

Don Freund

PASSION with Tropes

Reconstructed 2011 for an immersive theatre production

Text Collage

Don Freund's *PASSION with Tropes* is a collage of various music, theatre, and music-theatre experiences, using texts about religion, love, death, and the experience of human existence. It may be described as a theatre work in which the medium of the Passion oratorio is challenged by the invasion of other musical and dramatic media (chamber songs, pop songs, excerpts from plays, poetry recitations, philosophical declarations, sermons, processions) just as the scriptural telling of the Passion story is convoluted, supplemented, and challenged by texts from the works of poets, playwrights, and philosophers.

Although Christ's passion and death are historically fixed in time, theology and folk tradition tend to view these events as timeless, eternal, and ongoing. The events of the last days and hours of Christ's life are presented out of sequence in *PASSION with Tropes*. This temporal re-arrangement gives the work a surrealistic, non-linear quality, and allows a fresh interpretation of familiar scriptural passages, particularly when juxtaposed with tropes. The word "trope" has two meanings and they both apply to this work: in one sense, a trope is the use of a word or expression in a figurative way; in another sense (better known to students of music history), a trope is a phrase or verse that is inserted as an embellishment or interpolation to sung parts of the Mass in the medieval period.

PASSION with Tropes is about life as defined by suffering and death and love. It is also about music, about time, about the theatre experience, about sounds, about words, about beginnings and middles and ends, about confusion and frustration and desire, and about God who became human and finite in order to taste all these things and find a love that no all-knowing eternal being could feel.

Thanks to an Indiana University New Frontiers grant, this 90-minute immersive theatre reconstructed version of *PASSION with Tropes* was presented on the stage of the Ruth M. Halls theatre in May, 2011, combining the creative talents of Robert Shakespeare (lighting design), Paul Brunner (set and technology), choreographer Elizabeth Shea, stage director Jonathan Courtemanche, digital visual artist Margaret Dolinsky and videographer Susanne Schwibs under the production conception and musical direction of Carmen-Helena Téllez. The 2011 reconstruction of *PASSION with Tropes* employs reduced performing forces and tightened dramatic form to focus on a trajectory towards Christ's final cry of "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani" (My God, why have you forsaken me?). This cry is a recurring vision throughout, surrounded by multifaceted meditations, sacred and profane, on life, death, and love.

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There are 12 vocal soloists indicated in the score as Oratorio Soprano, Oratorio Mezzo, Oratorio Tenor, Oratorio Bass; Chamber Soprano, Chamber Mezzo, Chamber Tenor, Chamber Baritone; Pop Soprano, Pop Mezzo, Pop Tenor, and Pop Baritone. These titles refer more to a style of singing than a particular person. More soloists than indicated may be used, or the same soloist may be used for different “roles.” In the premiere of the immersive theatre version, these soloists also performed as part of the chorus.

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PROLOGUE

From Miguel de Unamuno: **The Tragic Sense of Life**

DEATH ON THE CROSS

Jean-Paul Sartre: *The Wall* (excerpt 1) ■ *The Cry: Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani...*

Charles Peguy: *The Everlasting Cry*, Strophe I

TABLEAU I: Carrying the Cross

Ecce lignum ■ Stations of the Cross 1/From Kurt Vonnegut: *Slaughterhouse Five*

(excerpt 1) ■ Recitative: Bearing the Cross ■ Ecce lignum / Stations of the Cross 2 ■

Aria from Robert Southwell: **Sin's Heavy Load** ■ Robert Creeley: *The Window* ■

From Fyodor Dostoevsky: *Notes from Underground*

The Cry: Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani...

Charles Peguy: *The Everlasting Cry*, Strophe 2

TABLEAU II: The Crucifixion

Recitative: Golgotha ■ Ecce lignum / Stations of the Cross 3 ■ From Kurt

Vonnegut: *Slaughterhouse Five* (excerpt 2) ■ From Peter Weiss: *Marat/Sade* ■

Faustas Kirsas: *The Wooden Christ* ■ Anne Sexton: *With Mercy for the Greedy*

Recitative: Forgive Them ■ From Friederich Nietzsche: *The Antichrist*

Jean-Paul Sartre: *The Wall* (excerpt 2) ■ *The Cry: Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani...*

Charles Peguy: *The Everlasting Cry*, Strophe III

TABLEAU III: The Entombment

Mother and Son ■ The Anointing at Bethany ■ Allen Ginsberg: *The Night-Apple* ■

The Entombment ■ *Aria* from Rainer Rilke: **Pieta** ■ From William Shakespeare:

King Lear ■ Robert Bly: *Come With Me* ■ Pieta Chorale: *The Corpus Christi*

Carol (14th Century) ■ From Kurt Vonnegut: *Slaughterhouse Five* (excerpt 3)

The Cry: Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani...

Charles Peguy: *The Everlasting Cry*, Strophe IV

TABLEAU IV: The Taunting Crowd

From Friederich Nietzsche: *The Antichrist* (excerpt 2) ■ He saved others ■

Don Freund: *God is Love* ■ From Søren Kierkegaard: *On Himself* ■ From

Kurt Vonnegut: *Slaughterhouse Five* (excerpt 4)

The Cry: Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani...

Charles Peguy: *The Everlasting Cry*, Strophe V

TABLEAU V: Apocalypse-Palm Sunday

From Samuel Beckett: *Waiting for Godot* ■ The Good Thief ■ **Apocalypse** ■

Jean de le Ceppède: *Theorème Spirituel* ■ Palm Sunday Procession ■ Giles

Fletcher: *It Was But Now*

From Kurt Vonnegut: *Slaughterhouse Five* (excerpt 4) ■ Jean-Paul Sartre: *The Wall*

(excerpt 3) ■ Etheridge Knight: *He Died in Detroit* ■ *On Murdering God* from Friederich

Nietzsche: **The Merry Science** ■ Charles Peguy: *The Everlasting Cry*, Strophe VI ■

The Cry: Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani...

Sheldon Tannenbaum: *My Daughter on Good Friday*

EPILOG

Easter Vigil Proclamation (with Genesis and John I)

The Return from Ronald Duncan: **Judas**

Don Freund: PASSION WITH TROPES
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Text Collage
PROLOGUE

From Miguel de Unamuno: **The Tragic Sense of Life**

Chamber Baritone and Woodwind Quintet

God is revealed to us because he suffered, and because we suffer;
because he suffered he demands our love,
and because we suffer he gives us his love,
and he covers our anguish with his eternal and infinite anguish.

Suffering tells us that we exist,
suffering tells us that those whom we love exist,
suffering tells us that the world in which we live exists,
and suffering tells us that God exists and that he suffers,
but his is the suffering of anguish,
the anguish of surviving and being eternal.

To believe in God is to love him,
and to love him is to feel him suffer,
to pity him.

DEATH ON THE CROSS

Chant leader:

We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee,

Chorus:

Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

Jean-Paul Sartre: *The Wall* (excerpt 1)

Actor, Violin, Piano, Strings

I felt relaxed and over-excited at the same time. I didn't want to think any more about what would happen at dawn, at death.

But as soon as I tried to think of anything else I saw rifle barrels pointing at me.

If I had wanted to, I think I could have slept a while; I had been awake for 48 hours.

But I didn't want to lose two hours of life.

The Cry (first vision)

Narrator, Chorus, Orchestra

From the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness
over the whole land, and Jesus cried out in a loud voice:

Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani...

Charles Peguy: *The Everlasting Cry*, Strophe I

Oratorio Bass and Orchestra

The Son of Man in his very last hour,
cried out louder than a lost soul in his dreadful anguish,
with a cry that rang as false as a divine blasphemy.
Why should he have uttered that dreadful cry?

We adore Thee, O Christ

Pop Singers

We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee,
Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

TABLEAU I: Carrying the Cross

Ecce lignum / Stations of the Cross 1

Chant Choir / Actress

Chant leader (*displaying the covered crucifix, and uncovering one corner*):

Ecce lignum crucis in quo salus mundi pependit.
(*Behold the wood of the cross upon which hung the salvation of the world.*)

Chant choir: Venite adoremus.

Actress: A heavy cross is laid on the
bruised shoulders of Jesus.
He receives it with a meekness,
nay, with a secret joy, for it is the instrument
on which he is to redeem the world.

From Kurt Vonnegut: *Slaughterhouse Five* (excerpt 1)

Actor and String Quintet

Another Kilgore Trout book there in the window was about a man who built a time machine so he could go back and see Jesus. It worked, and he saw Jesus when Jesus was only twelve years old. Jesus was learning the carpentry trade from his father.

Two Roman soldiers came into the shop with a mechanical drawing on papyrus of a device they wanted built by sunrise the next morning. It was a cross to be used in the execution of a rabble-rouser.

Jesus and his father built it. They were glad to have the work. And the rabble-rouser was executed on it.

So it goes.

We adore Thee, O Christ

Chorus

We adore thee, O Christ and we bless Thee,
Because thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

Recitative: Bearing the Cross

Chamber Soprano and Piano

Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified; and so they took Jesus and led him away; and bearing the cross for himself he went forth.....

Ecce lignum / Stations of the Cross 2

Chant Choir / Actress

Chant leader (*displaying the covered crucifix, and uncovering another corner*):

Ecce lignum crucis in quo salus mundi pependit.
(Behold the wood of the cross upon which hung the salvation of the world.)

Chant choir: Venite adoremus.

Actress: Bowed down under the weight of the cross,
Jesus slowly sets forth on the way to Calvary.
His agony in the garden has exhausted his body;
he is sore with blows and wounds;
his strength fails him,
he falls to the ground under the cross.

Aria from Robert Southwell: **Sin's Heavy Load**

Oratorio Tenor and Orchestra

O Lord, my sin doth overcharge Thy breast.
The weight thereof doth force Thy knees to bow;
Yea, flat Thou fallest with my faults oppressed,
And bloody sweat runs trickling from Thy brow:
Alas! if God Himself sink under sin,
What will become of man that dies therein?

O prostrate Christ! erect my crooked mind;
Lord, let Thy fall my flight from earth obtain:
Or if I still in earth must needs be shrined,
Then, Lord! on earth come fall yet once again;
And either yield me in earth to lie,
Or else with Thee to take me to the sky.

Robert Creeley: *The Window*

Pop Tenor and Jazz Ensemble

Position is where you
put it, where it is,
did you, for example, that

large tank there, silvered,
with the white church along-
side, lift

all that, to what
purpose? How
heavy the slow

world is with
everything put
in place. Some

man walks by, a
car beside him on
the dropped

road, a leaf of
yellow color is
going to

fall. It
all drops into
place. My

face is heavy
with the sight. I can
feel my eye breaking.

From Fyodor Dostoevsky: *Notes from Underground*

Actor and Brass Quintet

Gentlemen, my jests are, of course, in bad taste, jerky, indeed lacking in confidence. But, of course, that is because I do not respect myself. As if by design, I used to get into trouble in cases when I was not to blame in any way. At the same time I was genuinely touched and penitent; I used to shed tears and there was a sick feeling in my heart. Of course, a moment or so later I would realize that it was all a lie, an affected lie, a revolting lie - all this penitence, this emotion, these vows of reform.

Observe yourselves more carefully, gentlemen, then you will understand that it is so:

I invented adventures for myself,
and made up a life,
so as to live in some way.

The Cry (second vision)

Narrator, Chorus, Orchestra

From the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness
over the whole land, and Jesus cried out in a loud voice:

Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani...

Charles Peguy: *The Everlasting Cry*, Strophe II

Oratorio Bass and Orchestra

Why should he have uttered that dreadful cry?

He should have been pleased. It was over.

It was done. All was finished.

His passion was completed. Redemption was achieved.

His incarnation was at an end. At that moment he should have been happy.....

We adore Thee, O Christ

Chant Choir

We adore Thee, O Christ and we bless Thee.

Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.

TABLEAU II: The Crucifixion

Recitative: Golgotha

Chamber Soprano and Piano

And bearing the cross for himself, he went forth to the place
called the skull, in Hebrew, Golgatha.

There they crucified him.

Ecce lignum / Stations of the Cross 3

Chant Choir / Actress

Chant leader (*displaying the uncovered crucifix*):

Ecce lignum crucis in quo salus mundi pependit.

(Behold the wood of the cross upon which hung the salvation of the world.)

Chant choir: Venite adoremus.

Actress: The cross is laid upon the ground,
and Jesus is stretched on the bed of his death;
he offers his bruised limbs to his heavenly Father
in behalf of sinful men,
and to his fierce executioners
to be nailed to the shameful wood.

From Kurt Vonnegut: *Slaughterhouse Five* (excerpt 2)

Actor and String Quintet

Billy, after all, had contemplated torture and hideous wounds at the beginning and the end of nearly every day of his childhood. Billy had an extremely gruesome crucifix hanging on the wall of his little bedroom in Ilium. A military surgeon would have admired the clinical fidelity of the artist's rendition of all Christ's wounds - the spear wound, the thorn wounds, the holes that were made by the iron spikes. Billy's Christ died horribly. He was pitiful.
So it goes.

From Peter Weiss: *Marat/Sade*

Actor and Chorus (speaking)

The priests settled down among their treasures
and ate and drank with princes
and to the starving they said
Suffer
Suffer as he suffered on the cross
for it is the will of God
And anyone believes what they hear over and over again
so the poor instead of bread made do with a picture
of the bleeding scourged and nailed-up Christ
and prayed to the image of their helplessness.

*From Faustas Kirsa: **The Wooden Christ***

Chamber Baritone and Woodwind Quintet

In his father's home, a farmer who's a hundred
Carves a wooden model Lord that works some wonders.

On the face of Jesus he inscribes his misery
When they sent his son to prison in Siberia.

He, to crucify himself his heart and torments,
Spears the side of God and spikes the palms and insteps.

Then he twists a crown of thorns to grave the forehead;
White the wood the old man gouges, goads and tortures.

When he stripped the final splinter from the icon,
You could hear the lips of the creator speaking:

"God, you wipe my tears dry, turn my pain to sweetness
Through your agony with both your temples bleeding.

"If you do perform them - miracles, I beg you:
Save the innocent, but punish persecutors!"

And, his lips against the wound of Jesus' passion,
He himself begged mercy for his youth's transgressions.

*From Anne Sexton: **With Mercy for the Greedy***

Chamber Mezzo unaccompanied

*For my friend, Ruth, who urges me to make an
appointment for the Sacrament of Confession.*

Concerning your letter in which you ask
me to call a priest and in which you ask
me to wear The Cross that you enclose;
your own cross,
your dog-bitten cross,
no larger than a thumb,
small and wooden, no thorns, this rose —

I pray to its shadow,
that gray place
where it lies on your letter ... deep, deep.
I detest my sins and I try to believe
in The Cross. I touch its tender hips,
its dark jawed face,
its solid neck, its brown sleep.

True. There is
a beautiful Jesus.
He is frozen to his bones like a chunk of beef.

How desperately he wanted to pull his arms in!
How desperately I touch his vertical and horizontal axes!
But I can't. Need is not quite belief.

All morning long
I have worn
your cross, hung with package string around my throat.
It tapped me lightly as a child's heart might,
tapping secondhand, softly waiting to be born.
Ruth, I cherish the letter you wrote.

My friend, my friend, I was born
doing reference work in sin, and born
confessing it. This is what poems are:
with mercy
for the greedy,
they are the tongue's wrangle,
the world's pottage, the rat's star.

Recitative: Forgive Them

Oratorio Soloists, Chorus, and Orchestra

And when they had crucified him, Jesus said:
Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

From Friederich Nietzsche: *The Antichrist*

Four Actors and Two Jazz Saxes

A man requires a God who is able to confer benefits, and also inflict injuries, who is both a friend and a foe. He is marvelous in both good and evil - but the castration of a God, making him merely good, passes all comprehension.

What is the use of a God who knows nothing of passion, revenge, envy, scorn, cunning, and violence? What is the use of a God who has never known the raptures of victory and of destruction? Such a God would not be comprehensible.

Jean-Paul Sartre: *The Wall* (excerpt 2)

Actor, Violin, Piano, Orchestra Strings

At that moment I felt that I had my whole life in front of me and I thought, "It's a damned lie."

I had spent my time counterfeiting eternity,

I had understood nothing. I missed nothing: there was so many things I could have missed, the taste of manzanilla or the swims I took in summer in a little creek near Cadiz; but death had disenchanting everything.

The Cry (third vision)

Narrator, Chorus, Orchestra

From the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness
over the whole land, and Jesus cried out in a loud voice:

Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani...

Charles Peguy: *The Everlasting Cry*, Strophe III

Oratorio Bass and Orchestra

Why should he have cried out at that moment?
At that moment he had begun to make an end;
like a tired traveler at the end of his journey,
he saw his home . . .

TABLEAU III: The Entombment

Mother and Son

Oratorio Soloists, Chorus, and Orchestra

When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple whom he loved standing by the cross he said to his mother:

Woman, behold thy son.

And he said to the disciple:

Behold thy mother.

The Anointing at Bethany

Chorus (speaking) and Orchestra

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany.

And they made him a supper there; and Martha served, while Lazarus was one of those reclining at table with him.

Mary took a pound of ointment, genuine nard of great value, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and with her hair, wiped his feet dry.

Allen Ginsberg: *The Night-Apple*

Chamber Mezzo and String Quintet

Last night I dreamed
of one I loved
for seven long years,
but I saw no face,
only the familiar
presence of the body:
sweat skin eyes
feces urine sperm
saliva all one
odor and mortal taste.

The Entombment

Pop Singers (speaking) and Jazz Ensemble

Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes,
weighing about a hundred pounds.

Joseph of Arimethea took the body of Jesus down from the cross,
and they wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths,
and put it in a new tomb which had been hewn out of the rock.

Aria from Rainer Rilke: **Pieta**

Oratorio Mezzo and Orchestra

Now is my misery full, and unutterably it fills me.

I am numb as a stone is numb inside.

Now you are lying straight across my lap,

Now I can no longer give you birth.

Angelus

Chorus

The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary,
and she conceived of the Holy Ghost.

Hail Mary, full of grace,

The little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.....

From William Shakespeare: *King Lear*
(Act V, Scene III)

Actor (Lear enters carrying the dead body of his daughter, Cordelia)
Howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones!
Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so
That heaven's vault should crack! She's gone for ever.
I know when one is dead, and when one lives;
She's dead as earth. Lend me a looking-glass;
If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,
Why, then she lives.

This feather stirs--she lives! If it be so,
It is a chance which does redeem all sorrows
That ever I have felt.

A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all!
I might have saved her; now she's gone for ever!

No, no, no life!
Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,
And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
Never, never, never, never, never!

Robert Bly: *Come With Me*
Pop Singers and Jazz Ensemble

Come with me into those things that have felt this despair for so long--
Those removed Chevrolet wheels that howl with a terrible loneliness,
Lying on their backs in the cindery dirt, like men drunk, and naked,
Staggering off down a hill at night to drown at last in the pond.
Those shredded inner tubes abandoned on the shoulders of thruways,
Black and collapsed bodies, that tried and burst,
And were left behind;
And the curly steel shavings, scattered about on garage benches,
Sometimes still warm, gritty when we hold them,
Who have given up, and blame everything on the government,
And those roads in South Dakota that feel around in the darkness . . .

Pieta Chorale
Chorus

Lully, lulley, lully, lulley,
The fawcon hath born my make away.

He bare hym up, he bare hym down,
He bare hym into an orchard browne.

In that orchard there was an halle
That was hangid with purpill and pall.

And in that hall there was a bede;
Hit was hangid with gold so rede.

And yn that bed there lythe a knight,
His wowndis bledyng day and nyght.

By that bedeside kneleth a may,
And she wepeth both nyght and day.

And by that bedeside there stondith a ston,
"Corpus Christi" wretyn theron.

From Kurt Vonnegut: *Slaughterhouse Five* (excerpt 3)

Actor and String Quintet

"The most important thing I learned on Tralfamadore was that when a person dies he only appears to die. He is still very much alive in the past, so it is very silly for people to cry at his funeral. All moments, past, present, and future, always have existed, always will exist.

"When a Tralfamadorian sees a corpse, all he thinks is that the dead person is in bad condition in that particular moment, but that the same person is just fine in plenty of other moments.

The Cry (fourth vision)

Narrator, Chorus, Orchestra

From the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness
over the whole land, and Jesus cried out in a loud voice:
Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani...

Charles Peguy: *The Everlasting Cry*, Strophe IV

Oratorio Bass and Orchestra

An eternal kiss would lave his side, a fatherly kiss would lave his brow,
an eternal kiss from his father would refresh his smarting wounds,
his head, his side, his feet, his hands;
an eternal spring, pure eternal water awaited his smarting wounds.
On the point of returning into his eternity,
it is then he uttered that awful cry . . .

TABLEAU IV: The Taunting Crowd

From Friederich Nietzsche: *The Antichrist* (excerpt 2)

Four Actors and Two Jazz Saxes

As for Christian love, God had to become a person for this to be possible;
and, to give suppressed instincts a chance, God had to be young.
For the ardor of the women a beautiful saint was brought into the picture,
and for the men a holy virgin.

In addition an insistence upon chastity strengthens the vehemence and the introverted intensity of the religious impulse: it makes the cult warmer, more enthusiastic, more soulful. Love is a frame of mind in which things seem most different from what they really are: in love the power of illusion reaches its highest degree, and so does the art of sweetening and transfiguration. When a man is in love he endures more than at any other time: he will put up with anything. The problem was to find a religion which made some allowance for love: love which conquers the worst life has to offer, love which is blind . . .

He saved others

Oratorio Soloists, Chorus, and Orchestra

The passers-by jeered at him; they shook their heads and said:
So you would destroy the temple, and rebuild it in three days!
Then save yourself! If you're the son of God, come down from the cross!
The chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him in the same way:
He saved others, himself he cannot save.
Let the Christ, the king of Israel, come down from the cross now,
and then we will believe in him.

Don Freund: *God is Love*

Pop Baritone and Jazz Ensemble

God is love, what
kind of love, how,
could it be time and space
would embrace only me?
Love isn't wise, isn't knowing,
Love can't be sure where it's going,
Love is a dream, finite sensation,
Sheer fabrication,
Blind aspiration.
Oh what a silly God, to try
to be like me, to want
to be confused, to wish
things could be better than he made them.

Love is God, who,
making man, wants
to be man so he can make God
to be loved, to be Love, and to love.

He saved others (Reprise)

Chorus and Orchestra

Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down from the cross,
and then we will believe in him.
He saved others, himself he cannot save.

From Søren Kierkegaard: *On Himself*

Actor and Orchestra

The crowd is untruth. Therefore was Christ crucified, because,
although he addressed himself to all, He would have no dealings with
the crowd. It is not so great a trick to win the crowd. All that
is needed is some talent, a certain dose of falsehood, and a little
acquaintance with human passions.

From Kurt Vonnegut: *Slaughterhouse Five* (excerpt 4)

Actor and String Quintet

The visitor from outer space made a serious study of Christianity, to learn, if he could,
why Christians found it so easy to be cruel. He concluded that at least part of the trouble
was slipshod storytelling in the New Testament. He supposed that the intent of the
Gospels was to teach people, among other things, to be merciful, even to the lowest of the
low.

But the Gospels actually taught this:

Before you kill somebody, make absolutely sure he isn't well connected.

The Cry (fifth vision)

Narrator, Chorus, Orchestra

From the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness
over the whole land, and Jesus cried out in a loud voice:

Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani...

Charles Peguy: *The Everlasting Cry*, Strophe V

Oratorio Bass and Orchestra

Cry ringing at the heart of all humanity
O culminating, everlasting cry,
Cry as if God himself had sinned like us,
As if God himself had despaired . . .

TABLEAU V: Apocalypse-Palm Sunday

From Samuel Beckett: *Waiting for Godot*
Two Actors

VLADIMIR: Where was I . . . How's your foot?

ESTRAGON: Swelling visibly.

VLADIMIR: Ah yes, the two thieves. Do you remember the story?

ESTRAGON: No.

VLADIMIR: It'll pass the time. (*Pause.*)

Two thieves, crucified at the same time as our Saviour. One--

ESTRAGON: Our what?

VLADIMIR: Our Saviour. Two thieves., One is supposed to have been saved and the other . . . (*he searches for the contrary of saved*) . . . damned.

ESTRAGON: Saved from what?'

VLADIMIR: Hell.

ESTRAGON: I'm going.

(*He does not move.*)

VLADIMIR: And yet . . . (*pause*) . . .

how is it--this is not boring you I hope--how is it that of the four Evangelists only one speaks of a thief being saved. The four of them were there--or thereabouts--and only one speaks of a thief being saved. (*Pause*) Come on, Gogo, return the ball, can't you, once in a way?

ESTRAGON: (*with exaggerated enthusiasm*). I find this really most extraordinarily interesting.

VLADIMIR: One out of four. Of the other three two don't mention any

thieves at all and the third says that both of them abused him.

ESTRAGON: Who?

VLADIMIR: What?

ESTRAGON: What's all this about? Abused who?

VLADIMIR: The Saviour.

ESTRAGON: Why?

VLADIMIR:

Because he wouldn't save them.

ESTRAGON: From hell?

VLADIMIR: Imbecile! From death.

ESTRAGON: I thought you said hell.

VLADIMIR: From death, from death.

ESTRAGON: Well what of it?

VLADIMIR: Then the two of them must have been damned.

ESTRAGON: And why not?

VLADIMIR: But one of the four says that one of the two was saved.

ESTRAGON: Well? They don't agree and that's all there is to it.

VLADIMIR: But all four where there.

And only one speaks of a thief being saved. Why believe him rather than the others?

ESTRAGON: Who believes him?

VLADIMIR: Everybody. It's the only version they know.

ESTRAGON:

People are bloody ignorant apes

The Good Thief

Chamber Soloists and String Quintet

The other robber said to Jesus:

Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

And Jesus said to him:

Amen I say to you,

this day you shall be with me in Paradise.

Apocalypse

Chorus and Orchestra

And I saw in the midst of the throne of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, and he came and took the scroll out of the right hand of him who sat upon the throne.

And I beheld, and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures and the elders, and the number of them was thousands, saying with a loud voice,

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and divinity
and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and blessing."

And every creature that is in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and such as are on the sea, and all that are in them, I heard them all saying,

"To him who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb,
blessing and honor and glory and dominion,
forever and ever."

Jean de le Ceppède: *Theorème Spirituel*

Oratorio Soprano, Piccolo, Piano, Glockenspiel and Marimba

Great Sun, flame of Christ,
You have passed through four houses of the Zodiac:
Through Virgo, where Christ was born of flesh
From His own soul, matched and matchless;
Through the Waterbearer, when He sorrowed
in tears, blameless; through the Bull,
When He offered His body on the gallows.
Now he enters the house of the Lion
With a mane of light whose beams
Enflame the hemispheres, and His voice
Is the shaking thunder, the roar from the grave
That brings the world of beasts to the yoke
Of His redemption.

(During the Ceppède, the chant choir, and chorus if space permits, prepare a Palm Sunday procession, left to right)

Palm Sunday Procession

Oratorio Soloists, Chorus, Chant Choir, and Orchestra

Osanna filio David! benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.

Rex Israel: Osanna in excelsis.

(Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord. O King of Israel: Hosanna in the highest.)

Pueri Hebraeorum portantes ramos olivarum,

obviaverunt Domino, clamantes et dicentes:

Hosanna in excelsis.

(The Hebrew children bearing branches of olive, went forth to meet the Lord, crying out, and saying: Hosanna in the highest!)

Giles Fletcher: *It Was But Now*

Oratorio Soloists and Orchestra

It was but now their sounding clamours sung,

Blessed is he, that comes from the most high,

And all the mountains with Hosanna rung,

And now, away with him, away they cry,

And nothing can be heard but crucify:

 It was but now, the crown itself they save,

 And golden name of king unto him gave

And now, no king, but only Caesar, they will have:

It was but now they gathered blooming May,

And of his arms disrob'd the branching tree,

To strew with boughs, and blossoms all thy way,

And now, the branchless trunk a cross for thee,

And May, dismayed, thy coronet must be:

 It was but now they were so kind, to throw

 Their own best garments, where thy feet should go,

And now, thyself they strip, and bleeding wounds they show.

*From Kurt Vonnegut: **Slaughterhouse Five** (excerpt 5)*

Actor, String Quintet, and Orchestra

Billy Pilgrim had stopped in the forest. He was leaning against a tree with his eyes closed. His head was tilted back and his nostrils were flaring. He was like a poet in the Parthenon.

This was when Billy first came unstuck in time. His attention began to swing grandly through the full arc of his life, passing into death, which was violet light. There wasn't anybody else there, or any thing. There was just violet light - and a hum.

*Jean-Paul Sartre: **The Wall** (excerpt 3)*

Actor, Violin, Piano, Orchestra

In the state I was in, if someone had come and told me I could go home quietly, that they would leave me my life whole, it would have left me cold: several hours or several years of waiting is all the same when you have lost the illusion of being eternal.

Everything that came from my body was all cockeyed. Most of the time it was quiet and I felt no more than a sort of weight, a filthy presence against me;

I had the impression of being tied to an enormous vermin.

Etheridge Knight: *He Died in Detroit*

Pop Singers and Jazz Ensemble

Dead. He died in Detroit, his beard
was filled with lice; his halo glowed
and his white robe flowed magnificently
over the charred beams and splintered glass;
his stern blue eyes were rimmed with red,
and full of reproach; and the stench: roasted rats
and fat baby rumps swept up his nose that
had lost its arch of triumph. He died outraged,
and indecently, shouting impieties and betrayals.
and he arose out of his own ashes. Stripped.
A faggot in steel boots.

On Murdering God from Friederich Nietzsche: **The Merry Science**

Four Actors and Two Jazz Saxes

Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place, and cried incessantly, "I seek God! I seek God!" "Why, did he get lost?" "Did he lose his way like a child?" "Is he in hiding?" "Is he afraid of us?" "Has he gone on a voyage?"

(The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his glances.)

"Whither is God? I shall tell you. We have killed him - you and I. All of us are his murderers. What was the holiest and most powerful of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives. Who will wipe this blood off us?

What water is there for us to clean ourselves?

"God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.

"How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What did we do when we unchained this earth from its sun?

Are we not plunging through an infinite nothing?

Can we not feel the breath of empty space?

Hasn't it become colder? Isn't night and more night coming on all the while?

Do we smell anything yet of God's decomposition?"

Charles Peguy: *The Everlasting Cry*, Strophe VI

Oratorio Bass, Narrator, and Orchestra

Louder than the two thieves hanging beside him,
who howled at death like famished dogs,
the thieves howled but a human howl,
the thieves howled a cry of human death.

He alone uttered
the everlasting cry.

Narrator:

From the sixth hour
until the ninth hour
there was darkness
over the whole land...

The Cry (final vision)

Narrator, Chorus, Orchestra

Chorus: From the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness
over the whole land,

Narrator: and Jesus cried out in a loud voice:

Chorus: **Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani...**

Narrator: And gave up his spirit.

Chorus: Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.

From Sheldon Tannenbaum: My Daughter on Good Friday

Chamber Tenor, Guitar, Piano, and Vibraphone

Suddenly it must have seemed, in the hovering and still day,
Someone impressive had died. Our next door neighbors had gone away

On their yearly visit, and she swung on their little girl's swing,
But let her swinging die down to stillness.

As for the death, it was long, long ago; so long, it seems, that
We are not really sure it was, nor is it real as Rachel's ribboned hat

Blowing back over the landscape, that's ferny with the billion times
Of birth and death, death and birth, now, as Rachel climbs.

EPILOG

Easter Vigil Proclamation

All Performing Forces

(During the Tannenbaum setting, all the singers, soloists, chorus, chant choir, and actors prepare for a candlelight procession, right to left)

Easter Proclamation: All Singers and Full Ensemble

Chant leader:

Rejoice, heavenly powers! Sing, choirs
of angels! Exult, all creation around
God's throne! Jesus Christ, our King,
is risen! Sound the trumpet of salvation.

Genesis: Narrator:

In the beginning God created
the heavens and the earth.

John I: Actors (in turn) - Actor 1:

In the beginning was the
Word, and the Word was with
God, and the Word was God.

Chant Leader:

Rejoice, O earth in shining splendor,
radiant in the brightness of your King.
Christ has conquered! Glory fills you!
Darkness vanishes forever!

Narrator:

God said, "Let there be light,"
and there was light.

Actor 2:

In him was life,
and the life was the light of men.

Chamber soloists:

This is our passover feast,
when Christ, the true lamb, is slain,
whose blood consecrates the homes of all believers.

Narrator:

And God said, Let us create
man in our image and likeness.

Actor 3:

And the light shines
in the darkness, and the darkness
grasped it not.

Pop soloists:

O happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam, which gained for us
so great a Redeemer!

Narrator:

And God created man in his image.
In the image of God he created them male and female.

Actor 4:

It was the true light that enlightens every
one who comes into the world.

Oratorio soloists:

Night truly blessed
when heaven is wedded to earth
and man is reconciled with God.

Narrator:

The Lord formed man out of the
dust of the ground.

Actor 1:

And the Word was made flesh
and dwelt among us.

Chant Leader:

Therefore, heavenly Father,
Accept this Easter candle,
a flame divided but undimmed,
a pillar of fire
that glows to the honor of God.

Narrator:

And God breathed into his nostrils
the breath of life,

Actor 2:

And we saw his glory,
glory as of the only-begotten of the Father

Chorus:

Let it mingle with the lights of heaven
and continue bravely burning
to dispel the darkness of this night.

Narrator:

and man became a living being.

All Actors:

full of grace and of truth.

Children's Choir:

May the Morning Star which never sets
find this flame still burning:
Christ, that Morning Star,
who came back from the dead, and shed
his peaceful light on all mankind,

Chant leader:

your Son who lives and reigns forever and ever.

All: Amen.

(the vocal forces have by now spread throughout the theatre, and sustain the pitch A from the "Amen" during the following Arioso)

From *The Return* from Ronald Duncan: Judas

Chamber Baritone and Woodwind Quintet with electric bass and drumset; All others sustain A pedal-tone.

They covered His body with linen
Then placed it in a tomb.
His women wept. And they
Who'd followed Him with more hopes than understanding
Immediately began to shift for themselves
And as they walked away, the seed started to germinate.
Christ began to live.

END