

Cathedral Concerts

presents

LENTEN MUSIC SERIES - 2000

Friday, April 7, 2000

Marilyn Mason, Organist

Thomas Woody, Reader

Le Chemin de la Croix, Op. 29

Marcel Dupré
(1886-1971)

- 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 Cyrene helps Jesus to carry his cross
- VI. A woman of pity wipes the face of Jesus
- VII. Jesus falls a second time
- VIII. Jesus comforts the women of Jerusalem
- IX. Jesus falls a third time
- X. Jesus is stripped of his clothes
- XI. Jesus is nailed to the cross
- XII. Jesus dies upon the cross
- XIII. The body of Jesus is taken from the cross and laid in Mary's bosom
- XIV. The body of Jesus is laid in the tomb

Text by Paul Claudel
(1868-1955)

Composer's note:

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.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Fri., April 14 Lenten Music Series
12:05 p.m. Indianapolis Opera Company

Fri., April 28 Charles Manning, Organist
12:05 p.m. St. Luke's United Methodist Church
Indianapolis

Fri., April 21 Good Friday
12:05 p.m. No Recital

Fri., May 5 Frederick Burgomaster
12:05 p.m. Cathedral Organist
and Choirmaster

Every Friday at 12:05 p.m.

Christ Church Cathedral - Downtown on Monument Circle

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.

THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS, OP. 29 - LE CHEMIN DE LA CROIX
Poems by Paul Claudel - Music for Organ by Marcel Dupré

"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. 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

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, and 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 that 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. While the drama is taking place, she remains apart. When all is consummated she advances again to receive the body of her son.

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 a Miracle at the close of the sixth 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.

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.

--Abbe R. Delestra, L'Oeuvre de Marcel Dupre,
transl. Dr. E.L. Ford

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"Dupré's powerful score contains some of the most powerful wrenching music ever created for the organ. It must be counted as a sincere, highly motivated work, unsparing in its depiction of grief, agony, horror and torture. Balancing these are luminous scenes of poignancy, hope and consolation."

--Liner notes from Marilyn Mason's recording at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, D. C.

Musical Synopsis

- 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 mystérieuses."
- 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 the Cross 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.