

**SAINT THOMAS CHURCH FIFTH AVENUE**  
**in the**  
**CITY OF NEW YORK**

The Reverend Andrew C. Mead, OBE, DD, *Rector*  
John Scott, LVO, D.Mus., *The Nancy B. and John B. Hoffmann Organist and Director of Music*  
The Reverend Charles F. Wallace, *Headmaster*

# MUSICAL MEDITATIONS

**MONDAY 29 MARCH 2010 6:30PM**

LE CHEMIN DE LA CROIX  
Opus 29

Marcel Dupré  
(1886-1971)

Frederick Teardo, *organ*

**TUESDAY 30 MARCH 2010 6:30PM**

LES LEÇONS DE TÉNÈBRES

Marc-Antoine Charpentier  
(c. 1645-1704)

John Scott, *continuo*

Jolle Greenleaf & Molly Quinn, *sopranos*

Ryland Angel, *haute-contre*  
Emily Walhout, *gamba*

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# LE CHEMIN DE LA CROIX

## Opus 29

Marcel Dupré  
(1886-1971)

Frederick Teardo, *organ*

- I. Jésus est condamné à mort
- II. Jésus est chargé de la Croix
- III. Jésus tombe sous le poids de sa Croix
- IV. Jésus rencontre sa mère
- V. Simon le Cyrénéen aide Jésus à porter sa Croix
- VI. Une femme pieuse essuie la face de Jésus
- VII. Jésus tombe à terre pour la deuxième fois
- VIII. Jésus console les filles d'Israël qui le suivent
- IX. Jésus tombe pour la troisième fois
- X. Jésus est dépouillé de ses vêtements
- XI. Jésus est attaché sur la Croix
- XII. Jésus meurt sur la Croix
- XIII. Jésus est détaché de la Croix et remis à sa Mère
- XIV. Jésus est mis dans le sépulcre

The Stations of the Cross, also known as the Way of the Cross or *Via Crucis*, remain the primary devotion in the Roman Catholic Church commemorating the Passion of Christ. While Christ's Passion has been depicted in countless works of art, music, literature and theatre, the Stations offer the faithful a path through prayer and meditation to follow Christ's suffering, death and burial. Moreover, they provide a vehicle for personal reflection on the relationship between mortal sin and Christ's death for our redemption.

The Stations are stopping places that mark a different point on Jesus' journey from being condemned to death in Jerusalem to his crucifixion on Calvary and burial. The practice of the devotion has existed since the early centuries of Christianity, with its origins in pilgrimages to the Holy Land where the faithful literally walked in Christ's footsteps. This experience was imitated in the Middle Ages by placing illustrations of these various scenes around the interior walls of churches. The Franciscans prayed the Stations in monastic settings and aided in popularizing the devotion, which by the eighteenth century developed to its present form of fourteen stations and was practiced by Catholics far and wide.

Often manifested in art or sculpture, the Stations of the Cross have also been the subject of music and literature. Marcel Dupré, the great French organist of the twentieth century, utilized the Stations as the theme for his magnum opus, *Le Chemin de la Croix*, which has become one of the most celebrated programmatic works for organ. In 1930, Dupré gave a series of concerts in the Concert Hall at the Brussels Conservatory. It was upon receipt of these concerts that friends of Dupré approached him asking if he would consider returning to Brussels to perform an improvisation. The improvisation would serve as musical commentary to the reading of *Le Chemin de la Croix*, a set of fourteen poems written by French poet and devout Catholic Paul Claudel (1868-1955). Dupré returned to Brussels and performed the concert on February 13, 1931. Between each of the recited poems, Dupré improvised on each Station. Though Dupré was asked to improvise, he gave much thought to the structure and elements of the improvisation prior to the performance. In Dupré's personal reflection on the experience as stated in Abbé R. Delestre's book *L'Oeuvre de Marcel Dupré*, he states:

“No musical theme had been imposed on me. I was informed of my task in advance, and so in broad terms I could prepare myself and form ideas about the musical atmosphere of each of the 14 Stations, their registration, their keys. I also decided on the themes, or rather, the ‘symbolic motifs’ on which the work is based. Later, on the afternoon before the concert, I thought through my ‘draft’ of the 14 stations once more... a ‘rehearsal’ in a sense. What I did thus partakes of both composition and improvisation.”

Dupré's performance was a great success, and he subsequently decided to write the work down. The process took him an entire year, and though the composition resulted in being quite different from the original improvisation, the themes, motives and general atmosphere of the work remained the same. Dupré gave the first performance of *Le Chemin de la Croix* on March 18, 1932 on the Cavallé-Coll organ at the Trocadéro Palace in Paris.

*Le Chemin de la Croix* is a symphonic poem that conveys through music the suffering and agony of Jesus' Passion. Dupré employs twelve melodic themes and six rhythmic motives, each symbolizing a different element of the Way of the Cross. Dupré explains the origin of these thematic ideas:

“The themes are not only symbolic, but also traditional, one might say. Certain intervals, certain melodic shapes form part of the musical inheritance. I have studied how the masters have agreed upon certain formulae, like the double leap of a fourth for the Cross. It is found in Bach, Handel, and Schütz. The theme of the Redemption, formed of four conjunct notes, is found in Handel's *Messiah*, Bach's *St. John Passion*, Franck's *Beatitudes*, and Wagner's *Parsifal*.

The theme of the Virgin, forming a major triad, is the idea of Genetrix. The theme of Suffering, composed of a chromatic descent, is found in Bach. The theme of the Crucifixion is the inversion of the Cross motive. These are all the traditional themes of symbolism.”

What follows is a brief explanation of the themes utilized in each movement, how each movement portrays the Station it is providing commentary to, and how the themes and atmosphere function to unify the work as a whole.

- *Frederick Teardo*

**I. Jesus is condemned to death.** The opening musical statement serves as the death sentence to Jesus. What follows is a sense of chaos, the agitated eighth notes symbolizing the scurry of the crowd surrounding Jesus who is about to embark on his journey to be crucified. The sharp dotted rhythms that emerge from the texture are shouts of “Barrabas!” and “Crucify!” The movement develops to a climax and immediately winds down to almost nothing as the crowd scatters and leaves the Judgment scene.

**II. Jesus receives his Cross.** The weightiness of the Cross is expressed by means of a slow rhythmic figure played on 16' and 8' stops that accompany descending fourths in octaves on reed stops. The Cross motive of ascending fourths is heard throughout the movement.

**III. Jesus falls the first time.** Jesus' is pictured carrying the Cross by the music's intense feeling of weightiness; the slurred pairing of notes sound almost as sighs. The theme of Suffering, a highly expressive and lyrical theme always heard in the high register, appears for the first time. Tension is created by frequent use of suspension, and as the movement builds and then dies away, Jesus falls for the first time, after which a silence is heard, followed by a brief recitative of despair featuring the Redemption theme.

**IV. Jesus meets his mother.** Gently moving eighth notes accompany long phrases on the *Flûte Harmonique*, symbolizing the Virgin Mary, yet the phrases never develop and always “break down” with a falling motion, often a major triad – the Virgin motive. The calm of this movement is misleading, as the eighth notes are riddled with chromaticism, expressing the inner torment and anguish experienced by the Virgin as she watches Jesus suffer.

**V. Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry the Cross.** Flowing eighth notes accompany the inversion of the Cross motive in the Pedal. A dialogue between Jesus and Simon appears in canon, until the two voices are eventually in unison, symbolizing Simon and Jesus sharing the burden of the Cross together.

**VI. Jesus and Veronica.** The use of inversion and imitation in this movement, as well as the “mirror image” intervals used in the accompaniment portray the visage of Jesus as imprinted on Veronica’s cloth. The Redemption theme is heard on the *Voix célestes*.

**VII. Jesus falls a second time.** This movement begins much like the third, yet further anxiety is felt through intense chromaticism and rhythmic urgency.

**VIII. Jesus comforts the women of Jerusalem.** Truly the first moment of tranquility thus far in the work appears in this movement, as a beautiful and peaceful melody expresses compassion for the women grieving for Jesus.

**IX. Jesus falls a third time.** The scurry returns with rapid sixteenth notes accompanying the Persecution theme that permeates the movement. The bustle is disrupted by Jesus’ fall; all is silent, and the sparse ending signifies Jesus is nearing Golgatha.

**X. Jesus is stripped of his clothes.** The rapid rhythmic figure and bleak atmosphere of the movement depict how violently Jesus is stripped and flogged. The theme of the Incarnation is presented in the melody of the second section.

**XI. Jesus is nailed on the Cross.** The violent and heavy chords on full organ are the hammer strokes driving the nails into Jesus’ hands and feet. The pedal is falling fourths throughout, the inversion of the Cross motive, and is at times combined with the Suffering theme.

**XII. Jesus dies upon the cross.** The voice of Jesus is played on the *Vox humana*, uttering seven statements of the Consolation theme, symbolizing the Seven Last Words, accompanied by the Agony theme. The last phrase is unaccompanied as Jesus is forsaken and then dies. The earthquake is heard, and the Agony theme appears once more to conclude the movement.

**XIII. The body of Jesus is taken from the Cross and laid in Mary’s bosom.** Running triplets are accompanied by the Redemption theme. A lament from Mary follows, with musical material taken directly from the fourth movement: a musical portrayal of the *pietà*.

**XIV. The body of Jesus is laid in the tomb.** The final movement unifies the work. It begins as a funeral march employing the Comfort theme from the eighth movement. The Suffering theme is heard for the last time in the expansive middle section. The work concludes with an ethereal passage in E major, foreshadowing the Resurrection.

# LES LEÇONS DE TÉNÈBRES

Marc-Antoine Charpentier  
(c. 1645-1704)

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## PROGRAMME

### I

Première leçon du vendredi saint, H. 105 (1680)  
*dessus, dessus & basse de viole, basse-continuo*

### II

Seconde leçon de ténèbres du vendredi saint, H. 140 (1693?)  
*haute-contre, basse-continuo*

### III

Troisième leçon du vendredi saint, H. 110 (1680)  
*2 haut-dessus, haute-contre, basse-continuo*

## TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

### I

De lamentatione Jeremiae prophetae

*From the Lamentations of Jeremiah the Prophet*

HETH misericordiae Domini quia non sumus consumpti quia non defecerunt miserationes ejus

*It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.*

HETH novae diluculo multa est fides tua

*They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.*

HETH pars mea Dominus dixit anima mea propterea expectabo eum

*The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.*

TETH bonus est Dominus sperantibus in eum animae quaerenti illum

*The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.*

TETH bonum est praestolari cum silentio salutare Dei

*It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.*

TETH bonum est viro cum portaverit jugum ab adolescentia sua

*It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.*

JOD sedebit solitarius et tacebit quia levavit super se

*He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him.*

JOD ponet in pulvere os suum si forte sit spes

*He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope.*

JOD dabit percutienti se maxillam saturabitur opprobriis

*He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him: he is filled full with reproach.*

Jerusalem Jerusalem convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum

*Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return unto the Lord thy God.*

### II

ALEPH quomodo obscuratum est aurum mutatus est color optimus dispersi sunt lapides sanctuarii in capite omnium platearum

*How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street.*

BETH filii Sion incliti et amicti auro primo quomodo reputati sunt in vasa testea opus manuum figuli

*The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!*

GHIMEL sed et lamiae nudaverunt mammam lactaverunt catulos suos filia populi mei crudelis quasi struthio in deserto

*Even the sea monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones: the daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness.*

DALETH adhaesit lingua lactantis ad palatum ejus in siti parvuli petierunt panem et non erat qui frangeret eis

*The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst: the young children ask bread, and no man breaketh it unto them.*

HE qui vescebantur voluptuose interierunt in viis qui nutriebantur in croceis amplexati sunt stercora  
*They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets: they that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills.*

VAU et major effecta est iniquitas filiae populi mei peccato Sodomorum quae subversa est in momento et non coeperunt in ea manus

*For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her.*

Jerusalem Jerusalem convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum

*Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return unto the Lord thy God.*

### III

Incipit oratio Jeremiae prophetae

*Here beginneth the Prayer of Jeremiah the Prophet.*

recordare Domine quid acciderit nobis intueri et respice opprobrium nostrum  
*Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach.*

hereditas nostra versa est ad alienos domus nostrae ad extraneos

*Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens.*

pupilli facti sumus absque patre matres nostrae quasi viduae

*We are orphans and fatherless, our mothers are as widows.*

aquam nostram pecunia bibimus ligna nostra pretio conparavimus

*We have drunken our water for money; our wood is sold unto us.*

cervicibus minabamur lassis non dabatur requies

*Our necks are under persecution: we labour, and have no rest.*

Aegypto dedimus manum et Assyriis ut saturaremur pane

*We have given the hand to the Egyptians, and to the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread.*

patres nostri peccaverunt et non sunt et nos iniquitates eorum portavimus

*Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities.*

servi dominati sunt nostri non fuit qui redimeret de manu eorum

*Servants have ruled over us: there is none that doth deliver us out of their hand.*

in animabus nostris afferebamus panem nobis a facie gladij in deserto

*We gat our bread with the peril of our lives because of the sword of the wilderness.*

pellis nostra quasi clybanus exusta est a facie tempestatum famis

*Our skin was black like an oven because of the terrible famine.*

mulieres in Sion humiliaverunt virgines in civitatibus Juda

*They ravished the women in Zion, and the maids in the cities of Judah.*

Jerusalem Jerusalem convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum

*Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return unto the Lord thy God.*



## NOTES

*Is this Jerusalem? Is this the city, is that the temple, the honor, the joy of the whole world? And I say, Is this man made in God's image, the miracle of his wisdom, and the masterpiece he made with his own hands? – Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, quoting Lamentations 2:15 in his Sermon sur la mort, Lent 1662.*

*Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. – John 2:19.*

The office of *tenebrae* (the Latin word means “darkness” or shadows”) consists of Matins and Lauds of the Thursday, Friday and Saturday before Easter, the three-day observance of the passion and death of Christ (*triduum sacrum*). Matins, the night office, includes three nocturns of three psalms, lessons, and responsories each; this was followed immediately by Lauds at dawn with five more psalms, the *Benedictus* or Song of Zechariah from the Gospel of Luke, and the *Miserere*, Psalm 50(51). By the time of Louis XIV it became the custom to anticipate the saying of these hours in the early evening of the preceding day. We have selected excerpts from Charpentier’s 54 settings to form a *concert spirituel* and to recreate some of the atmosphere of a late seventeenth century *tenebrae* in one of the great religious houses in Paris, the Abbaye-aux-Bois. The lessons are those appointed for the first nocturn of Good Friday. The biblical book of Lamentations, traditionally ascribed to the prophet Jeremiah, is a collection of five dirges or odes written to commemorate the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 bc by the Babylonians. Major portions of the book were appointed as lessons for the first nocturns of the *triduum*, and it is to those lessons that composers in France beginning with Michel Lambert in 1662 and including Michel-Richard de Lalande, Sebastian de Brossard, François Couperin, and Charpentier lavished their skill. Lambert, the great master of the *air de cour*, established the style, using the plainsong melody as the basis of a highly florid solo setting. Charpentier followed suit, and expanded his settings to accommodate the three female singers at the Abbaye-aux-Bois: the high sopranos Mère Sainte Cacille and Mère Camille, and the *haute-contre* Mère Desnots (sung this evening by a male *haute-contre*). Attendance at these *soirées* became something of a social event, as witnessed by Lecerf de la Viéville in his *Comparison of Italian and French Music* (1705):

Thousands of people are no longer willing to attend *Tenebrae* unless they know that the lessons are signed by the hand of a famous composer... What a show! It is not strange to see in the choir or the ambos of a church five or six glaring silhouettes, dressed in any slipshod way, like real clowns, powdered to the waist, moving their heads unceasingly, taking snuff, laughing, talking and pulling faces! We are getting better with age! Now, we hire actresses: situated behind a curtain which they draw once in a while to smile at some friend or other among the public, they sing a lesson on Good Friday....

Despite the rhetoric, a hearing of this music should convince all but the most cynical that there was more than mere spectacle in the popularity of the *tenebrae*: in his sermon quoted above, the Abbé Bossuet gets to the heart of what made the subject so compelling to contemporary audiences: the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem becomes an allegory for the dissolution of the human body in death. In an age become increasingly confident in the glories of its art and architecture, science and technology, the fact of mortality and the brevity of human existence became a greater philosophical conundrum: human beings were at once gods of reason and frail children of dust. Like Bossuet, Charpentier leaves us with aural meditations on the meaning of suffering, life and death. In an age where images of the Passion in the guise of mass entertainment divide and confound, the subtler strains of Charpentier should not be taken for granted.

- *Pedro d'Aquino*

*Many thanks to Larry Trupiano,  
for his work in tuning and maintaining all the organs at Saint Thomas and to Pedro d'Aquino for  
preparing the editions of the Charpentier being used in this evening's meditation.*