

LIBRETTO

Passion according to St. John (1780)

1. Chorale

My Jesus has absolved
what brings death with it;
it is he who washes me clean,
makes white as snow what is red.
In him can I rejoice,
have a hero's courage,
need shrink from no judgments,
as a sinner otherwise does.

2. Chorus

That you died for me
on the day of your suffering,
this, o sacrificed one, this is
my right to your joys.
My death is no longer death for me.
It must return me, its plunder,
like you, to heaven.
And no judgment frightens me now.
I die in firm confidence
that I shall live united with you.

3. Recitative

EVANGELIST. When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples. And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples. Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them,

JESUS. Whom seek ye?

EVANGELIST. They answered him,

CHORUS. Jesus of Nazareth.

EVANGELIST. Jesus saith unto them,

JESUS. I am he.

EVANGELIST. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground. Then asked he them again,

JESUS. Whom seek ye?

EVANGELIST. And they said,

CHORUS. Jesus of Nazareth.

EVANGELIST. Jesus answered,

JESUS. I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:

EVANGELIST. That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.

Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter,

JESUS. Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?

4. Chorale

What God does, that is well done!
His will remains just.
As he undertakes my affairs,
I will hearken to him peacefully.
He is my God,
who amid distress
knows well to preserve me.
Therefore I let him alone prevail.

5. Recitative

EVANGELIST. Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him, and led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.

6. Aria

Your way, Lord, and your teaching
were harmony, joy, love and grace.

So may my way, to the glory of your name,
be harmony and patience!

Ah, savior of the world, your love
gave you up for us all.
So give us all kindred impulses,
bring about in us all one spirit!

7. Recitative

EVANGELIST. Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel
to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die
for the people.

8. 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?

9. Recitative

EVANGELIST. And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did
another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high
priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high
priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out
that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest,
and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in
Peter. Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter,
WOMAN. Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?

EVANGELIST. He saith,

PETER. I am not.

EVANGELIST. And the servants and officers stood there,
who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they
warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and
warmed himself. The high priest then asked Jesus of his
disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him,

JESUS. I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the
synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always re-
sort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou
me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them:
behold, they know what I said.

EVANGELIST. And when he had thus spoken, one of the
officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his
hand, saying,

OFFICER. Answerest thou the high priest so?

EVANGELIST. Jesus answered him,

JESUS. If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if
well, why smitest thou me?

EVANGELIST. Now Annas had sent him bound unto
Caiaphas the high priest. And Simon Peter stood and
warmed himself. They said therefore unto him,

CHORUS. Art not thou also one of his disciples?

EVANGELIST. He denied it, and said,

PETER. I am not.

EVANGELIST. One of the servants of the high priest, be-
ing his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith,

SERVANT. Did not I see thee in the garden with him?

EVANGELIST. Peter then denied again: and immediately
the cock crew. Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the
hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves
went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be de-
filed; but that they might eat the passover. Pilate then went
out unto them, and said,

PILATE. What accusation bring ye against this man?

EVANGELIST. They answered and said unto him,

CHORUS. If he were not a malefactor, we would not have
delivered him up unto thee.

EVANGELIST. Then said Pilate unto them,

PILATE. Take ye him, and judge him according to your
law.

EVANGELIST. The Jews therefore said unto him,

CHORUS. It is not lawful for us to put any man to death:

EVANGELIST. That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled,
which he spake, signifying what death he should die. Then
Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called
Jesus, and said unto him,

PILATE. Art thou the King of the Jews?

EVANGELIST. Jesus answered him,

JESUS. Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell
it thee of me?

EVANGELIST. Pilate answered,

PILATE. Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief
priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?

EVANGELIST. Jesus answered,

JESUS. My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom
were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I
should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my king-
dom not from hence.

EVANGELIST. Pilate therefore said unto him,

PILATE. Art thou a king then?

EVANGELIST. Jesus answered,

JESUS. Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I
born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should
bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth
heareth my voice.

EVANGELIST. Pilate saith unto him,

PILATE. What is truth?

10. Aria

Thus stands a cliff in the sea,
unconquered.
And the armies of the gaping abyss
thunder in the sea
and its waves rage:
yet still it stands unshaken.
He too stands amid the crowd
with calm and confidence.
The fury and mob and threats of the enemy
terrify him not.

11. Recitative

EVANGELIST. And when he had said this, he went out
again unto the Jews, and saith unto them,
PILATE. I find in him no fault at all. But ye have a custom,
that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye
therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?
EVANGELIST. Then cried they all again, saying,
CHORUS. Not this man, but Barabbas.
EVANGELIST. Now Barabbas was a robber.

12. Accompanied Recitative

The Father's son was he, and with the Father, God!
Upon his immeasurable heights
no mortal eye could see him.
Yet he became man; he became the mockery of sinners
and died, abandoned by God,
the most shameful death for them!

13. Aria

How unutterably sublime was he,
who gave himself up to death for sinners.
God, man, crucified, buried!
How low, how low, he abased himself.
How unutterably he abased himself!

14. Recitative

EVANGELIST. Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and
scourged him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns,
and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe,
and said,
CHORUS. Hail, King of the Jews!

15. Chorale

Now, what you, Lord, endure
is entirely my burden;
I, I have been guilty
for what you have borne.
Look, here I stand wretched,
who have deserved wrath!
Give me, o my compassionate one,
the sight of your mercy!

16. Recitative

EVANGELIST. and they smote him with their hands.
Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them,
PILATE. Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may
know that I find no fault in him.
EVANGELIST. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown
of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them,
PILATE. Behold the man!

17. Aria

To strengthen me in weakness,
you, Savior, yourself now grow weak.
Deep within your bloody wounds,
thence flows a balm for me,
thence have I found new strength,
which quiets the powerlessness of doubt.
Let me, when my dying day arrives,
feel its effect in consolation!

18. Recitative

EVANGELIST. When the chief priests therefore and offi-
cers saw him, they cried out, saying,
CHORUS. Crucify him, crucify him.
EVANGELIST. Pilate saith unto them,
PILATE. Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault
in him.
EVANGELIST. The Jews answered him,
CHORUS. We have a law, and by our law he ought to die,
because he made himself the Son of God.
EVANGELIST. When Pilate therefore heard that saying,
he was the more afraid; and went again into the judgment
hall, and saith unto Jesus,
PILATE. Whence art thou?
EVANGELIST. But Jesus gave him no answer. Then saith
Pilate unto him,

PILATE. Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?

EVANGELIST. Jesus answered,

JESUS. Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

EVANGELIST. And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying,

CHORUS. If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.

EVANGELIST. When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews,

PILATE. Behold your King!

EVANGELIST. But they cried out,

CHORUS. Away with him, away with him, crucify him.

EVANGELIST. Pilate saith unto them,

PILATE. Shall I crucify your King?

EVANGELIST. The chief priests answered,

CHORUS. We have no king but Caesar.

EVANGELIST. Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away. And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst. And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was Jesus Of Nazareth The King Of The Jews. This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate,

CHORUS. Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews.

EVANGELIST. Pilate answered,

PILATE. What I have written I have written.

EVANGELIST. Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did. Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleo-

phas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother,

JESUS. Woman, behold thy son!

EVANGELIST. Then saith he to the disciple,

JESUS. Behold thy mother!

19. Chorale

Ah faithful heart, thus you provide
for all your devout.

You see and watch attentively
how they enter into affliction,
and also come with counsel and faithful deed
to their side!

You take them away, give them place
and room among good people.

20. Recitative

EVANGELIST. And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith,

JESUS. I thirst.

EVANGELIST. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said,

JESUS. It is finished:

EVANGELIST. and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

21. Aria

Adoring resound up to the throne,
sublime song of praise!

Resound to the victor, God's son,
who overcame death!

He is God! The legions of heaven
and the earth and the seas

offer up to him honor, glory and thanks!

22. Recitative

EVANGELIST. The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was cruci-

fied with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.

23. Chorale

Shelter me and enclose me
in the opening in your side.
Here let me be quiet and safe,
here warm my soul.
When cold death befalls me
and when the hellish lion lurks
in wait for me and my spirit,
then let me in your steadfastness
take rest quite peacefully.

24. Recitative

EVANGELIST. And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

25. Chorus

The hero, before whom hell trembles,
who himself saw death and now lives,
now lives and reigns in eternity!
To you your God has given victory and life,
to you he has given his world
and all his glory!
In all your salvation
your Savior participates
by means of faith!
May the light of faith
not go out in us!
By it we see forever your salvation!

26. Chorale

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

*Translation © 2018 by Ruth B. Libbey
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