



Director Richard Pearlman stands above the sets being prepared for the opera.

Carmelite Opera Scheduled To Open on Good Friday

By Diane Farrell

Francis Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites* will be presented by the Eastman Opera Theatre and the Eastman Philharmonia Orchestra on Friday and Saturday, April 4 and 5. The plot, based on an actual incident, is about an order of nuns who are guillotined during the French Revolution for refusing to denounce their faith.

The opera, sung in English, will be performed on both nights at 8 p.m. in the Eastman Theatre. It is directed by Richard Pearlman and conducted by David Efron.

In 1792 nuns across France were expelled from their convents and their property was confiscated, according to Richard Pearlman, director of the opera. The Carmelite nuns lived in Compiègne, France. They went into hiding after their property was confiscated, and they took a vow of martyrdom. In 1794, 16 of the Carmelites were arrested by a revolutionary tribunal. They were convicted of treason against the state and beheaded. One of the Carmelites was convinced by a priest not to give herself up to the tribunal, so that she could

tell the story. She later wrote a book about their experiences.

In 1906 the Carmelites were beatified and were called the Martyrs of Compiègne, according to Robert Kraus, director of public relations at the Eastman School of Music.

Poulenc's liturgical settings, Ave Maria, Ave Verum and Salve Regina, were sung by the Carmelites as they were going to the guillotine, according to Pearlman.

The premiere performance of *Dialogues of the Carmelites* was in 1957 in Milan, Italy. This is Pearlman's first production of this three-act opera, which he says is "exhilarating."

"A lot of times emotions, feelings, and events in one's life are so overpowering that you don't have words to express them," Pearlman said. He said that operas are a way to express these strong emotions. The relationship between man and God is a very emotional subject according to Pearlman.

"A lot of the singers are having to think about the subject of the opera — sacrifice, unselfishness and basing life on spiritual values,

rather than material values," Pearlman said.

Pearlman said that for the first time an opera will be broadcast live from the Eastman Theatre — on WXXI radio (91.5 FM).

Soprano Carmen Pelton will sing the part of Blanche de la Force, a young woman who joins the convent to escape from the realities of life. Baritone Lee Strawn will sing the part of Blanche's father, and tenor Stanley Warren will sing the part of her brother. Other singers are Kate Nesbit, mezzo-soprano; Nicole Philibosian, soprano; Sheri Beaudry, mezzo-soprano; and Karen Holvik, soprano.

Pearlman joined the Eastman School faculty in 1976. He was once a stage director of the Metropolitan Opera Company and general director of the Washington Opera Society.

David Efron has been the principal orchestral director at the Eastman School since 1977.

Proceeds will benefit the Eastman School of Music's Scholarship Fund.

St. Bernard's Holy Week

Holy Week services will be celebrated in the chapel of the Immaculate Conception at St. Bernard's Seminary. On Palm Sunday, March 30, at 11 a.m. there will be a Eucharistic celebration with the singing of the Passion according to St. Luke. At 5 p.m. Palm Sunday Vespers will be celebrated.

On Holy Thursday, April 3, at 9 a.m. readings and morning prayer will take place. At 7:30 p.m. the Mass of the Lord's Supper will be celebrated.

Readings and morning prayer will be offered again on Good Friday, April 4, at 9 a.m. The Lord's Passion will be celebrated at 2:30 p.m.

On Holy Saturday, April 5, at 9 a.m. there will be readings and morning prayer in the chapel. The Easter Vigil will be celebrated at 7:30 p.m.

All chapel services are open to the public.

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