

LIBRETTO

Passion according to St. Mark (1770)

1. Chorale

Be hailed by me a thousandfold,
you who have loved me forever and always,
Jesus, who yourself atoned for
that with which I saddened you.
Ah, and how happy I should be
to kneel and lie down
at the cross where you die
and save my soul.

2. Recitative

EVANGELIST. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. And Jesus saith unto them,

JESUS. All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.

EVANGELIST. But Peter said unto him,

PETER. Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.

EVANGELIST. And Jesus saith unto him,

JESUS. Verily I say unto thee, that this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.

EVANGELIST. But he spake the more vehemently,

PETER. If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise.

3. Chorale

Help me to be always careful
to preserve my faith;
with it, too, a good conscience;
help too that I may so prevail,
that I shall ever be pure,
without offense, fulfilled with justice
and its fruits.

4. Recitative

EVANGELIST. Likewise also said they all. And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples,

JESUS. Sit ye here, while I shall pray.

EVANGELIST. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; and saith unto them,

JESUS. My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.

5. Chorale

Punish me not in your anger,
great God, spare me;
ah, let me not be lost,
do not repay me according to my deserving;
if the sin
has enraged you,
extinguish in the Lamb
the flame of your fury.

6. Recitative

EVANGELIST. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said,

JESUS. Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.

EVANGELIST. And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter,

JESUS. Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.

EVANGELIST. And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words. And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him. And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them,

JESUS. Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.

7. Aria

I walk entirely surrounded with sufferings,
and no one asks: whither do you go?
My heart is frightened, and my bones quake;
and God in heaven is furious while I am so helpless.
Swept away to new, terrible judgments,
I await God, and shall be glad.
My blood, all my blood shall flow,
and, Father, your world shall be blessed through me.

8. Recitative

EVANGELIST. And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying,

JUDAS. Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely.

EVANGELIST. And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith,

JUDAS. Master, master;

EVANGELIST. and kissed him.

9. Chorale

Be faithful in your heart,
beware of Joab's kiss.
Think: Judas suffers agonies
for the devil's false greeting.
Falseness is your worst enemy.
Speak what your heart intends.
Be wise in your beliefs
but guileless as doves.

10. Recitative

EVANGELIST. And they laid their hands on him, and took him. And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. And Jesus answered and said unto them,

JESUS. Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled.

EVANGELIST. And they all forsook him, and fled. And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked. And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.

11. Chorale

Christ who blesses us,
has committed no evil,
for us in the night he was
seized like a thief,
brought before godless people
and falsely accused,
derided, mocked and spat upon,
as the scripture says.

12. Recitative

EVANGELIST. And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire. And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none. For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together. And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying,
FALSE WITNESS. We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.

EVANGELIST. But neither so did their witness agree together. And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying,

HIGH PRIEST. Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?

EVANGELIST. But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him,

HIGH PRIEST. Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?

EVANGELIST. And Jesus said,

JESUS. I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

EVANGELIST. Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith,

HIGH PRIEST. What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye?

EVANGELIST. And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.

13. Aria

Go on, condemn him, unjust judge,
go on, condemn him, the creator of nature!
When at last the world reverts to original nothingness,
when then the Son as judge
holds his court in the clouds,
then flee, you evildoers!

14. Recitative

EVANGELIST. And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him,

CHORUS. Prophesy:

EVANGELIST. and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands. And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said,

WOMAN. And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth.

EVANGELIST. But he denied, saying,

PETER. I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest.

EVANGELIST. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by,

WOMAN. This is one of them.

EVANGELIST. And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter,

CHORUS. Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilaean, and thy speech agreeth thereto.

EVANGELIST. But he began to curse and to swear, saying,

PETER. I know not this man of whom ye speak.

EVANGELIST. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.

15. Chorale

Recognize me, my protector,
my shepherd, take me unto you!
From you, source of all things good,
much good is done to me,
your mouth has nourished me
with milk and sweet delicacies,
your spirit has bestowed on me
many a heavenly joy.

16. Recitative

EVANGELIST. And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate. And Pilate asked him,

PILATE. Art thou the King of the Jews?

EVANGELIST. And he answering said unto him,
JESUS. Thou sayest it.

17. Aria

Crowned with praise and glory

the Son of Man there rules.

The throne of the Father is his throne.

The cherub trembles before him and prays to him,
and all of heaven is subject to him.

Cast off your crowns,
you kings of earth!

The Son is king. Fear him!

He will not forgive much longer:

his day hastens quickly,
and you shall then be judged.

18. Recitative

EVANGELIST. And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing. And Pilate asked him again, saying,

PILATE. Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee.

EVANGELIST. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled. Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired. And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them. But Pilate answered them, saying,

PILATE. Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

EVANGELIST. For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy. But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them. And Pilate answered and said again unto them,

PILATE. What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?

EVANGELIST. And they cried out again,

CHORUS. Crucify him.

EVANGELIST. Then Pilate said unto them,

PILATE. Why, what evil hath he done?
EVANGELIST. And they cried out the more exceedingly,
CHORUS. Crucify him.

19. Chorale

Dearest Jesus, what sin have you committed,
that such a sharp judgment has been spoken?
What is the guilt, into what misdeeds
have you fallen?

20. Recitative

EVANGELIST. And so Pilate, willing to content the people,
released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when
he had scourged him, to be crucified. And the soldiers led
him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call to-
gether the whole band. And they clothed him with purple,
and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head,
And began to salute him,

CHORUS. Hail, King of the Jews!

EVANGELIST. And they smote him on the head with
a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees
worshipped him. And when they had mocked him, they
took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on
him, and led him out to crucify him. And they compel one
Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the coun-
try, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.

21. Accompanied Recitative

Jerusalem, how you rage!
Has not blood enough already flowed?
God sent you prophets,
and you have murderously poured out their blood!
Jerusalem, how you rage!
Will you the greatest of the prophets,
will you God's son now also kill?
How tenderly the friend of mankind called to you!
Did you not see his tears flow?
And now will you pour out his divine blood?
Jerusalem, how you rage!

He wanted to save you,
and you do not see the danger.
You, you should have given thanks
that he was so merciful to you.

No, you would not.
Now it is hidden from you,
now you can see to your own peace.
You begged to have a murderer set free.
And so the Divine One, the Lord of our life,
through you will be handed over to the murderer.
Your iniquity is inhumanly great!
Lead him to the cross, you most terrible of sinners,
and weep then for yourself and for your children.

He will suffer, he will die,
suffer, die for me as well!
Let me at last inherit your kingdom:
Lord, I have steady faith in you!

22. Recitative

EVANGELIST. And they bring him unto the place Gol-
gotha, which is, being interpreted, the place of a skull. And
they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he
received it not.

23. Chorale

Your thirst and drink of gall shall nourish me,
when I have no other sustenance,
let your cry of anguish be of good to me,
save me from the fires of hell!

24. Recitative

EVANGELIST. And when they had crucified him, they
parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every
man should take. And it was the third hour, and they cru-
cified him. And the superscription of his accusation was
written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS. And with
him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand,
and the other on his left. And the scripture was fulfilled,
which saith, And he was numbered with the transgres-
sors. And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their
heads, and saying,

CHORUS. Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and build-
est it in three days, Save thyself, and come down from the
cross.

EVANGELIST. Likewise also the chief priests mocking
said among themselves with the scribes,

CHORUS. He saved others; himself he cannot save. Let
Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that
we may see and believe.

EVANGELIST. And they that were crucified with him re-
viled him.

25. Chorale

I will venture all for your honor,
ignore no cross, complain of no shame,
nor aught of persecution or pains of death
take to heart.

26. Recitative

EVANGELIST. And when the sixth hour was come, there
was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.
And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying,
JESUS. Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?

EVANGELIST. which is, being interpreted, My God, my
God, why hast thou forsaken me?

27. Aria

Be silent, you heavens! The Divine One falters,
he bleeds upon the cross, he trembles and cries out,
a contemptuous judgment slays him.
Why have you abandoned your anointed one?
Lord, hasten to hate the murderers of the Savior,
and do not slay the Holy One.

28. Recitative

EVANGELIST. And some of them that stood by, when they
heard it, said,

CHORUS. Behold, he calleth Elias.

EVANGELIST. And one ran and filled a sponge full of vin-
egar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying,
A JEW. Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take
him down.

EVANGELIST. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave
up the ghost.

29. Aria

You tears, flow!
Committed to the terrible arm of death,
he dies, he who is the very Lord of life.
And we, we sinners live.
You tears, flow!
I feel each of my sins.
Lord Jesus, you who are salvation and reconciliation
to me,
let me through your death find everlasting life!

30. Chorale

I thank you from my heart,
O Jesus, dear friend,
for the pains of your death,
for you have meant it so well.
Ah, permit that I abide
with you and your faithfulness,
and when at last I shall grow cold,
let my end be in you.

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Translator's note:

*To keep the focus on the original text, the choice was made
to follow the German as literally as possible. I thank Ulrich
Leisinger for his kind assistance. Biblical portions are from the
King James Version.*