



USTVOLSKAYA

GALINA USTVOLSKAYA
Symphony No. 5, "Amen"
Tony F. Sias, *reciter*

FRANCIS POULENC
La voix humaine
Sarah Aristidou, *soprano*

THE
CLEVELAND
ORCHESTRA
WELSER-MÖST

POULENC

The Sounds Of Reconciliation

The arts can provide an ideal platform for evoking and exploring the concept of reconciliation. And music, in particular, through its audible processes of synthesizing disparate voices, instruments, timbres, and tones into some measure of harmonious coexistence, is ideally suited to demonstrate the dynamic process through which reconciliation is achieved — sometimes, with extreme difficulty.

Such is the case in **Francis Poulenc's** *La voix humaine* (The Human Voice), where a female protagonist reconciles herself to a new reality, nearly at the ultimate cost. Poulenc based his succinct one-act opera — completed in 1958 — on a 1928 play by **Jean Cocteau**, in which the audience hears only one side of a telephone conversation between a distraught young woman and an unseen, unheard lover who has abandoned her.

Poulenc wrote *La voix humaine* in close collaboration with soprano **Denise Duval**, who sang the premiere in Paris on February 6, 1959. The libretto, credited to the playwright, recounts a final conversation

between a woman named Elle and the man she loves, who is now with a new lover he intends to marry the next day.

During the call, the woman reveals that abandonment has driven her to attempt suicide. That the conversation is beset by wrong numbers, crossed connections, and frantic redialing heightens Elle's anxiety, while also transmitting her state of mind to the listener. The music is jagged and obsessive, with stretches of agitated, exposed vocalizing. When Elle waxes nostalgic, her accompaniment corresponds with romantic lushness. In the end, she wraps the telephone cord around her neck, murmuring “Je t'aime” (I love you) repeatedly to the lover she now knows is gone.

The gesture is ambiguous: is this denial or acceptance? In a 2023 interview, the French soprano **Véronique Gens** — a leading contemporary interpreter of *La voix humaine* — endorses the latter view. “By the end, she feels like she's been knocked down forever — but I hope and believe that she can pick up her life again,” Gens said. “She'll need

time and space to recover, but she's a strong woman, and eventually, she'll be ready for another love story.”

Also open for interpretation is the Fifth Symphony of Russian composer **Galina Ustvolskaya**. The work, subtitled “Amen,” is as arresting today as at its introduction in 1991. Along with anxious figurations on oboe, trumpet, and violin, and a tuba played at its high and low extremes, a percussionist solemnly strikes a hollow wooden cube with hammers. (This unusual instrument choice led Dutch musicologist **Elmer Schönberger** to nickname Ustvolskaya “the lady with a hammer.”)

Attended by this idiosyncratic ensemble, a reciter — Ustvolskaya specified a man in black, wearing no jewelry — intones the text of *The Lord's Prayer*, in a manner meant to

evoke private prayer. The words bear the comfort of familiarity and faith; the setting is anything but comfortable.

Where is reconciliation to be found herein? One might venture to suggest it is that of the composer herself. Having endured the public and private hardships that any artist so fiercely singular and uncompromising would have faced in the Soviet Union, Ustvolskaya shows her unshakeable faith in the eternal with an enigmatic ritual of mystery and awe — and, significantly, one in which the chief direction given to the musicians is *espressivo*. ■

— adapted from a note by Steve Smith



Photo Aireonna McCall-Dubé

At a Glance



GALINA USTVOL'SKAYA *Symphony No. 5, "Amen"*

Born

June 17, 1919, in Petrograd

Died

December 22, 2006, in Russia

World Premiere

*January 19, 1991, in New York City, with
Ensemble Continuum*

Cleveland Orchestra Premiere

*May 23, 2025, with Tony F. Sias as reciter
and members of The Cleveland Orchestra*

Orchestration

*Oboe, trumpet, tuba, wooden cube,
violin, and reciter*



FRANCIS POULENC *La voix humaine*

Born

January 7, 1899, in Paris

Died

January 30, 1963, in Paris

World Premiere

*February 6, 1959, featuring Denise Duval
as soloist and Georges Prêtre conducting
the orchestra of Paris's Opéra-Comique*

Cleveland Orchestra Premiere

*May 23, 2025, with soprano Sarah
Aristidou and Music Director Franz
Welser-Möst*

Orchestration

*2 flutes (2nd doubling piccolo), oboe,
English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet,
2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets,
trombone, tuba, timpani, percussion
(cymbals, tambourine, xylophone), harp,
and strings*

The Sung Texts

Text by **Jean Cocteau**

English translation by **Christopher Bergen**

TRACK 2

Allô, allô, mais non, madame,
nous sommes plusieurs sur la ligne, raccrochez ...
Vous êtes avec une abonnée ...
Mais, madame, raccrochez vous-même ...
Allô, mademoiselle !
Mais non, ce n'est pas le docteur Schmit.
Zéro huit, pas zéro sept.
Allô ! C'est ridicule.
On me demande ; je ne sais pas.
Allô ! Mais, madame,
que voulez-vous que j'y fasse ?
Comment, ma faute ? Pas du tout.
Allô, mademoiselle ! Dites à cette dame
de se retirer.

*Hello? Hello? No, madame,
there are several of us on this line. Hang up!
I'm a subscriber ...
No, you hang up!
Hello, miss?
No, this is not Dr. Schmit.
Zero eight, not zero seven.
Hello? This is ridiculous.
Someone's trying to reach me; I don't know.
Hello? But madame,
what am I supposed to do?
What do you mean, my fault? Not at all!
Hello, miss? Operator, please tell this lady
to hang up!*



Photo Aireonna McCall-Dubé

TRACK 3

Allô, c'est toi ? Oui, très bien.
C'était un vrai supplice de t'entendre à travers
tout ce monde ... Oui ... Oui ... Non ...
C'est une chance ... Je rentre il y a dix minutes.
Tu n'avais pas encore appelé ?
Ah ! Non, non. J'ai diné dehors, chez Marthe.
Il doit être onze heure un quart.
Tu es chez toi ? Alors regarde la pendule électrique.
C'est ce que je pensais. Oui, oui, mon chéri.

Hier soir ? Hier soir je me suis couchée tout de suite
et comme je ne pouvais pas m'endormir, j'ai pris
un comprimé.
Non, un seul, à neuf heures.
J'avais un peu mal à la tête, mais je me suis
secouée.
Marthe est venue. Elle a déjeuné avec moi. J'ai fait
des courses. Je suis rentrée à la maison.
J'ai ... Quoi ? Très forte ...
J'ai beaucoup, beaucoup de courage ...

Après ? Après je me suis habillée, Marthe est venue
me prendre. Je rentre de chez elle.
Elle a été parfaite. Elle a cet air,
mais elle ne l'est pas.
Tu avais raison, comme toujours.
Ma robe rose ... Mon chapeau noir.
Oui, j'ai encore mon chapeau sur la tête.
Et toi, tu rentres ? Tu es resté à la maison ?

Quel procès ? Ah, oui ...
Allô ! Chéri ... Si on coupe, redemande-moi
tout de suite.
Allô ! Non, je suis là.
Le sac ? Tes lettres et les miennes.
Tu peux le faire prendre quand tu veux.
Un peu dur ... Je comprends.
Oh ! Mon chéri, ne t'excuse pas, c'est très naturel
et c'est moi qui suis stupide.
Tu es gentil ...
Moi non plus, je ne me croyais pas si forte.

Quelle comédie ? Allô ! Qui ?
Que je te joue la comédie, moi !
Tu me connais, je suis incapable de prendre sur moi.
Pas du tout ... Très calme.
Tu l'entendrais. Je dis : Tu l'entendrais.
Je n'ai pas la voix d'une personne qui cache
quelque chose.
Non. J'ai décidé d'avoir du courage et j'en aurai.
J'ai ce que je mérite.
J'ai voulu être folle et avoir un bonheur fou.

Chéri, écoute ... Allô ! Chéri ... Laisse ...
Allô ! Laisse-moi parler !
Ne t'accuse pas. Tout est ma faute. Si, si.

*Hello, is that you? Yes, fine.
It was torture trying to hear you over all those
people! Yes ... Yes ... No ...
Good timing ... I just got back ten minutes ago.
Didn't you call?
Ah, no, I had dinner out, at Marthe's.
It must be a quarter past eleven.
Are you at home? Then look at the clock.
I thought so. Yes, my dear.*

*Last night? Last night I went to bed right away,
but I couldn't sleep,
so I took a pill.
No, only one, at nine.
I had a headache, but I
shook it off.
Marthe came over, we had lunch, I ran some
errands, and came home.
I ... What? Very strong ...
I'm very brave ...*

*Afterwards? I got dressed, Marthe picked me up,
and we went to her place.
She was perfect. At least she
pretends to be.
You were right, as always.
My pink dress ... My black hat.
Yes, I still have it on.
And what about you? Did you stay at home?*

*What lawsuit? Ah, yes ...
Hello? Dear, if we're cut off, call me back
right away.
Hello? No, I'm still here.
The bag? Your letters, and mine.
You can pick them up when you want.
It's a bit hard ... I understand.
Oh, dear, don't apologize. That's perfectly natural;
I'm being stupid.
You're sweet ...
I didn't think I was strong enough.*

*What act? Hello? Who?
You think I'm acting?
You know me, I can't pretend!
Not at all ... I'm completely calm.
You'd know if I'm upset. I said: You'd know if I'm upset.
Do I sound like someone hiding
something?
No, I decided to be brave, and I will be.
I got what I deserve.
I wanted to be foolish and wildly happy.*

*Dear, listen ... Hello? Dear ... Listen ...
Hello? Let me speak!
Don't blame yourself. It's all my fault. Yes, yes.*

TRACK 4

Souviens-toi du dimanche de Versailles
et du pneumatique ?
Ah ! Alors ! C'est moi qui ai voulu venir.
C'est moi qui t'ai fermé la bouche.
C'est moi qui t'ai dit que tout m'était égal.
Non, non, là tu es injuste.
J'ai téléphoné la première, un mardi.
J'en suis sûre. Un mardi 27.
Tu penses bien que je connais
ces dates par cœur ...
Ta mère ? Pourquoi ?
Ce n'est vraiment pas la peine.
Je ne sais pas encore. Oui, peut-être.
Oh ! Non, sûrement pas tout de suite, et toi ?

Demain ? Je ne savais pas que c'était si rapide.
Alors, attends, c'est très simple :
Demain matin le sac sera chez le concierge.
Joseph n'aura qu'à passer le prendre.
Oh ! Moi, tu sais, il est possible que je reste,
comme il est possible que j'aie passé quelques
jours à la campagne, chez Marthe.
Oui, mon chéri ...

*Do you remember that Sunday in Versailles,
and the telegram?
Ah, well then! I'm the one who wanted to come.
I'm the one who wouldn't let you speak.
I'm the one who told you it didn't matter.
No, you're not being fair.
I called you first, on a Tuesday.
I'm sure of it. Tuesday the 27th.
You should know by now that I know
these dates by heart.
Your mother? Why?
It's not worth the trouble.
I still don't know. Yes, maybe.
Oh, no, certainly not right away ... And you?*

*Tomorrow? I didn't know it was that soon.
Well, alright ... Let's see:
I'll leave the bag with the doorman.
Joseph can stop by tomorrow and get it.
Oh, it's possible that I might stay in town,
or it's possible that I might spend a few days
in the country, at Marthe's.
Yes, my dear ...*



Photo Aireonna McCall-Dubé

TRACK 5

Allô ! Et comme ça ?
Pourtant je parle très fort.
Et là, tu m'entends ? Je dis : Et là, tu m'entends ?
C'est drôle parce que moi je t'entends
comme si tu étais dans la chambre.
Allô ! Allô ! Allons, bon ! Maintenant c'est moi qui
ne t'entends plus.
Si, mais très loin, très loin.
Toi, tu m'entends. C'est chacun son tour.
Non, très bien. J'entends même mieux que tout à
l'heure, mais ton appareil résonne.
On dirait que ce n'est pas ton appareil.

Je te vois, tu sais.
Quel foulard ? Le foulard rouge.
Tu as tes manches retroussées.
Ta main gauche ? Le récepteur.
Ta main droite ? Ton stylographe.
Tu dessines sur le buvard, des profils, des cœurs,
des étoiles.
Ah ! Tu ris ! J'ai des yeux à la place des oreilles ...

Oh ! Non, mon chéri, surtout ne me regarde pas.
Peur ? Non, je n'aurai pas peur ... C'est pire.
Enfin je n'ai plus l'habitude de dormir seule.
Oui, je te promets. Tu es gentil ...

Je ne sais pas. J'évite de me regarder.
Je n'ose plus allumer dans le cabinet de toilette.
Hier, je me suis trouvée nez à nez avec
une vieille dame.
Non, non ! Une vieille dame avec des cheveux
blancs et une foule de petites rides.
Tu es bien bon ! Mais, mon chéri, une figure
admirable, c'est pire que tout,
c'est pour les artistes.
J'aimais mieux quand tu disais : Regardez-moi
cette vilaine petite gueule !
Oui, cher monsieur ! Je plaisantais. Tu es bête ...
Heureusement que tu es maladroit et
que tu m'aimes.
Si tu ne m'aimes pas et si tu étais adroit,
le téléphone deviendrait une arme effrayante.
Une arme qui ne laisse pas de traces, qui ne fait
pas de bruit.

Moi, méchante ? Allô ! Allô, chéri ... Où es-tu ?
Allô, allô, mademoiselle ...
Allô, mademoiselle, on coupe.

*Hello! Is that better?
I'm speaking really loudly.
Can you hear me now? I said: Can you hear me now?
That's funny, because I can hear you
as clearly as if you were right here.
Hello? Hello? Great, now
I can't hear you.
Yes, but you sound very far away.
Now you can't hear me? We're taking turns.
No, that's fine. I hear you better than before,
but that echo ...
It doesn't sound like your line.*

*I can see you, you know.
Which scarf? The red one.
Your sleeves are rolled up.
In your left hand? The receiver.
Your right? Your pen.
You're doodling on your notepad ... silhouettes, hearts,
stars.
Ha! You're laughing! I have eyes in place of my ears ...*

*Dear, don't look at me.
Afraid? No, I'm not afraid ... It's worse.
It's just that I'm not used to sleeping alone.
Yes ... I promise. You're sweet ...*

*I don't know. I try not to look at myself.
I no longer dare to turn on my vanity light.
Yesterday I found myself face-to-face with
an old woman.
No, no! An old woman with white hair
and lots of wrinkles.
You're too kind! But dear, to have a good
figure is worst of all ...
that's for artists.
I liked it more when you said: Look at that
awful little mug!
Yes, sir! I was joking. You're being silly ...
Fortunately, you're clumsy and
you love me.
If you didn't love me and you weren't so clumsy,
this phone would be a terrifying weapon.
A weapon that leaves no traces, that makes
no noise.*

*Me, mean? Hello? Hello, dear ... Where are you?
Hello? Hello, miss?
Hello, miss, we were cut off!*

TRACK 6

Allô, c'est toi ? Mais non, mademoiselle.
On m'a coupée ... Je ne sais pas ... C'est à dire ...
Si, attendez ... Auteil zéro quatre virgule sept.
Allô ! Pas libre ?
Allô, mademoiselle, il me redemande. Bien.

Allô ! Auteil zéro quatre virgule sept ?
Allô ! C'est vous, Joseph ? C'est madame.
On nous avait coupés avec monsieur. Pas là ?
Oui, oui, il ne rentre pas ce soir ...
C'est vrai, je suis stupide !
Monsieur me téléphonait d'un restaurant,
on a coupé et je redemande son numéro ...
Excusez-moi, Joseph. Merci.
Bonsoir, Joseph.

*Hello, is that you? No, miss.
We were cut off ... I don't know ... I mean ...
Wait, yes ... Zero four seven ...
Hello? Busy?
Hello, miss, he's calling me back. Alright.*

*Hello? Is this zero four seven?
Hello? Is that you, Joseph? It's madame.
I was cut off. Not there?
Oh, right, he didn't go home tonight ...
I'm so stupid!
He called from a restaurant,
we were cut off, and I called his number ...
Excuse me, Joseph. Thank you.
Good evening, Joseph.*



Photo Airéonna McCall-Dubé

TRACK 7

Allô ! Ah ! Chéri, c'est toi ?
On avait coupé.
Non, non. J'attendais.
On sonnait, je décrochais et il n'y avait personne.
Sans doute ... Bien sûr ... Tu as sommeil ?
Tu es bon d'avoir téléphoné, très bon.
Non, je suis là.
Quoi ? Pardonne, c'est absurde.
Rien, rien, je n'ai rien. Je te jure que je n'ai rien.
C'est pareil. Rien du tout. Tu te trompes.
Seulement, tu comprends, on parle, on parle ...

C'est parce que je viens de te mentir là,
au téléphone.
Depuis un quart d'heure, je te mens.
Je sais bien que je n'ai plus aucune chance à
attendre, mais mentir ne porte pas la chance et
puis je n'aime pas te mentir, je ne peux pas, je ne
veux pas te mentir, même pour ton bien.
Oh ! Rien de grave, mon chéri.
Seulement je mentais en te décrivant ma robe
et en te disant que j'avais dîné chez Marthe ...
Je n'ai pas dîné, je n'ai pas ma robe rose.
J'ai un manteau sur ma chemise,
parce qu'à force d'attendre ton téléphone,
à force de regarder l'appareil,
de m'asseoir, de me lever,
de marcher de long en large, je devenais folle !

Alors j'ai mis un manteau et j'allais sortir,
prendre un taxi, me faire mener sous tes
fenêtres, pour attendre ...
Eh bien ! Attendre, je ne sais quoi.
Tu as raison. Si, je t'écoute ...
Je serai sage, je répondrai à tout, je te jure.

Ici ... Je n'ai rien mangé. Je ne pouvais pas.
J'ai été très malade. Hier soir, j'ai voulu prendre
un comprimé pour dormir ; je me suis dit que
si j'en prenais plus, je dormirais mieux et que si
je les prenais tous, je dormirais sans rêve,
sans réveil, je serais morte.
J'en ai avalé douze dans de l'eau chaude.
Comme une masse.
Et j'ai eu un rêve. J'ai rêvé ce qui est.
Je me suis réveillée toute contente parce que
c'était un rêve, et quand j'ai su que c'était vrai,
que j'étais seule, que je n'avais pas la tête sur
ton cou, j'ai senti que je ne pouvais pas vivre.

Légère, légère et froide et je ne sentais plus
mon cœur battre et la mort était longue à venir
et comme j'avais une angoisse épouvantable,
au bout d'une heure j'ai téléphoné à Marthe.
Je n'avais pas le courage de mourir seule.

Chéri ... chéri ... Il était quatre heures du matin.
Elle est arrivée avec le docteur qui habite
son immeuble.

*Hello? Ah, dear, is that you?
We were cut off.
No, no. I was waiting.
It rang, I answered, and no one was there.
No doubt ... Of course ... Are you sleepy?
It was nice of you to call.
No, I'm here.
What? I'm sorry, it's absurd.
Nothing, it's nothing. Really, I swear nothing's wrong.
Really, nothing at all. You're mistaken.
It's just, well, we talk and talk ...*

*I've just lied to you right now,
on the telephone.
I've been lying for the past fifteen minutes.
I know now I have no chance,
and lying makes it even worse ... I don't like lying.
I can't, I don't want to lie to you, even for
your own good.
Oh, nothing serious, dear.
Only about the dress,
and dinner at Marthe's ...
I haven't eaten, I'm not wearing my dress.
I'm wearing a coat over my nightclothes,
because after waiting so long for your call,
staring at the phone,
sitting down, standing up,
pacing back and forth ... I was going mad!*

*So, I put on a coat and was going to
get a taxi, have it take me to your
window, and wait ...
Well, to wait for what, I don't know.
You're right. Yes, I'm listening ...
I'll be good. I'll tell you everything, promise.*

*Here ... I didn't eat. I couldn't.
I was very ill. Last night, I took
a sleeping pill. Then, I thought if I took more,
I'd sleep better, and that if I took all of them,
I would sleep without dreams,
without waking up ... I would be dead.
I swallowed twelve with hot water.
All at once.
Then I had a dream, about what really is.
Then I woke up, glad it was only a
dream, but when I realized that it was all real,
that I am alone, that my head wasn't on
your neck, I felt I could no longer live.*

*I felt light and cold and I felt my
heart stopping ... Death was coming slowly and
the torment was awful ...
After an hour, I called Marthe.
I didn't have the courage to die alone.*

*Dear ... dear ... It was four in the morning.
Marthe brought the doctor who lives
in the building.*

TRACK 7 (cont.)

J'avais plus de quarante. Le docteur a fait une ordonnance et Marthe est restée jusqu'à ce soir.
Je l'ai suppliée de partir parce que tu m'avais dit que tu téléphonerais et j'avais peur qu'on m'empêche de te parler.
Très, très bien. Ne t'inquiète pas.

Allô ! Je croyais qu'on avait coupé.
Tu es bon, mon chéri. Mon pauvre chéri à qui j'ai fait du mal.
Oui, parle, parle, dis n'importe quoi.
Je souffrais à me rouler par terre et il suffit que tu parles pour que je me sente bien, que je ferme les yeux.
Tu sais, quelque fois quand nous étions couchés et que j'avais ma tête à sa petite place contre ta poitrine, j'entendais ta voix, exactement la même que ce soir dans l'appareil.

Allô ! J'entends de la musique.
Je dis : J'entends de la musique.
Eh bien, tu devrais cogner au mur et empêcher ces voisins de jouer du gramophone à des heures pareilles.

*I was burning up. The doctor gave me a prescription, and Marthe stayed the night.
I begged her to leave since you said you were going to call. I was afraid she wouldn't let me talk to you.
I'm fine. Don't worry.*

*Hello? I thought we'd been cut off.
You are kind, my dear. My poor darling, whom I've hurt so.
Yes, just talk ... say anything.
I've been reeling. Your voice is all it takes for me to feel better, to close my eyes.
You know, sometimes when I used to lie with my head in its usual place upon your chest, your voice sounded just as it does tonight on the telephone.*

*Hello? I hear music.
I said: I hear music!
Well, you should bang on the wall and tell your neighbors to stop playing their record player at this hour!*

TRACK 8

C'est inutile, du reste le docteur de Marthe reviendra demain.
Ne t'inquiète pas. Mais oui.
Elle te donnera des nouvelles.
Quoi ? Oh ! Si, mille fois mieux.
Si tu n'avais pas appelé, je serais morte.

Pardonne-moi. Je sais que cette scène est intolérable et que tu as bien de la patience, mais comprends-moi, je souffre, je souffre.
Ce fil, c'est le dernier qui me rattache encore à nous.

Avant-hier soir ? J'ai dormi.
Je m'étais couchée avec le téléphone ...
Non, non. Dans mon lit. Oui. Je sais. Je suis très ridicule, mais j'avais le téléphone dans mon lit et malgré tout, on est relié par le téléphone.
Parce que tu me parles.
Voilà cinq ans que je vis de toi, que tu es mon seul air respirable, que je passe mon temps à t'attendre, à te croire mort si tu es en retard, à mourir de te croire mort, à revivre quand tu entres et quand tu es là, enfin, à mourir de peur que tu partes.
Maintenant, j'ai de l'air parce que tu me parles.

C'est entendu, mon chéri, j'ai dormi.
J'ai dormi parce que c'était la première fois.
Le premier soir on dort.
Ce qu'on ne supporte pas c'est la seconde nuit, hier, et la troisième, demain et des jours et des jours à faire quoi, mon Dieu ?
Et ... en admettant que je dorme, après le sommeil il y a les rêves et le réveil et manger et se lever et se laver et sortir et aller où ?
Mais, mon pauvre chéri, je n'ai jamais eu rien d'autre à faire que toi.
Marthe a sa vie organisée. Seule.

Allô ! Allô ! Madame, retirez-vous.
Allô ! Mais non, madame, nous ne cherchons pas à être intéressants.
Si vous nous trouvez ridicules, pourquoi perdez-vous votre temps au lieu de raccrocher ?
Oh ! Ne te fâche pas ...

Enfin ! Non, non. Elle a raccroché après avoir dit cette chose ignoble.
Tu as l'air frappé, si, tu es frappé, je connais ta voix.
Mais, mon chéri, cette femme doit être très mal et elle ne te connaît pas.
Elle croit que tu es comme les autres hommes.
Mais non, mon chéri, ce n'est pas du tout pareil.
Pour les gens, on s'aime ou se déteste.
Les ruptures sont des ruptures.
Ils regardent vite.
Tu ne leur feras jamais comprendre certaines choses.
Le mieux est de faire comme moi et de s'en moquer complètement. Oh !

*Never mind, anyway, Marthe's doctor is coming again tomorrow.
Don't worry. Of course.
She'll let you know.
What? Oh yes, a thousand times better!
If you hadn't called, I would have died!*

*I'm sorry, I know this situation is unacceptable and you've been so patient ...
But believe me, I'm miserable, miserable!
This cord is the last thing still tethering us together!*

*Night before last? I slept.
I fell asleep with the telephone next to me ...
No, no ... in bed. Yes, I know. I'm ridiculous ...
Despite everything, this phone is my only connection to you.
Because you're talking to me.
It's five years now that I've lived for you, that you've been the air I breathe, that I've spent my time waiting for you, thinking you're dead if you're late, dying from the thought that you're dead, coming back to life when you walk in, and finally, dying of fear that you'd leave.
Now I can breathe, because you're talking to me.*

*Yes, my love, I slept.
I slept because it was only the first night.
On the first night, you sleep.
But the second night, yesterday, was unbearable, and the third night, tomorrow, and all the days after ... What am I to do?
And, while I admit I do sleep, there are still dreams, and waking up, and eating, and getting up, and bathing, and going out, but where to?
But my poor dear, I have had nothing but you in my life!
Marthe has her perfect life. Alone ...*

*Hello? Hello? Madame, please hang up!
Hello? No, madame, we're not trying to be dramatic!
If we're so ridiculous, why waste your time and not hang up?
Oh! Don't get mad ...*

*Finally! No, no. She hung up after a nasty remark!
You sound upset ... Yes, you are, I hear it in your voice.
But, dear, she doesn't understand and she doesn't know you.
She thinks you're like other men.
No, dear, it's not at all the same!
People think there's only love or hate.
That when it's over, it's over.
They look quickly.
You'll never get them to understand certain things.
It's better to just follow my example and not give a damn. Oh!*



Photo Aireonna McCall-Dubé

TRACK 9

Rien, je crois que nous parlons comme
d'habitude et puis tout à coup
la vérité me revient.

Dans le temps, on se voyait. On pouvait perdre la
tête, oublier ses promesses, risquer l'impossible,
convaincre ceux qu'on adorait en les embrassant,
en s'accrochant à eux.

Un regard pouvait changer tout. Mais avec cet
appareil, ce qui est fini est fini.

Sois tranquille. On ne se suicide pas deux fois.
Je ne saurais pas acheter un revolver ...
Tu ne me vois pas achetant un revolver.

Où trouverais-je la force de combiner un
mensonge, mon pauvre adoré ?
Aucune ... J'aurais dû avoir du courage.
Il y a des circonstances où le mensonge est utile.
Toi, si tu mentais pour rendre la séparation
moins pénible ...
Je ne dis pas que tu mentes.
Je dis : Si tu mentais et que je le sache.
Si, par exemple, tu n'étais pas chez toi, et que
tu me dises ...

Non, non, mon chéri ! Écoute ... Je te crois.
Si, tu prends une voix méchante.
Je disais simplement que si tu me trompais
par bonté d'âme et que je m'en aperçoive,
je n'en aurais que plus de tendresse pour toi.

Allô ! Allô ! Mon Dieu, faites qu'il redemande.
Mon Dieu, faites ...

*Nothing. It just seemed we were talking like
we used to,
and then reality hit me.*

*When we were together, we could be reckless,
forget our promises, risk the impossible,
and with an embrace pretend,
like everything was fine.*

*A look can change everything. But with the telephone,
what's done is done.*

*Calm down, one doesn't commit suicide twice.
I wouldn't know where to get a gun ...
Could you imagine me buying a gun?*

*Where would I find the strength to think up a lie,
my poor love?*

*None ... I should have had the courage.
Sometimes lying is justified.*

*If you were lying to me to make breaking up
less painful ...*

I'm not saying you are lying.

I'm saying: If you were, and I knew it.

*For instance, if you weren't at home and you
told me ...*

No, my dear! Listen ... I believe you.

Yes, you're raising your voice!

*I was simply saying that if you lied to me out of the
goodness of your heart and I found out,
I'd only love you more.*

*Hello? Hello? Oh God, please have him call me back!
Oh God, please ...*

TRACK 10

On avait coupé.

J'étais en train de te dire que si tu me mentais
par bonté et que je m'en aperçoive,
je n'en aurais que plus de tendresse pour toi.

Bien sûr ... Tu es fou !

Mon amour ... Mon cher amour.

Je sais bien qu'il le faut, mais c'est atroce.

Jamais je n'aurai ce courage.

Oui. On a l'illusion d'être l'un contre l'autre
et brusquement on met des caves,
des égouts, toute une ville entre soi.

J'ai le fil autour de mon cou.

J'ai ta voix autour de mon cou ...

Il faudrait que le bureau nous coupe par hasard.

Oh ! Mon chéri ! Comment peux-tu imaginer
que je pense une chose si laide ?

Je sais bien que cette opération est encore plus
cruelle à faire de ton côté que du mien ...

No ... À Marseille ?

Écoute, chéri, puisque vous serez à Marseille
après-demain soir, je voudrais ...

Enfin j'aimerais ... J'aimerais que tu ne descendes
pas à l'hôtel où nous descendons d'habitude.

Tu n'es pas fâché ?

Parce que les choses que je n'imagine pas
n'existent pas, ou bien elles existent dans une
espèce de lieu très vague et qui fait moins de mal ...

Tu comprends ? Merci ... Tu es bon.

Je t'aime.

We were cut off.

*I was about to say that if you lied to me out of the
goodness of your heart and I found out,
I'd only love you more.*

Of course ... You're crazy!

My love ... My dear love.

I know we have to, but it's horrible.

I'll never have the courage.

*Yes, I have this feeling that we're close together,
but then, suddenly, there is so much distance
and spite between us.*

I have the cord around my neck.

I have your voice around my neck ...

Heaven forbid that we're cut off now.

Oh, my dear! How can you imagine

I'd think such an ugly thing?

*I know this is all the more painful for you
than for me ...*

No ... To Marseilles?

*Listen, when you arrive to Marseilles
the night after tomorrow I would like ...*

*No, I would love ... I'd love if you didn't stay
at the hotel where we'd always stayed.*

You're not angry?

*It's just that things I can't picture don't exist,
or perhaps they exist in an imaginary place,
a place where they hurt less ...*

You understand? Thank you ... you're kind.

I love you.

TRACK 11

Alors, voilà, j'allais dire machinalement :

À tout de suite.

J'en doute.

Oh ! C'est mieux. Beaucoup mieux.

Mon chéri ... Mon beau chéri.

Je suis forte. Dépêche-toi. Vas-y.

Coupe ! Coupe vite !

Je t'aime, je t'aime ... t'aime.

So, that's it then. I was just about to say:

See you soon.

I doubt it.

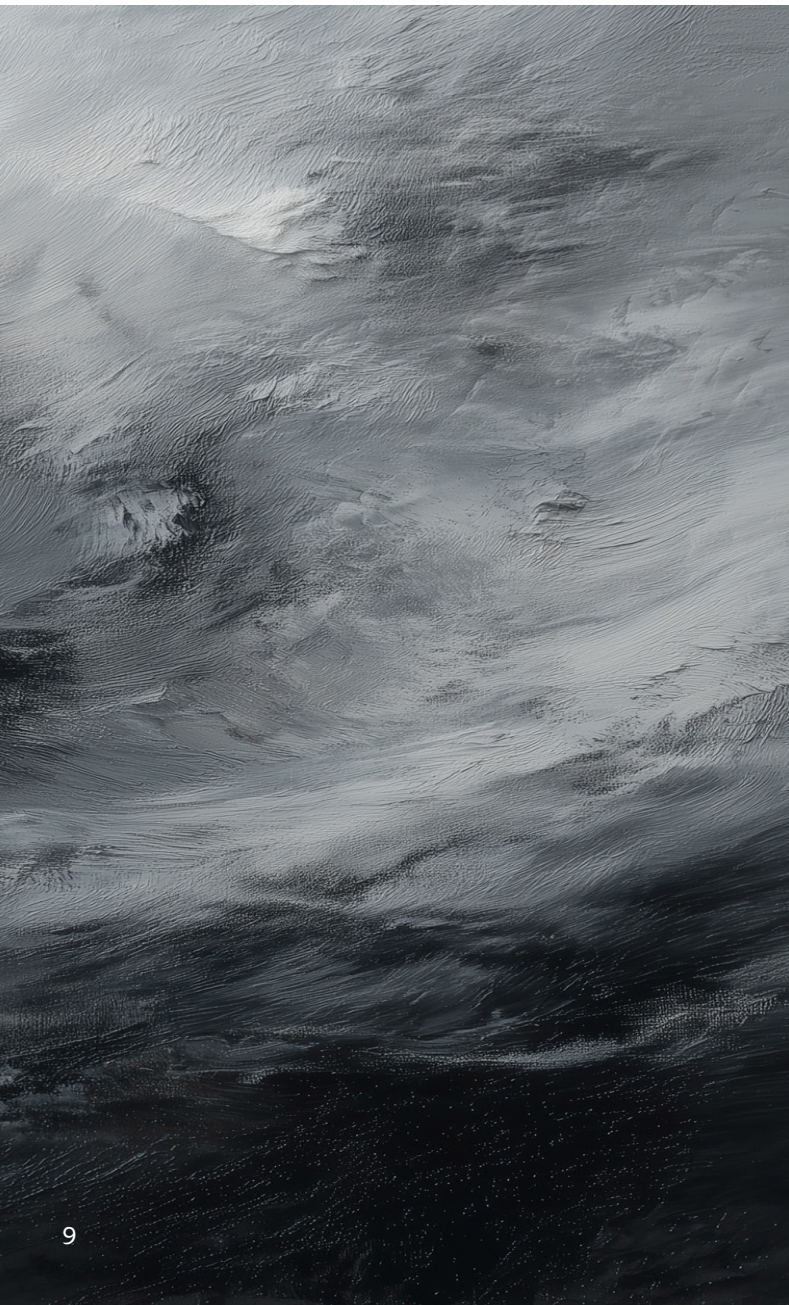
Oh, that's better! Much better.

My dear ... My beautiful darling.

I can do this! Hurry up! Go on.

Hang up quickly!

I love you! I love you ... I love you.



THE CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA
GALINA USTVOLSKAYA

Symphony No. 5, “Amen”
Frank Rosenwein, *oboe*
Michael Sachs, *trumpet*
Yasuhito Sugiyama, *tuba*
Richard Stout, *tuba*
Marc Damoulakis, *wooden cube*
Liyuan Xie, *violin*
Tony F. Sias, *reciter*

Track 1 11:19

FRANCIS POULENC

La voix humaine, FP 171
Franz Welser-Möst, *conductor*
Sarah Aristidou, *soprano*

Track 2 – “Allô, allô, mais non, madame” 1:48
Track 3 – “Allô, c’est toi ? Oui, très bien” 5:43
Track 4 – “Souviens-toi du dimanche de Versailles” 2:43
Track 5 – “Allô ! Et comme ça ?” 4:48
Track 6 – “Allô, c’est toi ? Mais non, mademoiselle” 2:08
Track 7 – “Allô ! Ah ! Chéri, c’est toi ?” 8:41
Track 8 – “C’est inutile, du reste le docteur de Marthe reviendra demain” 6:12
Track 9 – “Rien, je crois que nous parlons comme d’habitude” 3:15
Track 10 – “On avait coupé” 3:53
Track 11 – “Alors, voilà, j’allais dire machinalement” 2:05

*Recorded live in Mandel Concert Hall
at Severance Music Center in Cleveland, Ohio,
on May 23 & 24, 2025*

*Recorded at 24bit 96kHz PCM
Stereo and Dolby Atmos mixes available*

About the Orchestra

Now firmly in its second century, The Cleveland Orchestra, under the leadership of Music Director **Franz Welser-Möst** since 2002, is one of the most sought-after performing ensembles in the world. Year after year, the ensemble exemplifies extraordinary artistic excellence, creative programming, and community engagement. *The New York Times* has called Cleveland “the best in America” for its virtuosity, elegance of sound, variety of color, and chamber-like musical cohesion.

Founded by **Adella Prentiss Hughes**, the Orchestra performed its inaugural concert in December 1918. By the middle of the century, decades of growth and sustained support had turned it into one of the most admired around the world.

The past decade has seen an increasing number of young people attending concerts, bringing fresh attention to The Cleveland Orchestra’s legendary sound and committed programming. More recently, the Orchestra launched several bold digital projects, including the streaming platform **Adella.live**, and its own recording label. Together, they have captured the Orchestra’s

unique artistry and the musical achievements of the Welser-Möst and Cleveland Orchestra partnership.

The 2026–27 season marks Franz Welser-Möst’s 25th and final year as Music Director, a period in which The Cleveland Orchestra has earned unprecedented acclaim around the world, including a series of residencies at the Musikverein in Vienna, the first of its kind by an American orchestra, and a number of celebrated opera presentations.

Since 1918, seven music directors — **Nikolai Sokoloff, Artur Rodziński, Erich Leinsdorf, George Szell, Lorin Maazel, Christoph von Dohnányi, and Franz Welser-Möst** — have guided and shaped the ensemble’s growth and sound. Through concerts at home and on tour, broadcasts, and a catalog of acclaimed recordings, The Cleveland Orchestra is heard today by a growing group of fans around the world.

For more information, please visit **clevelandorchestra.com**. ■



Photo Aireonna McCall-Dubé

The Cleveland Orchestra

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Franz Welser-Möst

Now in his 25th and final season, **Franz Welser-Möst** continues to shape an unmistakable sound culture as Music Director of The Cleveland Orchestra. Under his leadership, the Orchestra has earned repeated international acclaim for its musical excellence, reaffirmed its strong commitment to new music, and brought annual opera productions back to the stage of Severance Music Center. In recent years, the orchestra also launched its own streaming platform, **Adella.live**, and a recording label. Today, it boasts one of the youngest audiences in the United States.

In addition to residencies in the US and Europe, Welser-Möst and the Orchestra perform regularly at the world's leading international festivals. Welser-Möst will remain Music Director until 2027, making him the longest-serving music director of The Cleveland Orchestra.

Welser-Möst enjoys a particularly close and productive artistic partnership with the Vienna Philharmonic. He regularly conducts the orchestra in subscription concerts at the Vienna Musikverein, at the Salzburg Festival, and on tour in Europe, Japan, China, and the US, and has appeared three times on the podium for their celebrated New Year's Concert (2011, 2013, and 2023). At the Salzburg Festival, Welser-Möst has set new standards in interpretation as an opera conductor, with a special focus on the operas of **Richard Strauss**.

Among Welser-Möst's many honors and awards, he was named an Honorary Member of the Vienna Philharmonic in 2024, one of the orchestra's highest distinctions. ■



Franz Welser-Möst conducts
The Cleveland Orchestra
in Mandel Concert Hall
at Severance Music Center.

Photo Roger Mastroianni

Tony F. Sias

reciter



Photo courtesy Tony F. Sias

Tony F. Sias is the president & CEO of Karamu House, America's oldest Black producing theater. Under Sias, since 2015, Karamu raised over \$14 million for restoration and increased attendance. As a creative, Sias has produced, directed, and performed in over 150 productions. His work has been highlighted nationally in *The New York Times*, *American Theatre Magazine*, and on NBC's *Today Show with Al Roker*, among others. In October 2021, Sias performed narration with The Cleveland Orchestra in **George Walker's** Sinfonia No. 5, "Visions."

Sias served as a delegate from the US Department of State in Istanbul, Turkey, representing the Council of International Programs. In 2018, he was inducted into The HistoryMakers, the largest African American oral history archive collection in the US.

Sias's numerous recognitions include the Cleveland Arts Prize (Barbara S. Robinson Prize), *Cleveland Magazine's* Community Leader Award, and the Community Leadership Award from the NAACP's Cleveland Branch. In addition, he serves on the boards of the League of Historic American Theatres, Assembly for the Arts, Cleveland School of the Arts, and the Lake View Cemetery Association.

Sias is a fellow of the National Arts Strategies Chief Executive Program through Harvard Business School. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in dramatic art from Jackson State University and a Master of Fine Arts in acting from The Ohio State University. ■

Sarah Aristidou

soprano



Photo Andrej Grlic

French soprano **Sarah Aristidou** is a gifted singer, vocally at ease in classical, contemporary, and folk music, as well as live improvisations. She ranks as one of the most innovative and creative artists of her generation, and in 2022, she became the first singer to receive the Belmont Prize for Contemporary Music.

In recent seasons, Aristidou has appeared in **Ligeti's** *Le Grand Macabre* at the Wiener Staatsoper, performed with the Orchestre de Paris and Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, and toured **Boulez's** *Pli selon Pli* and **Debussy's** *Trois poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé* with Les Siècles, among other engagements.

Aristidou has debuted many new works, including **Brett Dean's** *Ich lausche und ich höre* with the Scharoun Ensemble and **Thomas Larcher's** *The Living Mountain* at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw. Her voice has also inspired several compositions, including **Reimann's** *Cinq fragments français de Rainer Maria Rilke*, premiered with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin and **Robin Ticciati**, and **Jörg Widmann's** *Labyrinth IV*, presented with the Boulez Ensemble and **Daniel Barenboim**.

Aristidou's wide discography includes her second solo release, *Enigma* (Alpha Classics, 2023), which was awarded the Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik. Among her other accolades, she has received the Luitpold Prize for Outstanding Performance at the Kissinger Sommer Festival (2021) and has been twice nominated for Opernwelt's Best Newcomer Award. ■

Severance Music Center

Home of The Cleveland Orchestra



Photo Roger Mastroianni

Severance Music Center, home of The Cleveland Orchestra since 1931, is one of Cleveland's most treasured landmarks and among the world's most admired concert halls. Located in University Circle, Severance was designed by the Cleveland firm Walker & Weeks and funded largely through a \$1 million gift from **John and Elisabeth Severance**. The hall's creation was the result of years of advocacy by Orchestra founder **Adella Prentiss Hughes** and the Musical Arts Association.

Today, Severance houses the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Concert Hall, named in 2021 following a \$50 million grant from the Mandel Foundation, as well as Reinberger Chamber Hall, an intimate space ideal for smaller ensembles, recitals, and lectures. The building is used year-round for concerts, rehearsals, and education programs, and is also available to community organizations for performances and private gatherings. A \$36 million renovation completed in 2000 restored the hall's original Art Deco details, improved

patron amenities, modernized backstage areas, and preserved its legendary acoustics.

Recognized by the Cleveland Landmarks Commission and the National Register of Historic Places, Severance Music Center is a symbol of Cleveland's philanthropic spirit and commitment to the arts. ■

Acknowledgments

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