ZENOBIA EDITIONS

# The Passion of Mary

*A dramatic meditation*
*for narrator, choir and organ*



*Words and music by*

## Rupert Damerell

*Information for Organists and Choir Directors*

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## The work

### The Passion through a mother's eyes

Mary is one of the most familiar figures in the Christian story. Yet the Gospel accounts leave largely unspoken a simple question:

*What did these events feel like to his mother?*

*The Passion of Mary* grows from that question. A dramatic meditation for narrator, choir and organ, it follows Holy Week from Palm Sunday to the final scene of the Deposition through Mary's imagined voice.

At first, she is far from the events themselves. News reaches her through conversations, rumours and fragments: crowds in Jerusalem, a disturbance in the Temple, an anointing at Bethany, a supper in a borrowed room.

Gradually the distance closes.

By Good Friday, no one has anything left to tell her.

She can see.

## Words music and silence

### A familiar story experienced from within

Mary remembers the child while watching the man. The events of Holy Week awaken memories of the boy in the Temple, a wedding at Cana and words she has carried for years without fully understanding them.

The extraordinary is encountered through ordinary things: waiting for news, listening for a knock, remembering a sleeping child, wanting to bring water to someone who is thirsty.

The three performing forces each have a distinct role.

The narrator speaks as Mary. The choir voices sacred texts and, at Calvary, the traditional Seven Last Words of Christ. The organ prepares, interrupts and extends the drama, entering places where speech is no longer enough.

Rooted in the Gospel narratives and the Christian tradition of contemplating the Passion through Mary, the work is a meditation rather than a historical reconstruction.

It does not proceed to Easter. Its final scene, the Deposition at the foot of the cross, leaves Mary with her son's body.

## The organist

### The organ as a dramatic voice

The organ has a central role in *The Passion of Mary*. Alongside the spoken narrative and choral music, it creates its own dramatic world: celebration, memory, unease, waiting, violence and stillness.

Each organ meditation has a title and a defined relationship to the surrounding text. These provide a dramatic framework within which the organist has considerable creative freedom.

The passages may be realised through improvisation, prepared music, or a combination of both, shaped by the instrument, the building's acoustics and the performer's own musical language.

### From Hosanna to the torn veil

The opening grows from the Gregorian *Hosanna filii David*. It begins as genuine celebration; only after Mary has spoken does the familiar chant acquire a more uncertain character.

Later meditations inhabit different spaces: the remembered Temple in His Father's House; beauty and the intimation of burial in The Perfume; suspended time in The Waiting; burden and movement in The Weight of the Wood.

After Christ's death and the *Stabat Mater*, The Torn Veil moves from the violence of The Earthquake to the reduced stillness of The Centurion, preparing the final Deposition.

The length of these meditations helps determine the overall duration of approximately 60–90 minutes. The dramatic structure remains fixed, but each performance can take its own musical shape.

## The choir

### A distinct voice within the drama

The choir brings a different perspective. While Mary speaks from her immediate experience, the choir voices sacred texts that reach beyond her private thoughts.

Its interventions are concentrated at key dramatic moments, giving each entry particular weight. At Calvary, the relationship becomes most direct: the choir speaks Christ's words, and Mary responds to what she hears.

### The Seven Last Words

The traditional Seven Last Words are sung principally in the Greek of the Gospels. The cry Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani retains the Semitic form preserved in Matthew's account.

Greek text, transliteration and practical pronunciation guidance are provided in the performing edition.

After the final Word and a silence, the choir sings verses from the *Stabat Mater*. The work closes with the invocation:

*Salve, Radix. Salve, Porta. Salve, Maria.*

### Flexible vocal forces

The choral writing is set as SATB and may be performed by an experienced quartet, SATB or AATB, a small vocal ensemble, a chamber choir or a larger amateur choir.

The choir does not sing continuously. Spoken passages and organ meditations frame its contributions, allowing a relatively small body of singers to make a substantial musical and dramatic contribution.

## The narrator

### Mary's voice carries the story

The narrator is the dramatic centre of *The Passion of Mary*. Through her voice, the audience experiences the movement from Palm Sunday's distant celebrations to the physical intimacy of the Deposition.

The role may be taken by a professional actress, a gifted local performer or an experienced reader. It calls for clear, natural speech, a feeling for pace and silence, and the ability to let emotion develop without forcing it.

### From hearing to witnessing

Mary begins almost conversationally. She hears news, questions what she is told and remembers moments from her son's childhood. There is warmth, occasional humour and the familiar frustration of listening to people who think they know everything.

As the week unfolds, words gather significance: King, Temple, hour, burial. By the road to Calvary, those words fall away. What remains is her son.

At the Deposition, grief is expressed through small acts of care: wiping his face, moving hair from his forehead, holding a hand that no longer responds.

### A role shaped by listening

The narrator works closely with choir and organ. Musical entries, pauses and silence are part of the dramatic exchange; listening matters as much as speaking.

There is no requirement to act out the events of the Passion. The role's power lies in directness and restraint, allowing the audience to encounter Mary as a mother living through events she cannot yet fully understand.

## The dramatic journey

### Nine scenes through Holy Week

**1 · Palm Sunday**
News of celebration. The troubling word: King.

**2 · Monday: The Temple**
The child she remembers. The man who challenges.

**3 · John and Martha**
Perfume, generosity and the word burial.

**4 · Wednesday: No News**
The strain of waiting.

**5 · The Dinner**
Bread, wine and an approaching hour.

**6 · Pilate**
Mary sees her son. The crowd demands his death.

**7 · The Road**
A mother follows.

**8 · Calvary**
Christ's words. Mary's responses.

**9 · The Deposition**
His body returns to her arms.

## Publication and performance

### Bringing the work to your church

*The Passion of Mary* offers organists and choir directors the opportunity to shape a substantial Holy Week event around the musicians and performers available to them.

One narrator, SATB choir and organ provide the performing forces. No scenery, costumes or conventional staging are required. The building, its acoustics and the relationship between speech, music and silence create the dramatic setting.

The work lasts approximately 60–90 minutes, depending principally on the length of the organ meditations. It is particularly suited to Friday of Sorrows, the final days of Lent and Holy Week concert or devotional programmes.

### Performing edition available from January 2027

The complete performing edition will be published by Zenobia Editions, Madrid.

Performing organisations purchase the required published copies. No separate performance fee is charged by the composer or publisher. Any applicable performing-rights reporting and payments are handled through the appropriate local collecting society.

### Further information and performing materials

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Selected sample pages from the performing edition follow.

# 1. Palm Sunday

**ORGAN · HOSANNA**

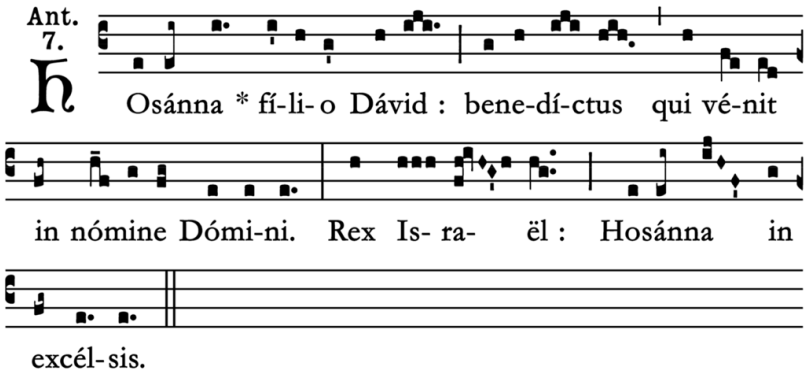
*Before Mary speaks, the music leads us into Jerusalem. The city receives Jesus with branches, cloaks and voices. The Gregorian chant* **Hosanna filii David** *begins as a public acclamation, bringing celebration, hope and supplication together in a single word.*

*Hosanna expresses joy, but it is also a plea: save us. Those who acclaim Jesus place their hopes in him, although each may imagine differently the salvation they expect to receive.*

*For now, the music neither judges those hopes nor anticipates their outcome. It remains within the brightness and movement of the entry into Jerusalem.*

*The chant should be presented clearly enough to remain in the memory. It will return later, after Mary has heard beneath the celebration something that the crowd cannot yet perceive. Its transformation can be understood only if it has first been received sincerely.*

*At this first appearance, the Hosanna does not yet contain a deliberate threat. The unease belongs to what Mary will say afterwards. The music opens the door to the joy of the crowd, allowing the acclamation to be genuine before the same word begins to reveal other possibilities.*




They say the whole city is out.

Jerusalem.

As if Jerusalem had nothing better to do
than run into the streets
because a man comes riding through the gate.

A donkey, they tell me.

Of course.

Not a horse.
Not a cart.
Not even on foot,
where perhaps he might pass
as one more among thousands.

A donkey.

He knows what he is doing.

Branches thrown before him,
cloaks in the road,
children running beside him,
everyone shouting

Hosanna!

The man who brings the news
can hardly keep still.

“You should have seen it”, he says.

I look at him.

No.

Perhaps better not to.

He tells me they are laughing,
singing,
calling from the windows.

People who do not know him
shouting his name

## 7. The Road.

The crowd moves
and I move with it.

There is no choosing now.

People press from behind.

Someone shouts.

Someone laughs.

Someone pushes past me
to see better.

I lose sight of John
for a moment.

Then I see him again.

And then I see Jesus.

At first
I do not recognise him.

The cross hides part of his body.

He is bent beneath it.

His face is swollen.

There is blood
running from his forehead
into his eyes.

More blood at his mouth.

He stumbles.

The crowd surges forward.

I look at John.

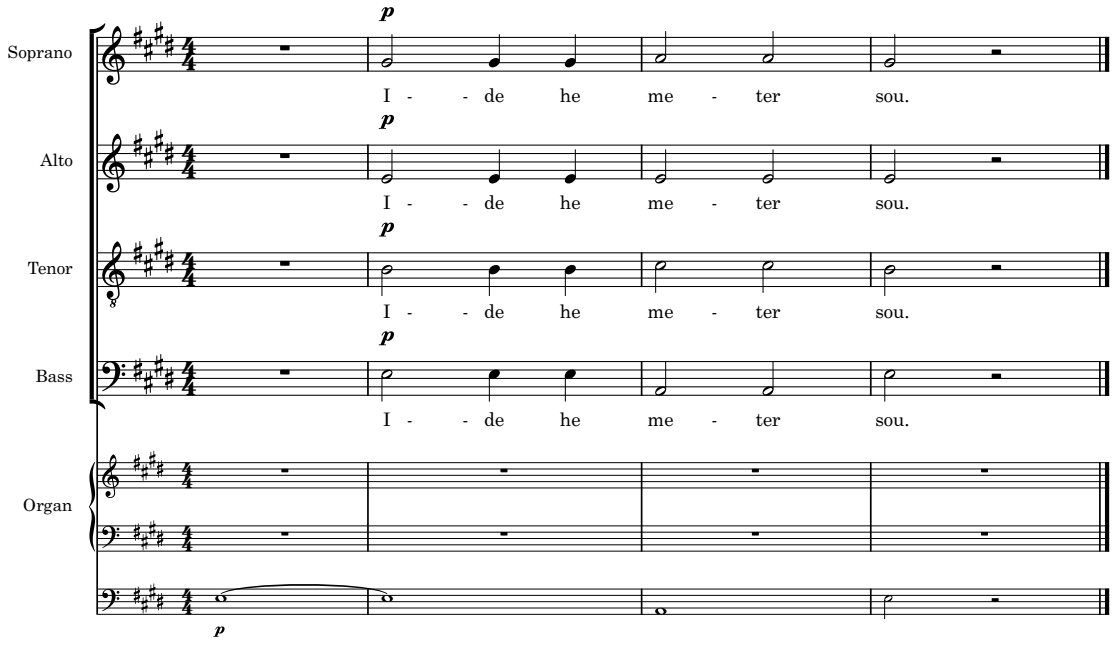
He looks at me.

Neither of us moves.

**CHOIR**

**Ἴδε ἡ μήτηρ σου.**

Ide h! m!t! r sou.




John's face changes.

Only slightly.

But I see it.

All these years
he has come and gone.

News.

Messages.

Where Jesus is.

What he has done.

What he has said.

John tells me, as usual.

And now this.

I want to say no.

Not because I do not love him.

Not because I do not trust him.

Because I know what these words mean.

They mean Jesus is leaving me.

I look up again.

He has closed his eyes.

The light changes.

Or perhaps I imagine it.

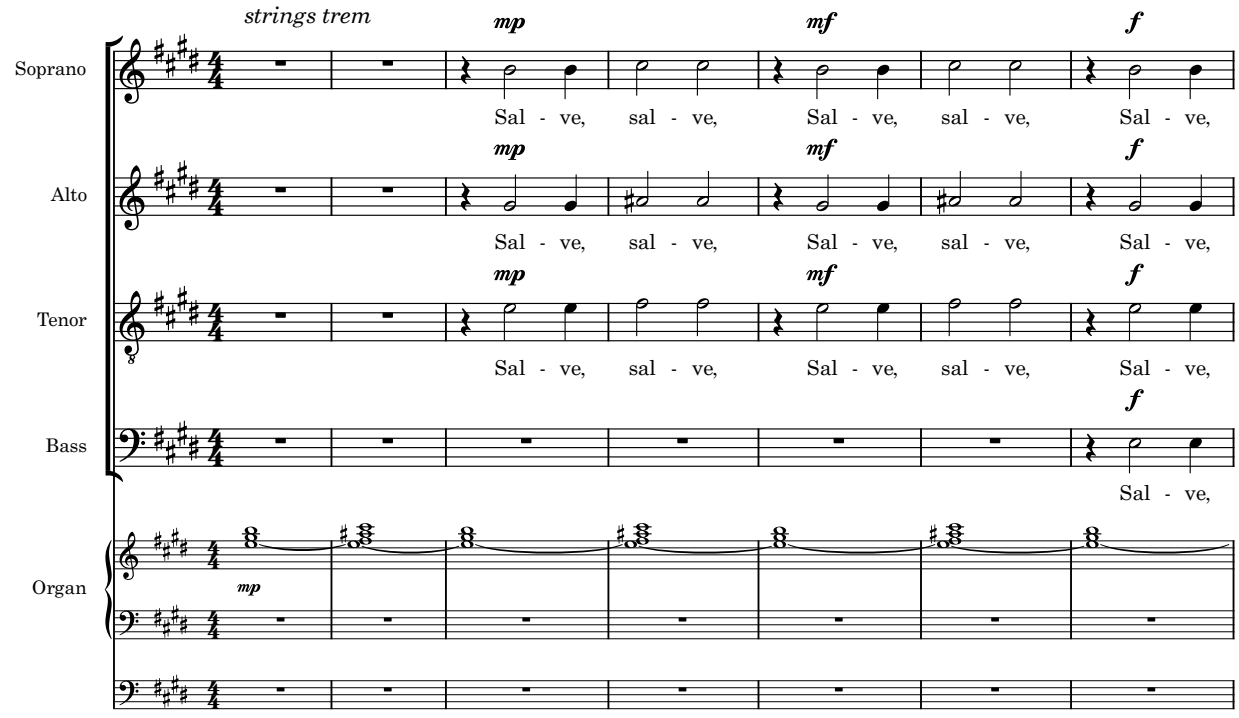
Time changes here.

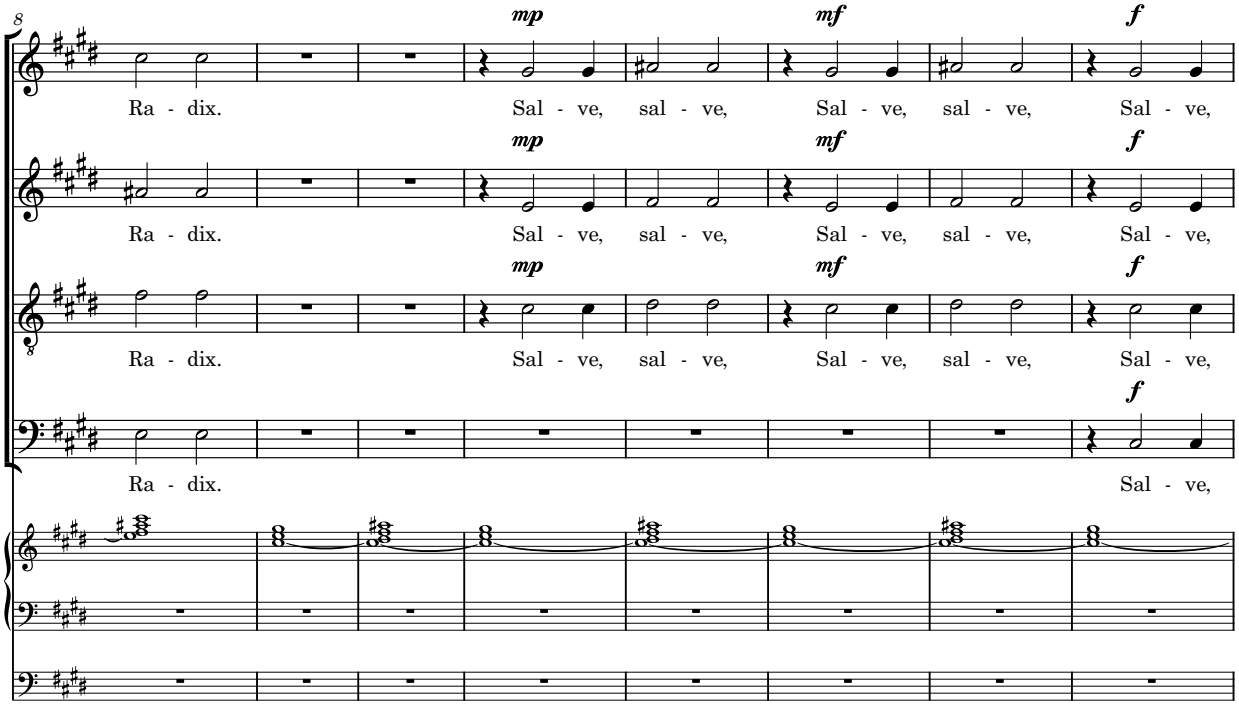
Minutes stretch.

Then disappear.

People who had been shouting
are quieter now.

Some have gone.


strings trem
Soprano
Alto
Tenor
Bass
Organ
mp
mf
f
Sal - ve, sal - ve, Sal - ve, sal - ve, Sal - ve,


Ra - dix.
Sal - ve, sal - ve, Sal - ve, sal - ve, Sal - ve,
mp
mf
f

# The Passion of Mary

For enquiries, performing materials
and information about programming the work

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