

Concerts at First Presbyterian Saginaw

10th Anniversary Season

Presents

Marcel Dupre's

"Stations of the Cross"

Performed by

Dr. Marilyn Mason



Based on the poetic reflections by Paul Claudel
Read by Vonnie G. Johnson and Peggy Knutson

Good Friday, April 21st, 2000

The Stations of the Cross

Music by Marcel Dupre (1886-1971)

Poetry by Paul Claudel (1868-1955)

Poetry Translated by J. Eric Swenson



I. Jesus is Condemned to Death

The tumult of the crowd and their angry cries for Barrabas can be heard. The name of Barrabas is depicted by one of the rhythmic motives.



II. Jesus Receives His Cross.

Heavy, plodding figures as Jesus Begins the journey toward Golgotha. The cross is symbolized by the ascending fourths.



III. Jesus Falls the First Time

Jesus' suffering is depicted by the descending triplet figure. Reflecting the heavy burden, the music slows to a halt as Jesus falls.



IV. Jesus Meets His Mother.

A peaceful scene as Jesus comforts his mother. The motive of the Virgin Mary is a descending, arpeggiated major chord.



V. Simon the Cyrene Helps Jesus to Carry the Cross.

Jesus' load is lightened by Simon. The canon symbolizes following and sharing. The Cross' motive is heard.



VI. Jesus and Veronica.

The Compassion Motive (two thirds ascending) is combined with the Cross Motive. The movement closes with the Redemption Motive in "Harmonies Mysterieuses."



VII. Jesus Falls a Second Time.

The weariness of Jesus is shown by the descending seconds in the soprano.



VIII. Jesus Comforts the Women of Jerusalem.

The Motive of Pity is heard first. The voice of Jesus (on the trumpet) is then combined with the Pity Motive.



IX. Jesus Falls a Third Time.

A French Toccata. The persecution of Jesus is represented by a three-note figure in the left hand accompanied by an ascending, diminished arpeggiated chord in the right hand.



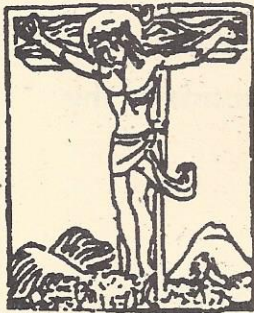
X. Jesus Is Stripped of His Clothes.

The flagellation of Jesus is expressed through a constant, driving rhythm. The movement concludes with the incarnation Motive of ascending minor third dyads.



XI. Jesus is Nailed on the Cross.

The hammer blows on the Crucifixion Motive (descending fourths) are heard throughout the movement. The Motive of Suffering returns near the end.



XII. Jesus Dies Upon the Cross.

His agony is expressed by a quiet four-note motive which fills in a tritone. Suddenly, there is an earthquake and Jesus dies.



XIII. The Body of Jesus is Taken from and Laid in Mary's Bosom.

The theme of the Virgin Mary returns as Mary beholds His face.



XIV. The Body of Jesus is Laid in the Tomb.

The motives of pity and suffering are combined.

Jesus' redemption is depicted in a "final" section by a transformation of the motive of suffering, to a rising motif.

DR. MARILYN MASON, ORGANIST: Marilyn Mason, Professor of Music and University Organist at the University of Michigan, is widely respected as a performer, adjudicator, teacher, and lecturer. Her distinguished career has carried her throughout the Western World. In one year alone, she received invitations to perform on five continents. She has adjudicated at nearly every major organ competition in the world. She was the first woman to perform at London's Westminster Abbey. Currently, she is pursuing her commitment to artistic integrity through scholarly study of historic performance practices. She has taught organ and organ literature courses at the University of Michigan for over fifty years. Additionally, she has commissioned more than sixty compositions. Dr. Mason served as the consultant for the Casavant Organ at First Presbyterian Church, Saginaw. This evening is Dr. Mason's third time to perform for Concerts at First Presbyterian Saginaw.

MARCEL DUPRE enjoyed a worldwide reputation for his organ compositions, brilliant organ playing, extraordinary ability at improvisation, and skill as an organ pedagogue. He was organist at the church of Saint Sulpice in Paris, was professor of organ at the Paris National Conservatory, and served for a time as director of the Conservatory.

COMPOSERS NOTES: The first sketch of *Le Chemin de la Croix* was conceived and realized in the form of an improvisation, at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Brussels, on February 13, 1931. During the concert the fourteen poems of *Le Chemin de la Croix* by the great 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

THE STATIONS 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. They are usually arranged at intervals around the walls of a church... 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 devotion is carried out by passing from Station to Station, meditating on each incident represented in the tableaux... 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. *The Catholic Encyclopedia, XV*

PAUL CLAUDEL dramatist, poet, essayist, and diplomat, was one of the most significant French literary figures in the first half of the twentieth century and the outstanding representative of the Catholic literary revival. His set of fourteen poems, *Le Chemin de la Croix*, was written in 1911.

THE READERS: Vonnie G. Johnson is the Director of Educational Ministries at First Presbyterian Church. Peggy Knutson is the Church School Director at First Congregational Church.

THE WOODCUTS are by Jean Marchand, from *Le Chemin de la Croix* by Paul Claudel, published by L'Art Catholique, Paris.

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Good Friday concert a treat

JANET I. MARTINEAU
THE SAGINAW NEWS

Artwork by the masters, poetry by a French literary giant and music played by one of the world's ranking organists combine on Good Friday.

The Concerts at First Presbyterian Saginaw series presents Marilyn Mason in a performance of Marcel Dupre's "Stations of the Cross," starting at 8 p.m.

As far as records show, it is the first time the composition, first performed in 1931, has been played in its entirety in the Saginaw area.

ON STAGE

Who	"Stations of the Cross"
Where	First Presbyterian, Saginaw
When	8 p.m. Friday
How much	\$5 donation
Info	793-9890

"It is very powerful music, full of passion and emotion, wrenching," says Mason in a phone call from Ann Arbor, where for more than 50 years she has taught organ and organ literature at the University of Michigan.

"This is not a happy time — the last days of Jesus Christ — but even for those who are not Christian, they should be able to enjoy the music and reflect on the story it is telling, to see it as an observer of something that is happening."

Despite the fact Mason has performed worldwide — and was the first woman to perform at London's Westminster Abbey — she says she is anticipating her return visit to Saginaw.

"I have played this work many times in the last 30 years, always during Lent, but playing it in Saginaw will be a special treat because I helped design the Casavant organ there and it is a wonderful instrument, perfect for this.

"First Presbyterian's organ has very beautiful solo stops and a strong sound that is evocative of this kind of music. It is well suited to 19th century music rather than Baroque."

Mason is bringing with her a multi-media show for the 14-part, 70-minute work.

Stations of the Cross is the name given to a group of pictures or tableaux which represent certain scenes in the Passion of Christ. It also plays a major role in Roman Catholic worship.

"In my travels I have collected six to seven slides representing the theme in each of the 14 stations, artwork depicting the historic moments of Christ's life, so we will show those," Mason continues. "Nearly 100 of them. Works by Michelangelo and Da Vinci, as well as lesser artists."

And two local people — Vonnie G. Johnson, director of educational ministries at First Presbyterian, and Peggy Knutson, the church school director at First Congregational Church — will read the Paul Claudel poems that inspired Dupre's music with its themes of suffering, redemption and consolation.

As Mason explains it, in 1911, Claudel, one of the most significant French literary figures of the first half of the 20th century, wrote "Le Chemin de la Croix," a series of 14 poems based on the 14 Stations of the Cross.

Upon reading the poetry series, Dupre, the organist at Saint Sulpice in Paris, was so inspired he made a rough sketch of his musical reaction to each of them and, in 1931 at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Brussels, played an improvised musical commentary.

Dupre enjoyed a worldwide reputation for his extraordinary abilities in improvisation.

"After that performance, however, the audience expressed regrets



Organist Marilyn Mason actually met Marcel Dupre.

it was an improvisation because it so loved the work," says Mason. So for the next year Dupre struggled to recreate it in written form.

"It was a quasi-miracle he was able to do that," says Mason.

In the performance, Mason says, the Claudel poem for each station is read then followed by Dupre's musical response and the slides.

The 14 stations include Jesus being condemned to death, receiving his cross, falling, meeting his mother, Simon helping him bear the cross, comforting the women of Jerusalem, being nailed on the cross, dying on the cross and being laid in the tomb.

Program notes, she says, also will guide concertgoers along the path on what to listen for musically.

"What makes the performance of this work special for me, too, is

the fact I knew Dupre and met with him several times, even played the organ at Saint Sulpice in Paris," says Mason of the composer, who died in 1971.

"And it also was my great pleasure to visit Jerusalem and walk the actual Stations of the Cross route, which is a little over a mile I am guessing."

Each spot is marked with a Roman numeral sign, she says; often chapels or churches are at the spots as well.

"It was very thrilling to be there, very meaningful. It took about 30 to 40 minutes to walk. Much of it is right in the center of the town, with all these different faiths converging there as well."

In her career Mason has commissioned more than 60 organ pieces and had performed on five continents. ■