

For Fran Hickox, and all who have made and continue to make the St Endellion Easter Festival vibrant and inspirational, with my deep gratitude.

First performance:

St Endellion Church, Good Friday (19th April), 2019

Conductor: Adam Hickox

Chorus Master: Harry Bradford

ST MARK PASSION

(2017/18)

PROGRAMME NOTE

St Mark's gospel is widely regarded to be the first to be written during the mid-first century, perhaps only thirty years or so after the events of the crucifixion, which it documents. It is because of this living connection with the memories of those who witnessed these dramatic, astounding, profoundly world-changing events first hand, that I have long felt drawn to Mark's gospel in particular. Mark's passion account (and the wider gospel) is direct and urgent. Phrases like 'immediately', 'straightaway', 'and then' appear frequently and give the narrative an imperative quality. I have tried to give this Passion a similar sense of momentum at key moments so as to preserve this spirit. Mark also uses a device where one miracle or parable is sandwiched in the middle of another, and I have used this as a structural feature of the piece. Many of the parables of the gospel seem to point towards the passion story, and towards the resurrection, even though the resurrection is not part of the passion. Perhaps more importantly, in these earliest sources of the gospel, the resurrection is absent entirely, and there is no resolution. The psalms give us the voices of Judas and Peter, in imitation of the prophetic use of *vox Christi*, where the psalmist's words are heard in the voice of Christ.

I have chosen not to depict the horror and humiliation of the events surrounding the crucifixion itself, and Jesus' words from the cross. The unexpected cruelty and brutality found in the *parable of the vineyard* maps the events of the crucifixion directly; with hindsight, it feels incredible that the disciples fail to see that in this parable Jesus is anticipating the terrible circumstances of his own death. In the garden of Gethsemane Jesus attempts to arouse the disciples to a sense of imminent disaster; in the parable of *the stilling of the storm* the roles of the sleepers and the wakers are reversed. Jesus is now the one sleeping soundly, whilst the storm rages around him. This provides a lens through which to apprehend the most appalling part of the story. We experience something devastating, and try not, or are too afraid, to look. This miracle is about keeping faith, as Jesus says. It reminds us that however devastating the storm of the crucifixion may be, we must trust in him.

I am interested in the ecumenical aspects of this story, and have been interested in how Islam views Jesus' life and death. The Islamic tradition holds that the person of Jesus did not die on the cross, though the details of what did happen are not universally agreed upon. The principal rationale for this is that it seems inconceivable that God in human form could suffer such degradation, pain, and death, and therefore this cannot have been what actually happened. For Christians, of course, it is the

extent of the suffering, and the fact that God died at the hands of men, that makes the victory of resurrection and the fulfilment of God's redeeming work the most amazing miracle of all.

From a musical point of view, I wanted to make some reference to the Maronite Syriac Orthodox tradition, which can trace its roots back to the earliest days of Christianity. I was drawn to the idea of using elements of a musical language with which the first Christians would have been familiar as the building blocks of the piece. To this end, I have used particular melodic gestures that draw their inspiration from some of the most ancient chants, some of which are quoted directly. The main melody that I use towards the end of the Passion is known as *Wa Habibi* in Arabic, and also known as the hymn *Kad Nofeq* in Aramaic, the language of Jesus. This melody is extremely popular in the Holy Land, and is widely sung on Good Friday throughout the region. It is heard on the *via dolorosa* in Jerusalem, where pilgrims walk the route that Jesus took, carrying his cross to Golgotha, 'the place of the skull', where he was crucified. Its origins are unclear. Some think that this melody originated in the Middle East, others that it was written by Pergolesi or Albanese in Italy in the seventeenth century and then transported by missionaries to the Holy Land, in a version that accompanied the French hymn *Lorsqu'un Dieu daigne répandre*. This melody also appears to share some strong similarities to various Basque folk songs. This makes it extremely difficult to trace its provenance, though the idea of a melody that belongs to no time and yet to all time, to no one and yet to everyone, is perhaps the most appropriate that could be associated with this extraordinary story.

Towards the end of this Passion, the idea of the 'seeds', which is introduced by *the parable of the sower* in the opening chorus, is explored through fourteen phrases from the gospel that contribute to the sense of what is to come. These phrases are sung variously by the chorus and by soloists, and also represent the fourteen candles that are kindled and extinguished during the ancient Good Friday office of *Tenebrae* (or shadows). Traditionally the last candle is left burning, but is left covered until Easter Morning. Here the last of these candles is represented by the line 'You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; he is not here.' The final phrase is left hanging, repeated by a male voice, who may even be Jesus himself, as the women run away from the garden in fear, confusion, and awe on that first Easter morning, still unaware of the world-changing events that they will soon witness.

As Jesus says, in this remarkable account, 'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.'

Oliver Tarney
January 2019

A NOTE ON THE TEXT

Mark tells the story of a man in a hurry, who shows constantly in his preaching and his miraculous actions the urgent truth of his relationship with God, impatient with the slowness and sleepiness of his audience.

We began with the idea of the grave as a place where someone lies in the dark, as a seed waits in the ground, which is why the *parable of the sower* is central: the seed is both Jesus and his word, and the gospel tells the story of the sowing of the word. Oliver particularly wanted the humanity of the participants to break through the idea that this is a story that we already know: Judas is tortured by his awareness of his forthcoming treachery, as is Peter by his betrayal. I was asked to write words that show Peter losing his temper in the exchange with the serving-maid, to emphasise his internal conflict.

The other key development Oliver requested was that Barabbas should be an unrepentant murderer, whose pleasure in his own cruelty makes him an appalling alternative to Jesus. This emphasises the terrible error of the mob, who in this Passion actually change their minds from Jesus to Barabbas, and in doing so choose that a mass murderer should go free, and Jesus, whose love and tenderness Mark has repeatedly stressed, be crucified.

We wanted to show the breadth of Jesus's influence, paying attention to both men and women, as he does. Nothing is taboo; no-one is excluded. The bleeding woman and the man whose son is possessed – these are humiliating problems to have, yet they confide in Jesus, and their arias give them an individual voice. The last chorus is written to suggest that Jesus himself, trapped in the grave, is now the one in need of a miracle; and that this is fulfilled in the astonished realisation: 'He is not here.'

Lucia Quinault

February 2019

TEXT

Part I

Introduction

Chorus: And he began to preach again by the seaside.

The Sower

Jesus + Semi-chorus + Chorus:

There went out a sower to sow, and as he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the birds of the air came and devoured them. Some seeds fell on the stony ground but it had no depth of earth, and when the sun rose up they were scorched.

Jesus: Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Chorus: And some of them fell among thorns and they choked them and they withered away. And some of them fell on the good ground and brought forth fruit.

Jesus & Semi-chorus: Watch and pray, you know not when the time is.

Chorus: They that have ears to hear, let them hear.

Jesus: What I say to you, I say to all.

Crucifixion prediction 1

Chorus: Now after two days, was the feast of the Passover.

The Son of Man must suffer and be rejected and killed, and on the third day rise. The chief priests and scribes sought how they might put him to death.

Recit/Aria

Soprano:

There was a woman who had bled for twelve years. She had suffered many things of the doctors, she spent all that she had and was never healed, but grew worse. She heard of Jesus, and touched the hem of his garment in the crowd, saying 'If I may touch but his clothes, I will be whole'.

Bleeding woman:

Pouring blood like life,
Crushed in the crowd,
I reached, touched his hem,
And felt my ragged body heal.*

Semi-chorus:

Daughter, your faith has made you whole; do not be afraid, only believe.

Last Supper

And in the evening Jesus came with the twelve and as they sat, and as they ate, Jesus said to them.

Jesus + full or semi-chorus: Truly I tell you, one of you who sits with me shall betray me.

Full or semi-chorus: Is it me? Was it him? Who has betrayed him?

Jesus: It is one of the twelve that dips with me in the dish.

Aria—Judas

Judas:

Better I had not been born.
O, Lord, you have searched me and you know me.
Before I speak you know all of my words.
You have laid your hand upon me.
Better I had not been born.
Surely the darkness shall cover me?
But the night shines bright as the day, and the darkness and the light
are both alike to you.
Marvelous are your works.

Chorus: Is it me? Was it him? Who has betrayed him?

(Last supper)

Jesus: Take, eat, this is my body, this is my blood which is shed for many.

Jesus & Chorus: Truly I say to you, I will drink no more wine until I drink it new in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Gethsemane

Semi-chorus: They came to the place named Gethsemane.

Jesus: Sit here while I pray.

Father, father, all things are possible for you. Take this cup away from me. But not what I want, only what you will.

Crucifixion prediction 2

Chorus: The Son of Man is delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him.

(Gethsemane) And Jesus found them asleep when he returned to them and he said sleep on, take your rest.

Semi-chorus: And they will kill him and he will rise on the third day.

Jesus: Sleep on, take your rest. Truly the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.

The arrest

Semi-chorus: And Judas went straight to him, and said.

Chorus: Master, master, and then he kissed him. They laid their hands on him.

Semi-chorus: And they laid their hand on him and took him.

Chorus: Then they laid their hands on him and took him.

(Judas aria) **Judas:** You have laid your hand upon me. Better I had not been born.

Part II

Crucifixion prediction 3

Behold, we are going to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man shall be given up to the Chief Priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and they will deliver him to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and beat him, and they will scourge him, and they will spit on him and kill him. And on the third day, he will rise again.

The vineyard

Chorus:

A man planted a vineyard and he set up a hedge around it, and built a watch-tower, and then he leased it to farm workers, and he travelled away to a distant land. And at the time of the harvest, he sent a servant to collect the profits from the vineyard. And they caught him, and beat him, and they drove him away from the vineyard. Again he sent one of his servants to the vineyard. And they threw stones at him and wounded him, and then they drove him away from the vineyard. And he sent others to the vineyard, he sent them again and again, and they drove them away from the vineyard. Having one son, his only son, he sent him, saying:

They will respect my son. And they took him and then they killed him and they threw his body out of the vineyard. What will the Lord of the vineyard do? He will destroy them and will give the vineyard to the hands of others. My son. And they led Jesus away, they led Jesus to the High Priest. And Peter followed them right into the palace of the High Priest, and he sat with the servants, warming himself by the fire.

Chorus: Accusers

Chorus/Scribes/Pharisees

Scribes and Pharisees: We heard him say, I will destroy the temple that is built with hands, and in three days I will build another temple built without hands!

Will you not answer them? Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?

Jesus' response

Jesus: I am, and you will see the Son of Man sitting at the righthand of power, and in the clouds of heaven.

Scribes/Pharisees: What more do we need, you have heard the blasphemy.

Chorus: And some began to spit on him and cover his face, and beat him. And they condemned him to death.

Peter & the Maid

Maid: You, you by the fire, you were with Jesus of Nazareth.

Peter: Me? Who are you to question me? I don't know what you're talking about.

Maid: Look, this is one of them, one of the twelve, look!

Peter: I have never met this man. Are you calling me a liar?

Maid: But you are one of them. You're a Galilean, you talk like one.

Peter: Get back to your grease and ashes, go! Before I stuff your mouth full of firewood, girl!

Maid: I saw you with him.

Peter: Hang yourself with your own tongue and save your spit for your pots and pans!

Maid: But I saw you.

Chorus: And he went away, and he wept.*

Aria – Peter

Peter: Hear my cry.
From the end of the earth will I cry unto you.
Lead me to the rock that is higher than me.
Keep me as the apple of your eye,
Hide me under the shadow of your wings.

Chorus: And they bound Jesus and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate.

Pilate: Are you the King of the Jews?

Jesus: You say that I am.

Chorus – Accusers

Scribes/Pharisees: This man speaks to the winds, he speaks to unclean devils; and they rise again. He bribed the people with loaves of bread. This man speaks to the blind and diseased but he has no word for us the cleansed and the righteous;

Female Chorus: He touches dead and they rise again, and he denies the bond of marriage. We saw him smash the stalls in the temple and then luxuriate in precious oils at a woman's hands. I will destroy the temple, and in three days I will build another temple built without hands!

Male Chorus: We heard him say I will destroy the temple, the bond of marriage, and then luxuriate in precious oils at a woman's hands, smash the stalls or honest salesmen.

Aria: Father of possessed boy

Father: I brought my son to him.
He foamed at the mouth, and raved.
He would not eat; he was wasting away.
The spirit tore him and he fell on the ground,
I brought my son to Jesus, who took him by the hand.

Female Chorus: At the Passover, Pilate was to release a prisoner, and one named Barabbas lay bound with the men who had committed murder.

Male Chorus: Give us a prisoner; release a prisoner.

Barabbas & Chorus

Barabbas: The truth is you're not the first mother to lose a son! Your son's gone forever! I did that.*

Pilate: Which prisoner do I release? Which do I release to you?

Chorus: Give us a prisoner! Jesus, King of the Jews! Release Jesus!

Pilate: Do I release to you, the King of the Jews?

Scribes/Pharisees: This man speaks to the winds, he speaks to unclean devils, he touches the dead and they rise again, he bribed the people with loaves of bread.

Barabbas: Lost, his voice, screaming, slipping in his own blood. Remember his eyes? Not any more! Remember his hair? Torn out by the roots.*

Scribes/Pharisees: This man speaks to the blind and diseased but he has no word for us the cleansed and the righteous. Release Barabbas!

Chorus

Male Chorus: Release Barabbas!

Scribes/Pharisees: Release Barabbas.

Female Chorus: The King of the Jews!

Barabbas: The truth is, you wouldn't have known him from Adam when I'd finished with him.*

Scribes/Pharisees: Release Barabbas!

Chorus: Release Barabbas!

Pilate: What shall I do with Jesus, the man you call the King of the Jews?

Barabbas: The truth is, kill me or don't kill me, you can't beat me.*

Scribes/Pharisees: Crucify him!

Crucify him!

Chorus: Crucify him! Crucify Jesus, the King of the Jews!

Pilate: What evil has he done?

Barabbas/Scribes/Pharisees/Chorus: Crucify him!

Part III

Chorus

Semi-chorus: And they divided up his clothes; and they dined for them; And it was the third hour; And they crucified him.

Stilling of the storm:

Chorus: There rose up a great storm of wind. The waves beat into the ship, and Jesus was asleep when they woke him: 'Master, Master, do you not care that we are all about to die?'

'Peace, be still.

Why are you so fearful?

How is it that you have no faith?'

And the wind ceased,
and there was a great calm.

Then are they glad because they are at rest, and so he brings them into the haven where they long to be.

Semi-chorus: Those who go down to the sea in ships and occupy the business in great waters, they see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. For at his word the stormy wind arises, and lifts up the waves of the sea. Their soul melts away because of their trouble. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, he brings them out of their distress. He makes the storm to cease, so that the waves are still.

Chorus—Tenebrae

1. Who will roll away the stone from the door?
2. What evil has he done?
3. Even the wind and the sea obey him.
4. Watch and pray.
5. Hide me under the shadow of your wings.
6. The stone that the builders rejected has become the head of the corner.
7. Keep me as the apple of your eye.
8. But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up.
9. Be not afraid; only believe.
10. Who touched my clothes?
11. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?

12. Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel or under a bed?
13. If you can believe, all things are possible.

Cold as clay

Chorus:

Cold as clay and silent as rock
that holds him down.

No warmth,
no light,
no breath,
no voice.

White linen for the newborn,
and the dead.

Chorus:

1. Who will roll away the stone from the door?
2. What evil has he done?
3. Even the wind and the sea obey him.
4. Watch and pray.
5. Hide me under the shadow of your wings.
6. The stone that the builders rejected has become the head of the corner.
7. Keep me as the apple of your eye.
8. But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up.
9. Be not afraid; only believe.
10. Who touched my clothes?
11. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?
12. Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel or under a bed?
13. If you can believe, all things are possible.

Chorus:

As blind as the beggar at the gates,
as dumb as those he healed.

Alone.
No touch,
no sight,
no sound.

Who now will say arise, take up your bed,
go to your home.

Semi-chorus chant the thirteen phrases

At the tomb

Female semi-chorus: He is gone to Galilee as he told you. And they trembled and fled and told no one for they were afraid.

Jesus + Male semi-chorus: You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth (who was crucified). He is not here.

He is not here.

He is not here.

END OF PASSION

*additional text by Lucia Quinault

INSTRUMENTATION

SINGERS

Jesus: Baritone

Bleeding woman recitative: Soprano

Bleeding woman: Mezzo-soprano

Scribes and Pharisees: two tenors, two baritones/basses (from chorus)

Judas: Tenor

Peter: Baritone

Maid: Soprano

Father of possessed boy: Tenor

Barabbas: Bass

Pilate: Baritone

CHORUS(ES)

Chorus (SATB)

Including:

Female semi-chorus (S/A)

Male semi-chorus (T/B)

Semi-chorus (SATB) - combined

ORCHESTRA

Flute (doubling piccolo)

Oboe

Clarinet (doubling bass clarinet)

Percussion

Bass Drum

Suspended cymbal

Crotales (2 octave chromatic)

Tam-tam

Snare Drum

Tambourine

Triangle

St Endellion Sanctus Bell (approximates g below middle c and f-sharp above)

Piano

Harp

Strings

DURATION: c.70 minutes

NOTES

Chanting

Normally the chanting will involve repeating all or part of a given text but changing note where written, even if it is in the middle of a phrase or word even. They will normally stop at a particular place requiring singers to end partway through a phrase on occasion.

Portamentos

These are always intended to be full slides, covering the whole frequency range in between. These slides happen only where marked, and sometimes it is not from the beginning of the note. *Port.* is not always marked, but a line connecting two notes in this way is always a *portamento* in this piece.

Megaphones

These are not used to make the sound louder *per se*. The idea came about whilst sitting on a Southwest Trains service to Winchester and noticing how the ear is drawn to the tannoy announcements, even though the quality of sound is very tinny. I was attracted to this idea in respect of the Chief Priests *et al*, whipping up the crowd to bray for Barabbas's release. It seems as though we're now used to this phenomenon: the voice of authority often comes through this degraded tone quality, through public address systems etc., and we listen, perhaps all the more intently.