



SACRED MUSIC SERIES
1974

MARILYN MASON, Organist
Central United Methodist Church
Traverse City, Michigan

THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Le Chemin de la Croix

Poems by Paul Claudel

Music by Marcel Dupré

MARILYN MASON, Organ

William Des Autels, Narrator

The first sketch of The Way of the Cross was conceived and realized in the form of an improvisation, at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Brussels, on Feb. 13, 1932. During the concert the fourteen poems of Le Chemin de la Croix by the French poet, Paul Claudel, were read and after each I improvised a musical commentary. Many in the audience having expressed their regret that nothing should remain of this spontaneous music, I decided to write the work down, trying to evoke the same atmosphere. Its composition took me an entire year. I gave the first performance in the Hall of the Trocadero in Paris on March 18, 1932.

- Marcel Dupré

In the Way of the Cross Marcel Dupré has placed himself before the drama as a witness who could in his emotions take up the words of the apostle: "What I have seen, what I have heard - that is what I have to say to you." He has seen, he has heard the two principal actors of the drama: Christ and the Virgin.

The Christ as Victim - we foresee it everywhere: from the first Station with the cries of the crowd pursuing him, we hear him stumble under the weight of the cross, but it is at the eighth Station what he reveals himself in a gesture of pity toward the "daughters of Israel who follow him." Crushed under the burden, he falls shortly afterwards at the ninth Station; it is upon him alone that our eyes are fixed, when stripped of his garments, nailed upon the cross, he speaks a last time to his Father before dying.

The Virgin shattered by grief: a striking figure which appears at the fourth Station, expressed by the song of a flute whose design, as if it could not maintain itself falls back on itself three times. While the drama is taking place, she remains apart. When all is consummated, she advances again to receive the body of her Son. She is always the "Mother of Grief (Mater Doloroso)".

Around these two personages, other secondary figures are sketched: the Holy Women whose meeting furnishes a temporary halt to the ascent to Calvary; Simon the Cyrenian, his steps adjusted little by little to those of the Victim; Veronica, who cannot withhold a gesture of pity, crowned by the Miracle at the close of the Station.

Thus the personages: here now is the setting amid which they move - first, the praetorium where the crowd mills around, shouts, then little by little melts away - a strikingly novel effect in the history of organ music notation.

Then begins the climb toward Calvary, translated from the second Station by an expressive rhythm: a solemn cortege which will become, at the fourteenth Station, a funeral march for the placing of the body in the tomb. Christ falls heavily, having arrived at the place of torture, his body is hoisted to the Cross by the ropes which grate; the blows of the hammer resound; the earth trembles, and finally, while the funeral procession leads us to the entrance of the tomb, by a magnificent lightening effect, the dawn of the Resurrection, felt little by little throughout the work, rises and illumines by its radiant tonality.

- Abbé R. Delestre, L'Oeuvre de Marcel Dupré
Transl. Dr. E. L. Ford

THE STATIONS*

- I. Jesus is condemned to Death
- II. Jesus receives His Cross
- III. Jesus falls the first Time
- IV. Jesus meets his Mother
- V. Simon the Cyrenian helps Jesus to carry the Cross
- VI. Jesus and Veronica
- VII. Jesus falls a second Time
- VIII. Jesus comforts the women of Jerusalem who follow him
- IX. Jesus falls the third Time
- X. Jesus is stripped of his garments
- XI. Jesus is nailed to the Cross
- XII. Jesus dies upon the Cross

*Please withhold applause until the close of the performance.

XIII. Jesus is taken from the Cross and placed in the arms of His Mother

XIV. Jesus is placed in the Sepulchre

The fourteen poems of Paul Claudel will be read in an English translation by Gale Kramer and Sister Judith Schweiss.

The Stations or Way of the Cross refer to a series of pictures or tableaux representing certain scenes in the Passion and Death of Christ, each corresponding to a particular incident connected with the Passion. The object of the Stations is to help the faithful make in spirit a pilgrimage to the principal scenes of Christ's passion and death.

The origin of this devotion is traced to the Holy Land. The route Christ traveled from the place of sentencing to Calvary has been marked since the earliest years of Christianity, and has been the object of pilgrimage since the days of Constantine. There is, however, no direct evidence of a set form of devotion until the seventeenth century, at which time the number of Stations was fixed at fourteen. Previously, the number varied from 12 - 39.

- The Catholic Encyclopedia, XV, 569

MARILYN MASON is Chairman of the Organ Department at the University of Michigan. She has taught at Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary where she received her Doctorate. She has been soloist at the International Congresses of Organists (representing the U. S. at Westminster Abbey) and in Spain. Last season, Dr. Mason played recitals on five continents.

You are cordially invited to greet Dr. Mason at the reception in Fellowship Hall following the recital.

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Donald Williams, Organ - Fall, 1974