bad but my friendship for you is very good."²⁵

As the saying goes, the third time's a charm, and so it was for Poulenc and Shaw, who finally found themselves in the same concert hall at the same time, during Poulenc's third American tour. Poulenc and Bernac arrived in New York in early January 1952 and returned to Paris on 5 March. With New York their locus, they made brief jaunts to Washington, D.C.; Middlebury, Vermont; Lakeville, Connecticut (to visit Wanda Landowska), plus a longer one-week stay in Caracas, Venezuela. This time, Poulenc attended two concerts under Shaw's direction. Later that month, Poulenc wrote to Geneviève Sienkiewicz, one of his oldest and dearest friends, "I heard during my trip to New York a fantastic concert by the Robert Shaw Chorale (that of the Mass)—on the program Requiem of Mozart, *Cantata [Profana]* by Bartók. They will give my *Stabat* the 27th of April and record it. This is

a great joy for me. Besides, everyone here is adorable. The radio celebrated my *birthday* (7 January) with one and a half hours of my recordings."²⁶

The first concert, in Carnegie Hall on 6 January, also included sets of *Trois Chansons* by Maurice Ravel and Claude Debussy. Then Poulenc attended Shaw's 27 January performance of J. S. Bach's Mass in B Minor, also at Carnegie Hall. In anticipation he wrote to his niece Brigitte Manceaux, "Tomorrow night Bach Mass by my beloved Shaw."²⁷ Soon thereafter, Poulenc found time during his four concerts in Caracas to pen the following note on the Hôtel Potomac letterhead:

Caracas, 31 January [1952]

Dear Shaw,

Forgive me if I did not go to congratulate you the other evening, but I was leaving the following day for Caracas and I was very tired. What a marvelous evening! What a heavenly "Incarnatus!" I return to New York on the 7th. We must see each other; I am staying at the Hotel Wyndham 42 West 58. Let me know when. For the *Stabat* the solo must be very Italian prima donna [like] (Desdemona) and not an angel like the celestial soloist of the Mass. Think about this, it's very important.

I'll see you soon. Very affectionately,

Poulenc²⁸

Once back in France, Poulenc turned his attention to a multitude of tasks that took him from Paris to the Midi, from Noizay to Munich, but the thought of one important event rarely left his mind: Shaw's upcoming 27 April performance of his *Stabat mater* by the Collegiate Chorale and the RCA Victor Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall. Several communications show his state of mind. In a 21 April letter to Casa Fuerte he wrote:

I am filled with agitation. I can think of nothing from morning to night but the concert on the 27th. The Paris premiere of the *Stabat* on the 30th is nothing by comparison. How I would love to be there to hear the sublime choirs of my beloved Shaw. I only hope the soloist is good. I attach considerable importance to this premiere. I would like you to come away from it with tears in your eyes.

Think of Bébé [Cristian Bérard], think of the past, of our poor Déso [Roger Désormière], who is not getting any better, I am in despair. I hope that Virgil [Thomson] will write a good review or, if he is conducting, that [Arthur] Berger will do so.²⁹

Poulenc then communicated twice with Shaw in the week preceding this concert, once by letter and then by telegram.

[21 April 1952]

My dear Shaw,

I will think of you on the 27th with great sadness for not being able to hear you. Above all, as promised, make me a recording that you will give to Paffratti at Salabert. He will send it along to me. Thank you with all my heart and very affectionately.

Francis Poulenc³⁰

The day before the concert, at 5:07 pm Paris time, he cabled a greeting to Shaw at Carnegie Hall: "My entire heart is with you. Send the recording via Salabert. I embrace you. Poulenc."³¹

Several of Poulenc's friends, Doda Conrad among them, sent their impressions. On 2 May Conrad wrote:

I wanted to write you immediately after the Carnegie Hall concert [but] I was too busy before my departure from New York. I sent you the program and the [*New York Times*] review. The one in the *Herald [Tribune]* was unpleasant—signed [Arthur] Berger. He must suffer from a liver ailment, since he fills his pen with bile. Because he is a composer (?) and because the *Stabat* was *acclaimed* (not only by me, I must say, who shouted myself hoarse), his reaction is rather flattering.³²

Personally, I was profoundly moved. Profoundly, and I am not sure that I don't even like the *Stabat* better than the Mass. It also seems that Robert Shaw conducted the *Stabat* better, with more tenderness, less rigidity, and less aggressive virtuosity than in his performance of the Mass I heard some years ago. It [the *Stabat*] is very human, very humble, very beautiful in its emotion. The soprano had a lovely voice but seemed to suffer a bit from stage fright. They had eight curtain calls, which seems to me unprecedented for a work in this genre.

On the contrary, I did not like the manner in which Shaw conducted the *Symphonie de psaumes*—without breadth, too slow. It evolved, most definitely, on the side of tenderness, and, though I think this is appropriate for your music, I am not sure that for Stravinsky this isn't an element of impotence.

I did not hear the *Stabat* from Strasbourg, except for a few measures that were so badly transmitted I turned off the radio. Shaw promised me to send you the recording made during the concert. I found his singers absolutely dazzling. That marvelous accuracy and that melting quality, which come, perhaps, from the fact that he does not separate his

singers—sopranos, mezzos, tenors, and basses—but intermingles them, which is ideal for your music. (I ask myself, though, how he gives them their cues, stresses the nuances, [and] brings out the various voices, etc.) Perhaps that is why the *Symphonie de psaumes* appeared less “clean,” less clear than usual.³³

Second-hand accounts aside—he had chided Casa Fuerte in a 27 May [1952] letter for not having sent her opinion of Shaw’s performance—Poulenc was impatient to receive the private recording so that he could judge for himself.³⁴ In the meantime, word reached Poulenc that Shaw had played it for some friends. This prompted him to write to Shaw, most probably sometime during May:

[May? 1952]

My dear Shaw,

I learned by letter from gentle Bill that he had heard the *Stabat* recording at your home. “What an incomparable marvel!” he writes. I am in tears because I have never received a copy. Where did you send it? I implore you, send one to Mr. Paffratti at Salabert 1 East 57[th Street] who will forward it to me. I long for it. I very much hope that you will record it for Victor. Here are my latest. I hope they will please you. I intend to write for you one day and to dedicate to you a *Gloria* with orchestra—if God inspires me. If you only knew what renewed joy your recording of the Mass gives me. You have the *secret of my music* that is why I like you so much.

Write me in English. I embrace you

Francis Poulenc³⁵

Shaw had sent a copy of the recording to Poulenc, but it had fallen victim to French customs officials as the following letter clarifies.

22 June [1952]

My dear Shaw,

I am benefiting from Sam Barber’s return to America to send you this letter because I do not have your home address. I finally received, after a long period at French customs, the *Stabat* recording. You have made me weep for joy. It is impossible to dream of a more beautiful performance. It is praiseworthy from one end to the other. How comforting to feel so completely understood.

It is the music precisely as it flows from me. What can I say? You have magnified and embellished it. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I hope that you are going to record the *Stabat* for Victor. Everybody hopes so and looks forward to it.

Believe, my dear Shaw, my affection both faithful and full of wonder.

Francis Poulenc³⁶

For unknown reasons, Poulenc's dream of an RCA Victor recording of *Stabat mater* conducted by Shaw never materialized during his lifetime, although Shaw would record it many years later on the Telarc label.³⁷ Nevertheless, Shaw's Carnegie Hall performance yielded one further accolade for the composer. In January 1953 Poulenc learned that his *Stabat mater* had won the prestigious New York Music Critic's Circle Award for best choral work of 1952.³⁸ In 1953, when Poulenc recorded a series of eighteen conversations with Claude Rostand, the noted radio producer and critic for numerous journals, both Shaw's name and recordings were once again on Poulenc's mind. In response to Rostand's question about important conductors of his choral music, Poulenc named three: "Marcel Couraud [director of an ensemble bearing his name] in France, Félix de Noble in Holland, and Robert Shaw in America."³⁹ He also played the "Agnus Dei" from Shaw's recording of the Mass in the fourteenth conversation and an excerpt from the private *Stabat mater* recording at the conclusion of the series.⁴⁰

Composer and writer Ned Rorem, who had spent much time in Paris after mid-May 1949, and who first visited Poulenc's apartment in early July 1949 in a scene oddly reminiscent of Shaw's first visit there, has written several recollections of Poulenc that inform our discussion.⁴¹ Most probably during October 1953, Poulenc played his private *Stabat mater* recording for Rorem. Two statements by Rorem confirm Poulenc's deep regard for Shaw:

And, like artists, he was also a child; his self-absorption was stupefying. I recall once in Cannes his monologue to a baffled bartender about a series of triumphant modulations he had penned that afternoon. I remember also a river of tears as he listened to a record of his own *Stabat Mater*. "Robert Shaw," he wept, "is the greatest performer of our time: his tempi correspond to the very motion of my blood."⁴²

Spent the afternoon with Jay . . . at Poulenc's in that sunny high apartment on the Luxembourg, with chairs of orange plush and squeaking floors. . . . His favorite interpreter in the whole world is Bob Shaw, whom he says has divined the speed of the very blood in his (Poulenc's) arteries. All the more surprising that Shaw is Protestant: *tendu*, and the *Stabat Mater* is Catholic: *calme*.⁴³

The most startling news in Poulenc's 1952 letters to Shaw, however, is the promise to write a *Gloria* with orchestra ("if God inspires me") and to dedicate it to Shaw. This fascinating revelation must be considered in the context of Poulenc's last decade.

Between 1953 and 1957 Poulenc's life was virtually ruled by a single obsession: the composition and performance of his opera *Dialogues des Carmélites*. Moreover, there were occasional bouts with depression that left him briefly institutionalized; the adjustment to new touring partners such as the cellist Pierre Fournier; composition of the Sonata for Flute and Piano for Jean-Pierre Rampal, but no scheduled tours of America. Highlights of 1958 and 1959 include a monodrama on Jean Cocteau's *La voix humaine* for Denise Duval and the swan song of the Bernac/Poulenc Duo, a concert in Paris's Salle Gaveau on 27 May 1959. The late 1950s were thus dominated by more worldly dramas. Between the *Stabat mater* and the *Gloria*, FP 177, Poulenc composed virtually no choral music, with the exception of a short *Ave verum corpus* for women's chorus, FP 154 (August 1952) commissioned by the Howard Heinz Foundation for the Pittsburgh International Contemporary Music Festival, and four *Laudes de Saint Antoine de Padoue* for men's chorus, FP 172 (between July 1957 and March 1959). We have no record of Poulenc's having sent Shaw the *Ave verum corpus*, but he did arrange for him to receive the *Laudes*.

Just before Christmas 1959, Poulenc must have contacted the firm of G. Ricordi in New York and requested that a copy of *Laudes* be sent to Shaw, who was then assisting Georges Szell and the Cleveland Orchestra. This was done on 18 December 1959, accompanied by a letter that stated in part: "We take great pleasure in forwarding to you herewith a copy of Mr. Francis Poulenc's latest choral work: LAUDES, which he is anxious for you to have."⁴⁴ Shortly after Twelfth Night, Shaw sent a brief note through Ricordi thanking Poulenc for his "constant friendship."⁴⁵ The four *Laudes*, which Poulenc barely mentions in his extant correspondence, were hardly compensatory in lieu of the promised *Gloria*.

What Shaw probably did not know at the time was that Poulenc had decided, at least eight months before, to compose a *Gloria*. For some months the prestigious Koussevitsky Foundation had tried to commission an orchestral piece from Poulenc, only to be rejected because a symphonic work was not among his interests.⁴⁶ Once the genre restriction was removed, agreement was reached, although formal negotiations dragged on into the summer of 1959, well after Poulenc had set to work.⁴⁷ What Poulenc had in mind fit the description of the "*Gloria* for chorus and orchestra" promised to Shaw in 1952. A history of this,

Poulenc's most famous and frequently performed large choral work, is beyond the scope of our article, but a few comments are in order.

Regaining his equilibrium after bouts of depression and indecision, Poulenc had Bernac send him the *Gloria* text on 24 April 1959, and four days later he wrote to his doctor, Louis Chevalier that he had "refound himself" and had "thrown himself" to writing the *Gloria*.⁴⁸ Poulenc sketched a first draft during the summer months, and on 24 July he told Bernac that the *Gloria* would have nothing in common with the *Stabat mater*. Unlike the Mass and *Stabat mater*, two "French" works, Poulenc's inspiration now came from Italy: the Benozzo Gozzoli frescos in the Ricardi Palace in Florence and Desdemona in Verdi's *Otello*.⁴⁹ Poulenc was so pleased with his progress that he wrote to Milhaud on 13 August, "Now, God be praised, with the *Gloria* I have taken up again the Poulenc style of [19]37." Poulenc might also have told Milhaud that its first performance would have nothing to do with Shaw.⁵⁰

Ironically, although the score was fully drafted by Christmas 1959, completion of the orchestration of the *Gloria* was delayed by Poulenc's fourth American tour, his first since 1952, which took place from mid-February to 20 March 1960. Accompanied by Denise Duval, the most important soprano to interpret his work, Poulenc's tour focused primarily on the Northeast, with concerts in New York, Ithaca, Philadelphia, Chicago, Detroit, and Washington, D.C.⁵¹ The centerpiece was Duval's performance of the monodrama *La voix humaine*, written expressly for her. Georges Prêtre, Poulenc's newest protégé conductor (who by that time seems to have replaced Shaw in Poulenc's regard) also participated during part of Poulenc's visit. Poulenc, who had already given him the premiere of *La voix humaine*, would soon entrust him with *La dame de Monte-Carlo* (another monologue for Duval) and the French premiere of *Gloria*.⁵²

After returning to Paris from a trip to Italy, Poulenc completed the *Gloria*, finishing the orchestration in May. Reinvigorated by his highly successful American tour, Poulenc began making plans in late July to visit the States, for the fifth time, during January 1961. The centerpiece of this tour would be the premiere of *Gloria* by his old friend Charles Munch, conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra with soprano Adele Addison and the Chorus Pro Musica (Alfred Nash Patterson, conductor).⁵³ In addition, after considerable and stressful negotiations about fees and repertoire, Poulenc was engaged to play his Concerto in D Minor for Two Pianos, FP 61, with Evelyne Crochet, winner of the 1958 Tchaikovsky Competition. Working with the BSO rekindled a relationship begun in January 1950 when Poulenc had premiered his Piano Concerto, FP 146, with the orchestra. Before leaving for America,

he also worked on *Sept répons des ténèbres*, FP 181, for a child soprano, a chorus of boys and men, and orchestra, which had been commissioned by the New York Philharmonic in celebration of its opening season at Lincoln Center.⁵⁴ The choral score was completed between April and October 1961, and the orchestration by March 1962.

When Poulenc arrived in Boston for rehearsals of the *Gloria*, things did not go as planned and he may well have wished that Robert Shaw was conducting. Immediately following the first rehearsal he attended, Poulenc gave Pierre Bernac a blow-by-blow account (here in Sidney Buckland's translation):

As for the *Gloria* if I had not come here, what peculiar music would have been heard! Dear Charlie [Charles Munch] had understood precisely *nothing*.

Arriving late for the first rehearsal of the choir, I heard something so unlike me that my legs almost failed me on the staircase. *Excellent* choir but [Alfred Nash] Patterson is not the intuitive [Robert] Shaw and all those worthy Protestants were singing sharp and shrill (especially the women) as they do in London, with that "Oh! my good Lord" quality. *All* of Munch's tempi were *wrong*—all too fast, naturally. A well-intentioned lady singing the part of Addison (who had not yet arrived), with a voice like a goat and all out of tune. A pale, wan pianist tinkled the keys, and not always the right ones!! I tell you, I wanted to run a mile. My poor child was really presenting itself badly. What a burden music is!!!

I didn't say a word before the interval but then I explained everything. Mr. Patterson, hearing me demonstrate, said: "Oh! so they have to sing like Maurice Chevalier." "Exactly!" When we started again, I played the piano. The soloist sang no more, Munch calmed down, and the thing was *perfect*. Ouf!!!⁵⁵

So Shaw was not forgotten after all! But terms required Poulenc to write "Commissioned by the Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation in the Library of Congress, and dedicated to the memory of Serge and Nathalie Koussevitzky."⁵⁶

Whether or not Poulenc, or Shaw for that matter, ever remembered the promise of a *Gloria* made by Poulenc in 1952, we cannot say. Had he honored it, surely Shaw would have treasured "his" *Gloria* as he did Paul Hindemith's *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd*, which he had commissioned in 1946 and later recorded with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. We can, however, be sure that Poulenc did write a *Gloria* for chorus and orchestra, and if the thousands of performances it has received around the world are any indication, the composer must have received the divine inspiration he had been seeking.

Poulenc had anticipated a sixth American tour for April 1963, which was to feature premieres of his new *Sept répons des ténèbres* and Sonata for Clarinet and Piano, FP 184, but his death on 30 January in Paris set aside this plan. Several individuals were involved in arranging memorials in New York and in carrying out planned premieres, but it fell to his old friend Doda Conrad to take control. Early in the planning process for the American event (others were planned in France), Virgil Thomson suggested Robert Shaw's participation, from a distance. On 11 February 1962 Thomson commiserated to Yvonne de Casa Fuerte:

We are all very much shaken by Poulenc's death. A grand memorial is being prepared for April at the time when [Thomas] Shippers will conduct his *Tenebrae* service in four concerts with the Philharmonic. There will also be a concert in Philharmonic Hall where Benny Goodman and Leonard Bernstein will play the new Clarinet and Piano Sonata. [Arthur] Gold and [Robert] Fizdale will also play things, and Jennie Tourel will sing things. Robert Shaw, conducting the Mass that same evening in Cleveland, will be piped into the hall by radio. There will also be a New York chorus singing something else and even, probably, Arthur Rubinstein playing things too. It will all be very[,] very impressive. Doda Conrad is organizing the program.⁵⁷

Conrad's concert, somewhat reshaped, eventually took place in Carnegie Hall on 10 April; in spite of its appropriateness, Shaw's performance of Poulenc's Mass was not "piped" in. This concert was followed by the premiere of *Sept répons* by the New York Philharmonic the following day, under Shippers's direction.⁵⁸

After Poulenc's death, Shaw continued to record Poulenc's choral works into the mid-1990s, and the results bear eloquent testimony not only to his excellence as a conductor, but of his ability to capture the essence of Poulenc's scores.⁵⁹ How fascinating it is to compare recordings of the Mass from the beginning and end of his career (1948 and 1989) and to hear his interpretations of *Stabat mater* and *Gloria*.

The letters published for the first time in this article, reflected in the mirror of Poulenc's references to Shaw across his all-too-short career, provide ample opportunity to consider the working relationship between two of the greatest figures in twentieth-century choral music: one a composer, the other his faithful interpreter. Each man has left a significant legacy in his own right, and there can be no doubt that Poulenc's music and Shaw's recordings of it continue to show amazing resilience, touching the lives of countless audiences and singers the world around. The distinguished writer on music, Michael Steinberg, dedicated his book on choral music to Robert Shaw in "recognition for depth of commitment to

music.” This could equally apply to both men.⁶⁰ It is sad that Poulenc did not live to see the ongoing dedication Shaw exhibited by frequently programming and recording his music, but in life he clearly understood that theirs was a remarkable relationship. In an interview with Jay S. Harrison of the *New York Herald Tribune*, Poulenc said it best:

I can only say that [Shaw] understands me better than I understood myself. Understands me? No. He divines my intentions. It is as though the work were performed fifty years after my death. Never in my lifetime did I expect to hear a composition of mine played with such calm and perfection. You know Shaw? He is, of course, a genius.⁶¹

Appendix I: The Poulenc/Shaw Correspondence at Yale⁶²

LETTER NO. 1: [Late summer 1948] Francis Poulenc to Robert Shaw

5 rue de Médicis, Paris

Cher Monsieur Shaw

Il y a déjà bien longtemps que je voulais vous écrire pour vous remercier de l'effort que vous faites en faveur de ma musique chorale; mais un hiver partagé entre de nombreuses tournées en Europe et de trop rares moments de création m'a fait remettre à ces vacances mon projet, très ancien. Je sais par Doda [Conrad] ce que vous avez déjà fait pour ma messe, mes motets, mes 7 chansons et j'en suis profondément touché. Doda me dit que vous préparez *Figure humaine*. Ce m'est une grande joie car j'ai essayé de mettre le meilleur de moi-même dans cette œuvre conçue et réalisée à une époque où j'étais un Français bien malheureux. J'ai cru à l'origine que deux chœurs fort nombreux étaient indispensables. On l'a chantée à 120 à Londres,⁶³ 130 à Bruxelles,⁶⁴ mais à la réflexion je pense que deux chœurs de 30 seraient suffisants à condition que les basses soient très solides. Ce qui manque à tant d'exécutions chorales c'est d'étayer l'ensemble sur des pieds puissants. De tous côtés on m'a vanté la pureté de vos exécutions et c'est pourquoi je suis si heureux que vous vous intéressiez à mon œuvre a cappella qui contient, j'en suis certain, la plus authentique de mon invention musicale. Cela tient sans doute à mon amour total pour la poésie et au grand bonheur que j'ai eu de naître à l'époque d'Apollinaire et d'Eluard.

Vous savez sûrement que je vais en Amérique cet hiver. J'ai tenu à me présenter au public américain d'une façon qui semblera modeste mais qui pour moi représente au contraire l'orgueil. Alors que mes contemporains de tous pays surenchérisent tant qu'ils peuvent dans le

domaine instrumental, j'ai voulu, fidèle à la tradition d'un Schuman[n], d'un Schubert, d'un Moussorgski ou d'un Fauré, prouver que le lied n'est pas une forme périmée. L'extrême subtilité de la poésie moderne rend la tâche du musicien difficile, mais heureusement, je crois pouvoir prétendre qu'Apollinaire, Eluard, Max Jacob, Louise de Vilmorin sont sans secret pour moi et c'est là mon orgueil.

J'achève actuellement un cycle de sept mélodies d'après les *Calligrammes* d'Apollinaire, où je veux prouver qu'un cycle vocal peut avoir l'armature d'une œuvre symphonique. Je compte en donner la première audition mondiale à New York le 20 novembre. J'espère que vous me ferez le plaisir d'y assister.

J'arriverai à New York le 29 Octobre avec Doda et mon co-équipier Pierre Bernac. J'espère que des amis communs nous réuniront vite.

D'ici là je vous en prie de croire, monsieur, que je me considère déjà, de loin, comme votre ami.

Croyez donc à mes sentiments très sincères.

Francis Poulenc

*LETTER NO. 2: 2 September 1948, Robert Shaw to Francis Poulenc, typed carbon copy*⁶⁵

Mr Francis Poulenc
5 rue de Médicis, Paris, France

Dear Mr Poulenc:

It was a great pleasure to receive your letter and thank you for your most gracious appreciation of the work of my choirs here in New York.

It has always been satisfying and stimulating to perform your choruses, and we are looking fo[r]ward keenly to your arrival and the further performances of your works next year.

Again with thanks and best personal wishes,

Cordially,
Robert Shaw

September 2, 1948
rs:fz

LETTER NO. 3: 10 March [1950], Francis Poulenc to Robert Shaw, on the Hotel Antlers, Colorado Springs, CO, letterhead

Mon cher, cher Shaw

Vous êtes le désespoir de ma tournée en Amérique.⁶⁶ Je vous ai manqué à New York en janvier et février. Je vous ai manqué de trois jours à San Francisco et je vous remanquerai le deux à New York car je prends l'avion le 29 mars pour Paris. Et moi qui aurais tant, tant voulu

vous voir, parler longuement avec vous et redire que l'enregistrement de ma messe a été le bonheur de mon été. Les jours où je doutais de moi (ils sont nombreux) je passais vos admirables⁶⁷ disques et je me sentais réconforté. Pourquoi ne sont-ils pas parus? Vous m'avez donné là une des plus grandes joies de ma vie de musicien.

Continuez à aimer ma musique. Vous me rendrez parfaitement heureux.

Croyez, mon cher Shaw, à ma très reconnaissante et admirative amitié.

Francis Poulenc

du 21 mars au 29 St Moritz Hotel New York

LETTER NO. 4: [April 1950?], Francis Poulenc to Robert Shaw

5 rue de Médicis, Paris

Mon cher Shaw

J'ai été littéralement désespéré de ne pas vous voir en Amérique. C'est trop de malchance mais le jour où vous me demandiez d'aller à Washington j'enregistrais avec Bernac chez Columbia.⁶⁸ Vous ne pouvez savoir mon impatience à voir la messe sortir chez Victor.

Jamais je ne vous dirai assez l'émotion profonde que me redonne, chaque fois que je l'écoute votre exécution de cette œuvre. Grâce à vous je me crois pendant quelques minutes un grand musicien: illusion bien agréable. J'espère qu'un jour vous pourrez donner Figure humaine. J'ai été très content de H. Ross mais, vous,⁶⁹ vous sauriez découvrir mes secrets.⁷⁰

Cher ami je vous serre les deux mains avec une grande affection et beaucoup beaucoup de gratitude.

Francis Poulenc

LETTER NO. 5: 10 August [1951], Francis Poulenc to Robert Shaw

5 rue de Médicis, Paris

Mon cher Shaw

10 août

Comme Paffratti a dû vous le dire, vous pourrez avoir aux environs du 15 septembre la partition de piano du *Stabat* et les parties de chœur.⁷¹ Le matériel d'orchestre sera prêt aux environs du 15 novembre. Inutile de vous dire combien je me réjouis de vous voir vous intéresser à cette œuvre. L'enregistrement de la Messe ne cesse de m'émerveiller, de m'émouvoir, de m'enchanter. C'est vous dire que j'attends avec impatience votre exécution du *Stabat*.⁷² Vous avez un sens étonnant de ma musique et vous me devinez ce qui est bien agréable. Je retournerai en Amérique pendant le premier trimestre 52. Renseignez-vous auprès de M^r

Schang, "Columbia manager", pour que je puisse assister à la première du *Stabat*. Tout de suite après la fin de ma tournée serait parfait. Je serai alors à New-York pour les enregistrements. Donnez-moi de vos nouvelles et croyez à ma très profonde affection.

Francis Poulenc

LETTER NO. 6: [fall 1951], *Francis Poulenc to Robert Shaw*

5 rue de Médicis, Paris

Mon cher Shaw

Que je vous redise une fois de plus ma joie immense, ma joie sans réserve pour les prodigieux disques de la Messe. L'interprétation est admirable et l'enregistrement parfait.

Quelle joie de vous confier mon nouvel enfant: le *Stabat* dont vous allez recevoir une épreuve.⁷³ La réduction de piano très simple ne vous donnera, je le crains, qu'une idée très approximative de l'œuvre mais elle a le mérite d'être jouable pour l'étude.

Ayant pénétré tous les secrets de ma musique chorale, vous serez comme chez vous. Je retourne en Amérique, l'hiver prochain, avec Bernac. Je ne connais pas encore mon itinéraire mais Schang vous le communiquera. J'aimerais tant être à New York pour la première. Peut-être pourrait-on mettre cela juste avant mon retour pour la France.

Voyez cela.

En attendant je vous redis ma joie et mon amitié.

Francis Poulenc

LETTER NO. 7: [December 1951?], *Francis Poulenc to Robert Shaw, hand-painted color Christmas card by M.T.M. [Marie-Thérèse Mabilille] showing the yard of Poulenc's Noizay estate Le Grand Coteau*

Merry Christmas, dear Robert Shaw and thank you so much for what you do with my music. I love you as you like my music. Please record my *Stabat*! My English is very bad but my friendship for you is very good.

Francis Poulenc

LETTER NO. 8: 31 January [1952], *Francis Poulenc to Robert Shaw, on the Hotel Potomac [Venezuela] letterhead*

Caracas 31 janvier

Cher Shaw

Excusez-moi si je ne suis pas allé vous féliciter l'autre soir mais je partais le lendemain pour Caracas et j'étais très fatigué. Quelle merveilleuse soirée.⁷⁴ Quel Incarnatus est céleste. Je rentre le 7 à New York. Il faut vous voir, j'habiterai Hôtel Wyndham 42 West 58. Faites-moi signe. Pour le *Stabat* le solo doit être très prima donna italienne (*Desdemona*)

et non un ange comme la céleste soliste de la Messe. Pensez-y c'est très important.

A bientôt. Très affectueusement

Poulenc

LETTER NO. 9: [21 April 1952], Frances Poulenc to Robert Shaw, postcard of Le Grand Coteau, from the front

Mon cher Shaw

Je penserai à vous le 27 avec infiniment de tristesse de ne pas vous entendre.⁷⁵ Surtout, comme promis, faites-moi un enregistrement que vous donnerez à Paffratti chez Salabert. Il me le fera parvenir ensuite. De tout cœur merci et très affectueusement. Francis Poulenc.

Dear Robert, spending the week end here with a friend of Poulenc's — marvelous house in the Loire valley — with spring springing on all sides. Sorry not to see you before I left—back for Sunday! Bill B.

LETTER NO. 10: 26 April 1952, Francis Poulenc to Robert Shaw, Mackay All America Cable from Paris

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LT ROBERT SHAW CARNEGIE HALL 57 WEST NEWYORK | DE
TOUT COEUR AVEC VOUS ENVOYEZ ENREGISTREMENT | PAR
SALABERT VOUS EMBRASSE |

POULENC

LETTER NO. 11: [undated, May? 1952], Francis Poulenc to Robert Shaw

5 rue de Médicis à Paris

Mon cher Shaw

J'ai appris par une lettre du gentil Bill qu'il avait entendu chez vous les disques du *Stabat*. "Quelle merveille incomparable!" m'écrit-il. Je pleure car je n'ai jamais reçu de copie. Où l'avez vous envoyée? Je vous en prie, remettez-en une à Monsieur Paffratti Salabert 1 East 57 qui me la fera parvenir. Je me languis après. J'espère tant que vous l'enregistrerez une pour chez Victor. Voici les derniers nés. J'espère qu'ils vous plairont. J'ai l'intention d'écrire un jour pour vous et de vous le dédier un Gloria avec orchestre — que Dieu m'inspire. Si vous saviez quelle joie toujours renouvelée me donne l'enregistrement de ma Messe! Vous avez le secret de ma musique: c'est pourquoi je vous aime tant.

Ecrivez-moi en Anglais. Je vous embrasse

Francis Poulenc

LETTER NO. 12: 22 June [1952?], Francis Poulenc to Robert Shaw

22 juin

Mon cher Shaw

Je profite du retour de Sam Barber en Amérique pour vous envoyer cette lettre car je n'avais pas votre adresse privée. J'ai enfin reçu, après un long stage à la douane française, le disque du *Stabat*.⁷⁶ Vous m'avez fait pleurer de joie. Il est impossible de rêver une plus belle exécution. C'est admirable d'un bout à l'autre. Comme c'est réconfortant de se sentir si totalement compris.

C'est la musique telle qu'elle est sortie de moi. Que dis-je? Vous l'avez magnifiée, embellie. Du fond du cœur merci. J'espère que vous allez enregistrer le *Stabat* chez Victor. Tout le monde l'espère et l'attend.

Croyez, mon cher Shaw, à mon affection très fidèle et émerveillée.

Francis Poulenc

LETTER NO. 13: 18 December 1959, Nadia Vouki to Robert Shaw, G. Ricordi & Co. letterhead (16 West 61st Street, New York 23, N.Y.)

December 18, 1959

Mr. Robert Shaw
The Cleveland Orchestra
Severence Hall
Cleveland 6, Ohio

Dear Mr. Shaw,

We take great pleasure in forwarding to you herewith a copy of Mr. Francis Poulenc's latest choral work: *LAUDES*, which he was anxious for you to have.⁷⁷

We should like to take this opportunity to express to you our very best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and remain

Yours very sincerely,
G. RICORDI & CO.
[signed] Nadia Vouki
Nadia Vouki

NV/n
Encl.

LETTER NO. 14: 11 January 1960, Robert Shaw to Francis Poulenc, typed carbon copy

January 11, 1960

M. Francis Poulenc

c/o G. Ricordi and Company
16 West 61st Street
New York 23, New York

My dear M. Poulenc:

My sincere thanks for the male choruses, "Laudes." I shall look at them with great interest and hope to find an opportunity for their early performance.

With thanks for your constant friendship and all good wishes for a happy and productive New Year.

Cordially,
Robert Shaw

RS:eb

Appendix II: Robert Shaw's Commercial Recordings of Poulenc⁷⁸

- 1947 *Petites voix* (FP 83)⁷⁹
RCA Victor (10-1409) 78 rpm 10 in. record (Women of the RCA Victor Chorale)
- 1949 *Mass in G Major* (FP 89)
RCA Victor (DM1409) 3 78 rpm analog records also released as (WDM 1409), 3 45 rpm 7 in. analog records, and (LM1088) 33 1/3 rpm 12 in. analog record (Robert Shaw Chorale)
- 1965 *Gloria* (FP 177)
RCA Victor (LM/LSC 2822) 33 1/3 rpm 12 in. monaural/stereo record (Robert Shaw Chorale & RCA Victor Symphony Orchestra, Saramae Endich, soprano); recorded August 1964; 1965 Grammy award for best classical recording
- 1982 *Concerto in G Minor for Organ, String Orchestra, and Timpani* (FP 93) *Gloria* (FP 177)
Telarc (80104) 4 3/4 in. digital, stereo CD and Telarc (DG10077) 33 1/3 stereo 12 in. record (Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Michael Murray (organ), Sylvia McNair (soprano)); re-released in 2004 as Telarc (80643) 4 3/4 in. stereo CD; Concerto recorded 20 May 1982 (Cathedral of Saint Philip, Atlanta, GA); Gloria recorded 22 May 1982 (Symphony Hall, Atlanta, GA)
- 1989 *Mass in G Major* (FP 89)
Quatre motets pour un temps de pénitence (FP 97)

Quatre motets pour le temps de Noël (FP 152)
Quatre petites prières de Saint François d'Assise (FP 142)

- Telarc (80236) 4 3/4 in. digital, stereo CD (Robert Shaw Festival Singers); recorded 28 July 1989, Church of St. Pierre, Gramat, France
- 1994 Stabat mater (FP 148)
Telarc (80362) 4 3/4 in. digital CD (Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, Christine Goercke, soprano); recorded 7–8 November 1993, Symphony Hall, Woodruff Arts Center, Atlanta, GA
- 1996 Un soir de neige (FP 126)
Telarc (80408) 4 3/4 in. digital CD (Robert Shaw Festival Singers)

Appendix III: Robert Shaw's Collection of Annotated Poulenc Scores at Yale University⁸⁰

FP No.	Title	Type of score	Location
61	Concerto en ré mineur pour deux pianos et orchestre	Photocopy of Printed Score	Box 115; Folder 1246
61	Concerto en ré mineur	Miniature Score	Box 115; Folder 1247
80b	Suite française d'après Claude Gervaise (16 ^e siècle) pour orchestre	Miniature Score	Box 116; Folder 1263
82	Litanies à la Vierge noire, Notre-Dame de Roc-Amadour pour chœur de femmes ou d'enfants à trois parties avec accompagnement d'orgue	Score	Box 115; Folder 1252
82	Litanies à la Vierge noire [transcribed for orchestra by Louise Talma]	Photocopy of MS	Box 154; Folder 1815
89	Messe en sol majeur pour chœur mixte a cappella	Score (3 copies)	Box 115; Folder 1253
90	Sécheresses: Cantate pour chœur mixte et orchestre	Miniature Score (2 copies)* ^a	Box 116; Folder 1259
93	Concerto en sol mineur pour orgue, orchestre à cordes et timbales	Score	Box 115; Folder 1244
93	Concerto en sol mineur	Miniature Score	Box 115; Folder 1245
97	Quatre motets pour un temps de pénitence	Score (2 copies)	Box 115; Folder 1255
120	Figure humaine: cantate pour double chœur mixte à cappella	Score* ^b	Box 115; Folder 1248

120	Figure humaine	Score + Photocopy of Score	Box 115; Folder 1249
126	Un soir de neige: petite cantate de chambre pour 6 voix mixte ou chœur a cappella [1974 ed.]	Score	Box 116; Folder 1260
142	Quatre petites prières de Saint François d'Assise pour chœur d'hommes a cappella	Score	Box 115; Folder 1256
148	Stabat mater pour soprano solo, chœur mixte et orchestre	Score	Box 116; Folder 1261
148	Stabat mater	Piano/Vocal Score	Box 116; Folder 1262
152	Quatre motets pour le temps de Noël	Score	Box 115; Folder 1254
177	Gloria pour soprano solo, chœur mixte et orchestre	Score	Box 115; Folder 1250
177	Gloria	Piano/Vocal Score	Box 115; Folder 1251
181	Répons de ténèbres pour soprano solo (voix d'enfant), chœur mixte (voix d'enfants-voix d'hommes) et orchestre	Score	Box 115; Folder 1257
181	Répons de ténèbres	Piano/Vocal Score	Box 115; Folder 1258

^aOne is inscribed "Pour Robert Shaw l'admirable[.] son fidèle Poulenc 52." and the other "Pour l'admirable Shaw, très affectueusement[.] Fr. Poulenc 53."

^bThis inscription is cited in the body of the article.

Notes

Carl B. Schmidt is Professor of Music History at Towson University. He has worked extensively on the music of Antonio Cesti, Jean-Baptiste Lully, Francis Poulenc, and Georges Auric. He and his wife are currently completing a catalog of the music of Randall Thompson, and his *Story of Randall Thompson's Alleluia Revisited: A Facsimile Edition with Commentary* will be published by ECS Publishing for the seventieth anniversary of the opening of the Tanglewood Institute, 5 July 2010.

1. This essay is gratefully dedicated to Kirke and Doe Mechem, devoted and generous friends for many wonderful years. It is with deep gratitude that I thank Kendall Crilly (Librarian) and Richard Boursy (Archivist) at the Yale University Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, who generously drew my attention to the Poulenc materials in Shaw's collection. Ironically, as Boursy showed me, the papers contain a letter I had written to Shaw more than a decade ago asking about any correspondence he might have had with Poulenc. Responding on his behalf, Shaw's assistant kindly sent me an English translation of the text for *Sécheresses* made for Shaw by Doda Conrad, but no letters. I am also most grateful to Rosine Seringe for permission to publish Poulenc's letters, to Alexander C. Hitz for permission to publish those by Robert Shaw, and to Sandrine Erdely-Sayo for her expert guidance with the transcriptions and translations.
2. Sidney Buckland has gathered 350 letters to and from Poulenc in *Francis Poulenc "Echo and Source": Selected Correspondence 1915–1963* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1991) and Myriam Chimènes has gathered 767 in *Francis Poulenc: Correspondance 1910–1963* (Paris: Fayard, 1994). With regard to letters quoted from the Chimènes volume, the first number always refers to the year, the second to the number of the letter of that year, i.e., 48/6 is the sixth letter of 1948.
3. Roger Désormière was a particular favorite. Poulenc told his teacher Charles Kœchlin that Désormière was "excellent in my music." See the 18 August 1942 letter in Buckland, *Francis Poulenc "Echo and Source,"* no. 159, and Chimènes, *Francis Poulenc: Correspondance,* 42/7. Poulenc was also extremely fond of Yvonne Gouverné, who directed the Chœurs de la Radio for twenty-five years. Following one of her performances he wrote on 3 April [1953]: "Never will I be able to thank you enough for your performance of *Stabat* last evening. It was, quite simply, *wonderful*, and I have never heard it before like that." See Buckland, *Francis Poulenc "Echo and Source,"* no. 232, and Chimènes, *Francis Poulenc: Correspondance,* 53/8. And, in an April 1948 letter to Henry Barraud, composer and director of music for French national radio, Poulenc wrote: "I have reserved for Yvonne Gouverné, who knows my choral style perfectly, the first performance of *Huit chansons françaises* [FP 130: *Chansons françaises pour chœur a cappella*]." Poulenc was also particularly fond of Nadia Boulanger as a conductor of his choral music. He had her premiere his *Litanies* on 17 November 1936 in London. See Chimènes, *Francis Poulenc: Correspondance,* 48/1.
4. We do not know if Casa Fuerte heard this performance, but quite possibly she did. See Appendix III for the location of Talma's orchestral arrangement of *Litanies*.
5. Since Shaw had not yet commercially recorded any of Poulenc's choral music, at least some of his information most likely came from Casa Fuerte and Doda Conrad, a bass-baritone who had first traveled to America in 1938 as a member of Nadia Boulanger's ensemble and who had spent five years in the American army. Later Conrad not only helped arrange Poulenc's first American tour in 1948 but accompanied

- him to the United States. See Conrad's *Dodascalies: Ma chronique du XX^e siècle* (Arles: Actes sud, 1997), 328–31.
6. By this time Shaw had already made his first commercial recording of Poulenc. See Appendix II (a recording of *Petites voix* for RCA Victor).
 7. For the complete French text see Appendix I, Letter No. 1 and the notes establishing its date. All translations in this article, with one noted exception, are by the author. Titles have consistently been placed in italics.
 8. See Appendix I, Letter No. 2, 2 September 1948.
 9. Chimènes, *Francis Poulenc: Correspondance*, 48/6.
 10. See Appendix III under FP 120 (first item).
 11. For the context and additional details related to Shaw's decision, see John A. Mussulman, *Dear People . . . Robert Shaw: A Biography* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 94–97. The information about Shaw in Paris, including the quote below, comes directly from his account. When Shaw returned to America and began his Robert Shaw Chorale tour in early October, he included Poulenc's *Quatre motets pour un temps de pénitence* in his program.
 12. See Appendix II for Shaw's commercial recordings. Francis Poulenc (FP) numbers are established in Carl Schmidt, *The Music of Francis Poulenc: A Catalogue* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).
 13. Mussulman, *Dear People*, 96–97.
 14. Chimènes, *Francis Poulenc: Correspondance*, 49/3. As will be noted later, Shaw gave the first American performance.
 15. See the itinerary in Carl Schmidt, *Entrancing Muse: A Documented Biography of Francis Poulenc* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2001), Appendix K, 495–98.
 16. See Appendix I, Letter No. 3. Poulenc's praise of Shaw's recording of the Mass is a refrain found in later letters.
 17. Poulenc and Bernac recorded during 25–27 March. See Schmidt, *Entrancing Muse*, 498.
 18. See Appendix I, Letter No. 4.
 19. In a 6 March [1951] letter to Milhaud, Poulenc wrote: "Thank God[,] from 20 March until 30 October I shall become a composer again." Buckland, *Francis Poulenc "Echo and Source,"* no. 215, and Chimènes, *Francis Poulenc: Correspondance*, 51/3.
 20. 15 June 1951, letter from Henri Hell to Francis Poulenc, in Chimènes, *Francis Poulenc: Correspondance*, 51/6.
 21. Numerous details are given in Schmidt, *Entrancing Muse*, 366–69, including the fact that Poulenc attended a performance of the *Stabat* in Brussels on 2 November 1951 (see note 82).
 22. See Appendix I, Letter No. 5.
 23. See Appendix I, Letter No. 6. Coppicus & Schang, Inc. of Columbia Artists Management Inc. in New York City was Poulenc's and Bernac's agent.

24. See Appendix I, Letter No. 7.
25. Many years later, on 15 October 1991, in anticipation of a performance by the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, Shaw “wrote in brief concerning aspects of Poulenc’s *Stabat mater* which might be more accessibly approached during rehearsal.” Intended for the chorus, his discussion compared and contrasted Poulenc’s *Stabat mater* with Verdi’s. He spoke in particular about the difficulty of getting Poulenc’s “richness of choral textures . . . to sound through the color-range-dynamic capabilities of a twentieth-century symphony orchestra.” For the complete account, see Robert Blocker, ed., *The Robert Shaw Reader* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 311–13 (quotation from page 313).
26. See Myriam Chimènes, “Geneviève Sienkiewicz et Francis Poulenc: Correspondance inédite,” in *Centenaire Georges Auric→Francis Poulenc*, ed. Josiane Mas (Montpellier: Centre d’étude du XX^e siècle de l’Université Paul Valéry, 2001), 267. The Bartók cantata, sung in Alice Parker’s and Julius Herford’s English translation, was an American premiere.
27. Buckland, *Francis Poulenc “Echo and Source,”* no. 224, and Chimènes, *Francis Poulenc: Correspondance*, 52/2.
28. See Appendix I, Letter No. 8.
29. See Buckland, *Francis Poulenc “Echo and Source,”* no. 227, and Chimènes, *Francis Poulenc: Correspondance*, 52/12.
30. This letter continues with an addition in English by Bill B., whom I was not able to identify. See Appendix I, Letter No. 9.
31. See Appendix I, Letter No. 10.
32. It is possible that Conrad instead meant “unflattering” here.
33. Buckland, *Francis Poulenc “Echo and Source,”* no. 228, and Chimènes, *Francis Poulenc: Correspondance*, 52/13. His friend Simone Girard, who had heard the direct broadcast of a performance over the radio, also wrote. See excerpts of her 14 June [1942] letter in Chimènes, *Francis Poulenc: Correspondance*, 51/10, n1.
34. See his letter in Chimènes, *Francis Poulenc: Correspondance*, 52/14. On 27 May, Poulenc wrote to her again concerning the Paris performance: “Since the *Stabat* does not interest you I will only tell you in passing of its success at [the church of] St. Roch.” See Chimènes, *Francis Poulenc: Correspondance*, 52/14.
35. See Appendix I, Letter No. 11. Emphasis in original.
36. See Appendix I, Letter No. 12. By 1955 Poulenc’s copy was, as he put it “so used, so used” that it was worn out. In a 2 July [1955] letter to the singer Rose Dercourt-Plaut Poulenc asked if she could procure a replacement at Carnegie Hall. See Chimènes, *Francis Poulenc: Correspondance*, 55/7.
37. See Appendix II, No. 6. During 1955 Poulenc supervised the first recording of *Stabat mater* by the Orchestre de l’Association des Concerts Colonne and the Chœurs de l’Alauda. (Jacqueline Brumaire soprano and Louis Frémaux conductor). See Schmidt, *Entrancing Muse*, 405.
38. See the details in Schmidt, *Entrancing Muse*, 379n9. Poulenc was also aware that Shaw intended to perform his *Quatre motets pour le temps de Noël*, FP 152. See his 8

July [1952] letter to Casa Fuerte in Chimènes, *Francis Poulenc: Correspondance*, 1994, 52/17 (in which Shaw is referred to by the sobriquet “le sublime”).

39. For a printed version of the original French, see Francis Poulenc, *Entretiens avec Claude Rostand* (Paris: René Julliard, 1954), 208.

40. See Poulenc, *Entretiens*, 156–57 and 214.

41. Poulenc’s friend and biographer Henri Hell arranged for Rorem to meet Poulenc at tea time on 6 July. Poulenc, dressed only in a peignoir, told Rorem he could not see him and begged him to come back two days later, which he did. See Schmidt, *Entrancing Muse*, 348–49.

42. From the essay “Francis Poulenc: A Souvenir,” in Ned Rorem, *Settling the Score: Essays on Music* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1988), 126 (originally published simultaneously in 1963 in *The Village Voice* [21 February 1963] and *Tempo Magazine* [Spring 1963] under different titles).

43. Ned Rorem, *The Paris and New York Diaries of Ned Rorem, 1951–1961* (San Francisco, CA: North Point Press, 1983), 111. In another essay entitled “Afterthoughts on Francis,” *Setting the Tone*, 131 (originally published in *The American Record Guide* [September 1968]), Rorem remarked: “In that game of if-you-were-on-a-desert-island-with-only-five-records, two of mine would surely be Ravel’s *L’Enfant et les sortilèges* and Poulenc’s *Stabat Mater*, because they comprise every aspect of the sonorous variables (sung words, both solo and choral, and orchestra), and they do it à la française, which is my need. I might include *Figure humaine*; not, however, *La Voix humaine*, for, despite its beauty, it always relates the same story, whereas *Figure humaine* changes meaning with each hearing.”

44. For the complete text see Appendix I, Letter No. 13.

45. See Appendix I, Letter No. 14.

46. See Schmidt, *The Music of Francis Poulenc*, 490.

47. The details of the \$2000 commission and a timeline ascertained from Poulenc’s writings can be found in Schmidt, *The Music of Francis Poulenc*, 490–94, and the summary in Schmidt, *Entrancing Muse*, 433–36.

48. See Schmidt, *The Music of Francis Poulenc*, 490.

49. Poulenc chose the Italian soprano Rosanna Carteri and Yvonne Gouverné’s Chœurs de la R.T.F. (Georges Prêtre conducting) for the 14 February 1961 Paris world premiere performance of his *Gloria*.

50. For full documentation see Schmidt, *Entrancing Muse*, 434–35.

51. See the tour itinerary in Schmidt, *Entrancing Muse*, Appendix K, 499–500.

52. Chimènes points out that Poulenc signed a copy of *La voix humaine* to Prêtre on 6 February 1959 saying, “I have finally found the *chef* I have waited for for years.” See Chimènes, *Francis Poulenc: Correspondance*, 1044. Prêtre conducted Martial Singher’s semi-staged performances of *Les mamelles de Tirésias* and *La voix humaine* at Carnegie Hall on 23 February and the Academy of Music in Philadelphia two days later. At this point in his career, Shaw was the associate conductor to George Szell in Cleveland.

53. Given Serge Koussevitsky's long association with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, this orchestra was a logical choice for the commission.
54. See the details in Schmidt, *The Music of Francis Poulenc*, 499–505.
55. Buckland, *Francis Poulenc "Echo and Source,"* no. 323; the square brackets are Buckland's. Addison is Adele Addison. See also Chimènes, *Francis Poulenc: Correspondance*, 61/3.
56. From the printed piano-vocal score (Paris: Salabert, 1960).
57. Tim Page and Vanessa Weeks Page, eds., *Selected Letters of Virgil Thomson* (New York: Summit Books, 1988), 314. See also Schmidt, *Entrancing Muse*, 463–65.
58. See Conrad, *Dodascalies*, 411–14.
59. See Appendix II for a list of Robert Shaw's commercial recordings of Poulenc.
60. Michael Steinberg, *Choral Masterworks: A Listener's Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), ix. Steinberg's book is dedicated "To Robert Shaw in loving memory."
61. Poulenc's remarks to Jay S. Harrison of the *New York Herald Tribune*, as quoted by Mussulman, *Dear People*, 106.
62. A few punctuation marks have been added for clarity, but Poulenc's titles and underlining have been given as they appear in his originals.
63. London, BBC Home Service broadcast on 25 March 1945 by the BBC Chorus, Leslie Woodgate conducting. See Schmidt, *The Music of Francis Poulenc*, 336.
64. See Chimènes's commentary in *Francis Poulenc: Correspondance*, 43/3, n2.
65. Carbon copy.
66. See Schmidt, *Entrancing Muse*, Appendix K, 495–98, for the itinerary of this trip.
67. Triple underlined.
68. 25–27 March 1950.
69. Double underlined.
70. Hugh Ross and the Schola Cantorum gave the first American performance of *Figure humaine* at Carnegie Hall in New York City on 17 February 1950.
71. For details about *Stabat mater*, FP 148, and when the various scores were completed see Schmidt, *The Music of Francis Poulenc*, 406–12, and Schmidt, *Entrancing Muse*, 361–63. The piano-vocal score (R.L. 12443 et C¹⁶) bears the date "Paris, Imp. MOUNOT Octobre 1951," and Poulenc sent a copy of it to his friend Simone Girard on 11 November 1951. Later he gave a manuscript copy to her husband, Doctor Pierre Girard. See Chimènes, *Francis Poulenc: Correspondance*, 1026–27.
72. The performance by the Collegiate Chorale and the RCA Victor Symphony Orchestra took place 27 April 1952 at Carnegie Hall in New York City. See Schmidt, *The Music of Francis Poulenc*, 410.
73. The published piano-vocal score was printed in October 1951. See Schmidt, *The Music of Francis Poulenc*, 408.

74. Poulenc had attended Robert Shaw's performance of Bach's Mass in B Minor on 27 January 1952.
75. Reference to Shaw's performance of the *Stabat mater*. See above.
76. Poulenc refers to a private recording made of Shaw's New York concert. See Doda Conrad's 2 May 1952 letter to Francis Poulenc. Buckland, *Francis Poulenc "Echo and Source,"* no. 228, and Chimènes, *Francis Poulenc: Correspondance*, 52/13. Shaw did not commercially record the *Stabat mater* during Poulenc's lifetime.
77. The *Laudes de Saint Antoine de Padoue*, FP 172, were printed by Salabert in Paris (E.A.S. 16478-16481) during the spring of 1959. See also Schmidt, *The Music of Francis Poulenc*, FP 172.
78. Titles are in English, as in the recordings.
79. Nos. 1–3 are listed in Francine Bloch, *Phonographies II: Francis Poulenc 1928–1982* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1984), 148, 117, and 83, respectively. A Shaw discography is also included in Mussulman, *Dear People*, 251–56.
80. This list is based on one prepared by Kendall Crilly. Most of these scores are heavily annotated by Shaw in pencil, colored pencil, and/or via pasted in notes. Those marked with an asterisk (*) are inscribed to Shaw by Poulenc.