



THE HUMAN VOICE

by Poulenc

April 3, 4, & 5, 2025
Historic Westwood

A Letter from our Founding Executive Artistic Director

Thank you so much for joining us for Poulenc's *La Voix Humaine* or *The Human Voice*. Poulenc has always been one of my favorite composers. I first discovered Poulenc as a flutist playing his *Sonata for Flute and Piano*, which is considered to be one of the most challenging flute sonatas, requiring advanced skills in performance and musical proficiency. As I continued my

training as a singer, I had more opportunity to study Poulenc and his music. For my masters recital in voice I performed Poulenc's *La courte paille* which was a song cycle composed as a gift to his dear friend and collaborator Denise Duval. I have also performed Poulenc's *Gloria* with the Chattanooga Symphony. As I continued to study Poulenc and his music I discovered he was very particular about including every musical marking in the score as to not leave anything to chance, and to indicate to the musician exactly what he was thinking and what he was looking for in his compositions. He was very detail oriented. My research also led me to *La voix humaine*, which he also composed for Denise Duval. They were both going through break ups at the time and the Jean Cocteau play seemed the perfect creative outlet. As a soprano who has devoted composer collaborators, I know how important the relationship and collaboration between the two can be. I believe they created a masterpiece with this one-woman opera. It is one of the most difficult operas I have ever taken on and I'm thrilled to take it on a second time in this immersive production at Historic Westwood. I hope that even though the piece deals with dark and difficult topics that you will fall in love with this opera and Poulenc's music as much as I have. The melodies are beautiful, haunting, and timeless.

Sincerely,
Kathryn Frady



Kathryn Frady

Founder & Executive Artistic Director

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Special Thanks to

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This season's projects are being supported in whole or in part by federal award number 21.027 awarded to the City of Knoxville by the U.S. Department of the Treasury and the Arts & Culture Alliance.



This project is being supported, in whole or in part, by federal award number SLFRP5534 awarded to the State of Tennessee by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

POULENC'S

The Human Voice

(LA VOIX HUMAINE)

Elle

Kathryn Frady

Stage Director

Marya Barry

Music Director

Brandon Coffey

Synopsis

The Human Voice (La Voix Humaine) is a fifty-minute, one-act opera for soprano and orchestra composed by Francis Poulenc in 1958. The work is based on the play of the same name by Jean Cocteau. It is set in Paris, where a young woman, Elle, is on the phone with her lover of the last five years. Elle is not dealing with the break up of her relationship very well and is struggling with crippling depression and thoughts of suicide. Her struggles are all made more complicated by their phone call getting disconnected with interruptions from operators. In the end, she tries to convince herself and her lover that she is strong enough to end the call, but is she?

Audience Advisory:

This performance contains themes and content related to suicide and mental health struggles. We want to ensure that all members of our audience are aware of the sensitive nature of the subject matter and are given the opportunity to make an informed decision about whether they wish to continue with the performance. The play explores complex and often difficult topics, which may be distressing for some individuals.

If you or someone you know is experiencing emotional distress or suicidal thoughts, we encourage you to seek help. Support is available. Please reach out to a mental health professional, or contact a suicide prevention hotline immediately. You are not alone, and help is available.

Local Help:

McNabb Center: Mental Health Crisis Hotline 865-539-2409

Materials are available at the entrance of the venue for more information



Kathryn Frady, soprano

Critically acclaimed soprano Kathryn Frady has worked throughout the United States, Europe, and South Africa. Frady has been widely praised for her vocal range, dramatic talent, and immersive and creative direction. Frady received Most Memorable Opera Performance Awards for her vocal and dramatic portrayals of the title roles in *Tosca*, *Suor Angelica*, *Susannah*, Violetta in *La Traviata*, and Amelia in the World Premiere of *Amelia Lost*.

Arts Knoxville's review of *Tosca* said, "In addition to having those requisite vocal and dramatic qualities that make for great melodrama, Frady, appropriately costumed and coiffed, simply looked and sounded like the *Tosca* that one carries around in their mind's eye." Of her previous performance of Poulenc's *The Human Voice*, Arts Knoxville noted "Frady's brilliance as a soprano capable of riveting the audience's attention - in vocal depth, in lyrical beauty, and in a marvelously conceived ebb and flow of posture and attitude - was as rewarding as it gets in theater." TN Today called the same performance "nothing short of a tour de force."

A fierce advocate for new American works, Frady has produced, sung, and directed in over 20 premieres. Frady's production of the world premiere of Larry Delinger's *Shadowlight*, was called "a stunning celebration of the art and life of Beauford Delaney" in a "marvelously immersive" production by Arts Knoxville.

Frady has a Bachelor of Music and Master of Music in Vocal Performance from the University of North Texas and is the Founding Executive Artistic Director & CEO of Marble City Opera.



Marya Barry, stage director

Marya Barry is a director and entrepreneur with a passion for bringing opera to life in unique and meaningful ways. Originally from DeBary, Florida, she earned her Bachelor of Music from Stetson University in 2014 and her Master of Music in Voice Performance from the University of Tennessee in 2017.

Her love for opera took her abroad to train in young artist programs such as the Varna International Opera Academy in Bulgaria and Oberlin in Italy. She also developed her skills in opera directing under the mentorship of James Marvel.

Marya has directed several productions with Marble City Opera, including two U.S. premieres — *The Nero Monologues* (2018) and *City of Ashes* (2019). She has also led site-specific performances of Puccini's *Tosca* (2021) and *Il Tabarro* (2024), as well as George Lam's *Heartbreak Express*.

In addition to her work in opera, Marya is the owner of Little Valley Play Cafe, a space where creativity and play come together for young children. She is excited to direct *The Human Voice* and share this powerful one-act opera with audiences.



Brandon Coffey, music director

Brandon Coffey is a highly sought-after collaborative pianist and music director based in East Tennessee. A graduate of Carson Newman University with a degree in Piano Performance, he served as the university's staff accompanist from 2013 to 2016. His career spans roles as a church pianist at Bearden United Methodist Church, First Baptist Church, and now as Music Director and Organist at Central United Methodist. Brandon has also collaborated extensively with local high schools, the East Tennessee Vocal Association, and theater companies throughout the region.

Since 2013, Brandon has been the resident pianist and music director for Marble City Opera. In January 2023, he made his operatic conducting debut with Marble City Opera's production of *The Christmas Spider*, and he later led the world premiere of *The Doctor and The Devils* by Jason Overall. With his exceptional talent and unwavering dedication, Brandon continues to be a prominent figure in the East Tennessee music scene, seamlessly collaborating with a diverse range of musicians.

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