

LIBRETTO

Passion according to St. Mark (1778)

1. Chorale

Lord, strengthen me to contemplate your suffering,
to immerse myself in the sea of love
that moved you to redeem us
from all blame of evil!

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 utterly 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.

5. Aria

I have glorified you, Father, on earth;
the hour arrives, and you shall glorify your son.

Your word, which you gave me, have I taught the
world.

It accepted it eagerly and believes in my teachings.

6. Recitative

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.

7. Chorale

Prepare yourself, my soul,
be on watch, entreat and pray,
that the evil hour should not
arrive unexpected by you!

For it is through Satan's cunning that many pious ones
have succumbed to temptation.

8. 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.

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. Aria

Lord, Lord, examine me, and see my intentions!

My heart examines itself, ere I appear before you.

You lead my foot upon a verdant pasture.

I eat, and my pleasure is salvation and joy.

10. Recitative

EVANGELIST. And they laid their hands on him, and took him.

11. Chorale

All the disciples run away,

they abandon Jesus.

Peter himself, who was before too bold,

roams unfamiliar streets.

God endures patiently,

he also has suffered,

he helps me, and does not cease

to plead for me.

12. Recitative

EVANGELIST. 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. 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. Chorus

Because the godless pursue mischief, the wretched must suffer. They band together and scheme up malicious acts.

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. Prophecy:

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

Help me not to waver from you, Lord Jesus Christ!
 Strengthen my weak faith at all times!
 Help me to fight gallantly!
 May your hand hold me steady,
 that I may happily sing,
 that it is fulfilled!

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. Duet

1. Be proud, you monarchs on earthly thrones:
 there the Christians inherit immortal crowns,
 when they see you, God Messiah.
2. The kings rule; this happiness vanishes.
 Your happiness is my heaven; it have I established.
 There will you, redeemed, see me.
 1. If you will grant me the inheritance in Heaven,
 then will I, enthused by divine joys,
 exalt you, o my Messiah.
 2. Thus will you, immersed in eternal delight,
 glimpse the magnificence of your Savior
 and exalt me with the angels.

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

But how wondrous is this punishment!
 The good shepherd suffers for his sheep;
 for his servants' debts
 the Lord, the righteous pays.

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 called together the whole band. And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head,

21. Aria

Shun vain pleasures
and look, o man, on Jesus's suffering!
His blood flows for your welfare.

These are the hard battles of the Lamb.
Assuredly, the victories are to the Savior,
Who will raise you to life.

22. Recitative

EVANGELIST. 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 country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.

23. Accompanied Recitative

Now, Jerusalem, the Messiah
is led outside your walls.
The hearts of the disciples are touched,
and their gazes mourn.
They weep for the Lord,
who so willingly
had mercy on the needy.
Only death now awaits you, o God,
the most shameful,
the punishment of evildoers,
the torturous cross.
Now the shepherd dies for the sheep.
He is ready to give up
his divine life for them, for all.

24. Chorus

A victim in keeping with eternal guidance,
beset with our torments,
for your people's iniquity
tormented and shattered,
you walk the path to the stem of the cross,
silent in innocence, like a lamb
which one leads to the slaughter.
Freely, as the hero of heroes,
do you endure out of love for the world
the death that we deserve.

25. Recitative

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

26. Chorale

Let your cross be my walking staff,
let your holy grave be my rest and repose;
let your pure grave-clothes
be my burial garments!

27. 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 crucified 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 transgressors. And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying,

CHORUS. Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest 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 reviled him.

28. Chorus

You heaven, darkened by battling storms,
let terrible thunder smash the murderers!
Apply, Almighty, your avenging justice!
Jerusalem, murderess, tumble down!
Perish through never to be extinguished flames!
Swallow up, you Earth, the whole lineage!

29. Chorale

O great love, o love beyond all measure,
which brought you to this road of torments;
I lived with the world in pleasure and joys,
and you must suffer.

30. 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? 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 vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying,

CHORUS. Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.

31. Accompanied Recitative

Here hangs the Lamb,
crucified by traitors,
crucified between evildoers!
Soon will he commend his spirit, his life,
on the accursed stem
into the hand of the Father.
His head sinks into the night of death.
He dies, he dies, the dearest son!
And dying yet he cries:
It is fulfilled!

32. Recitative

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

33. Chorale

Appear as a shield to me,
as comfort in my death,
and let me see your image
in your distress of crucifixion!
Then I will look upon you;
then will I, full of faith,
clasp you tight to my heart.
Who dies thus, dies well!

*Translation © 2018 by Ruth B. Libbey
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