

ST. MARY CATHEDRAL

Gaylord, Michigan

and

THE AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS

Cherry Capitol Chapter

Present:

“The Stations Of The Cross”

by Marcel Dupre



Performed by:

Dr. Marilyn Mason, Organist

University of Michigan

Anna Lovelace, Narrator

PALM SUNDAY

April 5, 2009

St. Mary Cathedral

4:00 p.m.

First station: Jesus is condemned to death

'As soon as Pilate has pronounced the fateful phrase: *Gardes, saisissez-vous de cet homme!*, the agitation of the crowd, which had calmed for a moment, breaks out again and degenerates into a tumult, in the midst of which one can hear the cries of *Barrabas, Jésus*, and *Qu'il soit crucifié*, finally dominated by the clamour: *A mort*. Then, as the praetorium gradually empties, the cries recede and die away in the distance...'

Second Station: Jesus receives his cross

Above a persistent dotted rhythm, symbolising uneven steps, the theme of the Cross is declaimed by a rasping solo trumpet; proliferating into two and then three voices, it 'overwhelms with its weight the painful rhythm of the march to Calvary...'

Third Station: Jesus falls for the first time

An ostinato motif of paired descending quavers symbolises the weary steps of Jesus, above which the poignant lament of the theme of Suffering sings out in octaves high in the treble. At the climax of the piece the ostinato moves down to the pedals, but exhaustion overwhelms even the pain; the intensity recedes, and Jesus falls... Silence... 'However, the hearts of the disciples who follow him are penetrated by the gentle light of Redemption, whose consoling theme illuminates the final bars of the painful scene.'

Fourth Station: Jesus meets his mother

'The attitude of the Virgin is one of stupor. Down her face, frozen with horror, flow silent tears....*C'est comme une plainte intérieure, qui s'échappe de la musique.*' The theme of the Virgin sings out on a solo flute above a circling, almost motionless chromatic accompaniment on Voix Celeste; the first and last notes of the theme are prolonged, as if frozen in time....Towards the end, in the pedals, there is a brief reminiscence of the 'weary steps' motif..

Fifth Station: Simon the Cyrenian helps Jesus to carry the cross

'The music stresses the tremendous effort which Simon has to make to help carry the burden of the cross, until he succeeds in adjusting his steps to those of Jesus.' The music of the fifth station is a kind of reworking of the second. Here the uneven steps flow a little easier, but the theme of the Cross is again played by a rasping solo trumpet, first in one voice, symbolising Jesus alone, then by two voices in canon, as Simon attempts to share the burden, and finally by the two voices in unison as their steps finally coincide and the burden is eased.

Sixth Station: Jesus and Veronica

'The double melody of Compassion sings out in a harmonious, archaic and lightly exotic atmosphere.' The hypnotic, slightly oriental music of this sixth station represents Dupré

at his most poetic and imaginative. The double theme unfolds on the oboe, and the pedals play a hushed reminiscence of the theme of the Cross; at the end the theme of Redemption reappears on the Voix Celeste, 'sustained by mysterious harmonies'.

Seventh Station: Jesus falls for the second time

'The bitter ascent resumes, while the turbulent crowd presses on all sides around the tragic procession, and the second fall passes almost unnoticed.' The music of the second fall is developed from the first, intensifying the "weary steps" motif through the addition of chromatic semiquaver decoration. Again the scene rises to a central climax and then recedes until only the rhythmic pedal figure remains.

Eighth Station: Jesus comforts the women of Jerusalem

'The Holy Women follow, sad unto death, haunted by the vision of the final sacrifice. The theme of their grief rises up like a lament, to which the consoling voice of Jesus replies. Then the two themes mingle and flow together, tender and soothing.' This station provides another oasis of calm; the theme of Pity is characterised by expressive diatonic harmonies on gentle flutes, while the voice of Jesus, with his theme of Consolation, is entrusted to a soft trumpet.

Ninth Station: Jesus falls for the third time

'The crowd is infuriated by the slow progress of the ascent; cries, clamours and insults break out on all sides...' The violence implicit in the two previous falls now erupts in full fury. The 'weary steps' motif is now transformed into a barrage of relentless semiquaver figuration, which is combined with a new theme of Persecution; at the climax, for full organ, the original motif of paired descending steps returns in the pedals, while both the other themes are superimposed above. The final fall is graphic, sudden and violent. It is followed by a long silence, before 'a few muffled spasms illustrate the crushing of the Victim.'

Tenth Station: Jesus is stripped of his clothes

An agitated chromatic scherzo evokes the stripping and flagellation. The violence suddenly ceases, and after another long pause, the moving spectacle of the Saviour's helpless body inspires a hushed meditation on the mystery of the Incarnation, on the softest 8' flute.

Eleventh Station: Jesus is nailed to the cross

'The obsessive rhythm of the hammer blows (theme of Crucifixion), forcing the nails through the hands and feet of Jesus, dominates this station and expresses the implacable cruelty of the executioners, while at times there rises up the heart-rending lament of the theme of Suffering.'

Twelfth Station: Jesus dies upon the cross

Broken solo phrases on the Vox Humana evoke the seven last words of Christ, which include a reprise of his theme of Consolation. As the last phrase falls away, the earth begins to tremble, and after a momentary cataclysm the disciples are left alone and desolate...

Thirteenth Station: The body of Jesus is taken from the cross and laid in Mary's bosom

A flowing scherzo for flutes evokes the tenderness of the descent from the cross, and the station ends with a poignant quotation from the fourth station, as Mary is reunited with the body of her son.

Fourteenth Station: The body of Jesus is laid in the tomb

The sad cortège escorts the body to the tomb; the theme of Pity gradually intensifies from a single voice to a full texture, and the music blossoms into a final development of the theme of Suffering. As this recedes, the pedals initiate a muffled drum beat which underpins the resumption of the cortège, in a passage that evokes an extraordinary atmosphere of muted, hopeless grief. But finally the miracle occurs: the gates of paradise are opened, and the theme of Suffering is transformed into a 'theme of the Fruits of Redemption', played, in Delestre's evocative description, 'by three distant flutes, above muted Celestes. The muffled drum is transformed into the mysterious chime of a repeated mediant pedal: a vision of immaterial, transparent sweetness, which opens a door on the Beyond, and seems to prolong into eternal peace the religious emotion of this ineffable conclusion.'

Among the important influences on the American organ scene in the second half of the 20th century, **Marilyn Mason** certainly has made a lasting impact in her distinguished career as concert organist, lecturer, adjudicator, teacher, organ consultant, recording artist, and by the nearly 75 organ works she has commissioned. Her name commands immediate recognition among organists today, confirming her impact more than 50 years after she made her debut.

Dr. Mason is University Organist, Professor of Music, and Chairman of the Organ Department of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Her affiliation with Michigan began in 1944 as she began her undergraduate studies there under Palmer Christian, later completing her M.Mus degree. And, except for a year spent in France, where she studied under Nadia Boulanger (analysis) and Maurice Durufle (organ), and time studying for her Doctor of Sacred Music degree at Union Theological Seminary in New York, she has spent her entire career in Ann Arbor. Dr. Mason has been consistently recognized by the faculty, first, as an undergraduate, she was awarded the Stanley Medal, the highest award given to any music major. Later, in her teaching career, her colleagues presented her with the Distinguished Faculty Award and music alumni awarded her the first Citation of Merit. During her time at Michigan, annual summer and fall organ music conferences have become regular highlights, organ tours abroad to see and hear historic organs, and the installation of the Marilyn Mason organ in a specifically built recital hall. This organ, built by C. B. Fisk, is a replica in the spirit of the instruments of the 18th century organ builder, Gottfried Silbermann, whose organs Bach knew well.

Dr. Mason has performed on every continent, save Antarctica. She was the first American woman to play in Westminster Abbey, the first woman organist to play in Latin America, and the first American to play in Egypt. She has served as judge at nearly every major organ competition in the world. Her dedication to modern organ music is evidenced by the names of influential composers who have written for her: Albright, Bolcom, Cook, Cowell, Creston, Diemer, Haines, Jackson, David Johnson, Jordan, Krenek, Langlais, Lockwood, Near, Persichetti, Sowerby, Wyton, and Young. Dr. Mason recently completed a recording of the complete works of Johann Pachelbel for the Musical Heritage Society. In 1987, Dr. Mason was awarded the degree Doctor of Music honoris causa from the University of Nebraska. She was honored as the "1988 Performer of the Year" by the New York Chapter of the American Guild of Organists.