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Poulenc Sonata



Photo © Paul Kolnik

Music [Sonata for Two Pianos \(1953\) by Francis Poulenc](#)
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Choreography [Peter Martins](#)

Premiere [January 17, 1985, New York City Ballet, New York State Theater](#)

Original Cast [Kyra Nichols, Alexandre Proia, Christopher d'Amboise](#)

Poulenc Sonata is an exploration of relationships: steps to music, time to space, light to dark, woman to man. Martins presents these relationships in the vocabulary of classical ballet. Very much as it is in life, the excitement and passion of the ballet comes from the action of exploration. The music and movement project a dramatic quality that does not come from any story line or plot yet draws the viewer into the emotions of the various relationships. Francis Poulenc (1899-1963), a pianist and self-taught composer, was linked (after his service in World War I) with a group of young composers known as "The French Six." The Six avowed the principles of simplicity, economy, and directness, as a reaction to German post-Romanticism and French Impressionism. Although Poulenc's simplicity and directness at first led critics to overlook him as a serious composer, his fame spread beyond Paris in 1924, when he was commissioned by Diaghilev to compose the music for the ballet *Les Biches*, which was choreographed by Bronislava Nijinska. Influenced by Mozart and Schubert, as well as Satie, Stravinsky, and Ravel, Poulenc, for whom the most important compositional element was melody, also favored a neoclassic style with a strong emphasis on lyricism. His songs, chiefly based on the poems of Apollinaire, are considered among the best composed during the twentieth century.

"WHAT ATTRACTS ME VERY MUCH TO THE COMPANY IS THAT THERE ARE REALLY NO SET RULES."

— Peter Martins

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