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■Francis Poulenc (1899–1963)

■Gloria (24')

Francis Poulenc was born into a wealthy family. His father Émile was a manufacturer of pharmaceuticals in Paris. Émile and his younger brother Camille succeeded the firm their father founded and subsequently made the company grow. Francis, the only son of Émile's, was expected to follow in his father's footsteps and was forbidden to devote himself solely to music. As a result, he was not allowed to enter the Paris Conservatory.

Poulenc developed interests in music early in his childhood. He received his first piano lessons from his mother. He then studied with Boutet de Monvel, César Franck's niece. His most influential teacher was the Catalan pianist Ricardo Viñes, who taught the young Poulenc the music of the time, including the works by Debussy, Stravinsky, and Satie. Poulenc eventually became known as a member of a group of musicians called *Les Six* (the others are: Georges Auric, Louis Durey, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud, and Germaine Tailleferre).

In the 1930s, Poulenc began to rethink his religious faith and eventually returned to Catholicism. From this point on, Poulenc never stopped composing sacred pieces. After writing a Mass and several motets, he composed in 1950 *Stabat Mater*, his first large-scale choral piece. A few years later in 1953, he started to write an opera on a religious theme. This was *Dialogues des Carmélites*, a story about the Martyrs of Compiègne, Carmelite nuns, guillotined during the French Revolution for their religious beliefs. It took Poulenc until 1956 to complete the piece. He then composed the Gloria between 1959 and 1960. It was commissioned by the Koussevitzky Foundation of America and was performed for the first time on January 20, 1961, with Charles Munch conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The Gloria is undoubtedly one of Poulenc's best works, reflecting what he once said about composing religious works: "I think I put the best

and most authentic side of myself into my choral music.” The composition was indeed very well received at the premiere.

Poulenc’s Gloria consists of six movements. The text follows the contemporary Gloria of the Mass ordinary. It opens brilliantly and majestically, somewhat retaining the tone quality utilized by numerous composers of the past generations. Its ending, however, is unique. The last word Amen is sung only once by the chorus and twice by the soprano soloist, who concludes the entire piece with soft notes.

[Akira Ishii]