

## Cantate 20

The Stations of the Cross may be conducted personally by the faithful, making their way from one station to another and saying the prayers, or by having an officiating celebrant move from cross to cross while the faithful make the responses. The stations themselves must consist of, at the very least, fourteen wooden crosses, pictures alone do not suffice, and they must be blessed by someone with the authority to erect stations.

In the Roman Catholic Church, [Pope John Paul II](#) led an annual public prayer of the Stations of the Cross at the Roman [Colosseum](#) on Good Friday. Originally, the Pope himself carried the cross from station to station, but in his last years when age and infirmity limited his strength, John Paul presided over the celebration from a stage on the [Palatine Hill](#), while others carried the cross. Just days prior to his death in 2005, Pope John Paul II observed the Stations of the Cross from his private chapel. Each year a different person is invited to write the meditation texts for the Stations. Past composers of the Papal Stations include several non-Catholics. The Pope himself wrote the texts for the [Great Jubilee](#) in 2000 and used the traditional Stations.

The celebration of the Stations of the Cross is especially common on the Fridays of Lent, especially Good Friday. Community celebrations are usually accompanied by various songs and prayers. Particularly common as musical accompaniment is the [Stabat Mater](#). The Stations are celebrated each Friday during Lent at 5:30 at St. Francis Xavier Cathedral here in Alexandria.

**Franz Liszt** was a [Hungarian composer](#), [virtuoso pianist](#) and teacher. He was also the father-in-law of [Richard Wagner](#). In 1865 he became an [abbot](#) in the [Roman Catholic Church](#).

Liszt became renowned throughout Europe during the 19th century for his great skill as a performer. He was said by his contemporaries to have been the most technically advanced pianists of his age and perhaps the greatest pianist of all time. He was also an important and influential composer, a notable piano teacher, a conductor who contributed significantly to the modern development of the art, and a benefactor to other composers and performers, notably [Richard Wagner](#), [Hector Berlioz](#), [Camille Saint-Saëns](#), [Edvard Grieg](#) and [Alexander Borodin](#).

As a composer, Liszt was one of the most prominent representatives of the "[Neudeutsche Schule](#)" ("New German School"). He left behind a huge and diverse body of work, in which he influenced his forward-looking contemporaries and anticipated some 20th-century ideas and trends. Some of his most notable contributions were the invention of the [symphonic poem](#), developing the concept of [thematic transformation](#) as part of his experiments in [musical form](#) and making radical departures in [harmony](#). You will hear a bit of this in today's program.

Liszt's setting of the *Via crucis*, the fourteen Stations of the Cross, is without parallel in the choral repertoire. Written in 1878, it was a work that had occupied his mind for some years, and which he finally committed to paper in the romantic surroundings of the Villa d'Este in Tivoli, outside Rome.

There is much that is experimental in the music, and certainly it stretched the limits of tonality at the time. In terms of the text, he includes a wide variety of sources, including a plainsong hymn, the *Stabat Mater* sequence and two Lutheran chorales, *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden* and *O traurigkeit, o herzeleid*.

To a great extent this work needs to be seen in the light of the religious culture of Liszt's time. The stations of the Cross are rooted in popular religion, and probably date from the fourteenth century. It is highly likely that they derived from pilgrimages to the Holy Land and the processions associated with them. By 1600 in Germany, fourteen stations had become the established number of stopping places. While they have been depicted in many carvings or other visual art, there is little other representation of them in music apart from in some hymns. Liszt envisaged his settings being used, perhaps accompanied by harmonium, in the Good Friday devotions that took place in the Coliseum in Rome. In fact the work was not performed until 1929, and not published until 1936, the fiftieth anniversary of his death.

Liszt divides the setting between movements that are for organ or piano only, some that are with either instrument, but with baritone solo added, and the plainsong and chorale settings for full choir. The three cries of *Jesus cadit*, in Stations 3, 7, and 9 sung by male chorus, form the pivotal points of the first part of the work, which opens with an introduction that is the plainsong hymn, *Vexilla Regis*. The climax is reached with the setting of *O traurigkeit, o herzeleid* at the conclusion of Station 12.

The French conductor, Laurence Equilbey, studied choral conducting principally with Swedish maestro [Eric Ericson](#). She also trained at the Paris and Vienna Music Conservatories, as well as under [Nikolaus Harnoncourt](#) with the [Arnold Schoenberg Choir](#).

In 1991, Equilbey founded the [Accentus Chamber Choir](#), to perform modern and traditional a capella choir music, but especially music since 1800.

Naïve's Recording Studios' Compact Disc of *Liszt's: Via Crucis* features pianist Brigitte Engerer and the chorus Accentus under Laurence Equilbey.. Recordings of "Via Crucis" are not common, and this one is certainly welcome. We will hear now, Franz Liszt's "Via Crucis" beginning with the hymn *Vexilla Regis* translated, *Abroad the royal banner fly*.

### Track 1 (4:00) Vexilla Regis

Vexilla regis prodeunt,  
Fulget crucis mysterium  
Qua vita mortem pertulit  
Et morte vitam protulit  
Impleta sunt quae concinit

Abroad the royal banners fly  
now shines the cross's mystery  
upon it Life did death endure.  
and yet by death did life procure  
That which the prophet King of old

David fideli carmine  
Dicendo nationibus  
Regnavit a lingo Deus. Amen.

O crux, ave spes unica  
Hoc passionis tempore  
Piis adauge gratiam  
Reisque dele criminal. Amen

hath in mysterious verse foretold  
is now accomplished while we see  
God ruling nations from a tree.

Hail Cross of hopes the most sublime.  
now in the mournful passion time  
improve religious souls in grace  
the sins of criminals efface.

### **Track 2 (1:03) Station 1: Jesus is condemned to death**

Innocens ego sum a sanguine justi hujus      I am innocent of the blood of this just man

### **Track 3 (1:53) Station 2: Jesus takes up his cross**

Ave, ave crux!

Hail, hail, O Cross!

### **Track 4 (1:11) Station 3: Jesus falls the first time**

Jesus, cadit  
Stabat Mater dolorosa  
Juxta crucem lacrymosa  
Dum pendebat filiius

Jesus falls.  
At the cross her station keeping  
stood the mournful mother weeping  
close to Jesus to the last.

### **Track 5 (1:35) Station 4: Jesus meets his holy mother (piano only)**

### **Track 6 (2:48) Station 5: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the cross (piano only)**

### **Track 7 (2:36) Station 6: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus**

O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden,  
voll Schmerz und voller Hohn!  
O Haupt, zum Spott gebunden  
mit einer Dornenkron!  
O Haupt, sonst schön gezieret  
mit höchster Her und Zier,  
jetzt aber hoch beschimpfet  
gegrüßet seist du mir!

O sacred head sore wounded,  
defiled and put to scorn!  
O Kingly Head surrounded  
with mocking crown of thorn!  
What sorrow mars Thy grandeur?  
Can death Thy bloom deflower?  
O countenance whose splendour  
the hosts in heaven adore!

### **Track 8 (1:13) Station 7: Jesus falls the second time**

Jesus cadit  
Stabat mater dolorosa  
juxta crucem lacrymosa,  
dum pendebat filiius.

Jesus falls.  
At the Cross her station keeping.  
stood the mournful Mother weeping.  
close to Jesus to the last.

**Track 9 (2:20) Station 8: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem**

Nolite flere super me, sed super vos ipsas flete et super filios vestros.	(Daughters of Jerusalem,) weep not over me; but weep for yourselves and for your children.
---	--

**Track 10 (1:14) Station 9: Jesus falls the third time**

Jesus cadit.	Jesus falls.
Stabat Mater dolorosa juxta crucem lacrymosa. dum pendebat Filius	At the Cross her station keeping. stood the mournful Mother weeping close to Jesus to the last.

**Track 11 (1:22) Station 10: Jesus is stripped of his garments (piano only)**

**Track 12 (:35) Station 11: Jesus is nailed to the cross**

Crucifige!	Crucify him!
------------	--------------

**Track 13 (6:50) Station 12: Jesus dies on the cross**

Eli, Eli, lama Sabacthani? In manus tuas commendo spiritum meum. Consummatum est	My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? into Thy hands I commend my spirit. It is finished.
O Traurigkeit, o Herzeleid ist das nicht zu beklagen? Gott des Vaters einigs Kind wird ins Grab getragen O Traurigkeit, o Herzeleid.	O darkest woe! Ye tears, forth flow! Has earth so sad a wonder? To the Father's only Son Now lies buried yonder. O darkest woe! Ye tears, forth flow!

**Track 14 (3:09) Station 13: Jesus is taken down from the cross (piano only)**

**Track 15 (4:47) Station 14: Jesus is laid in the tomb**

Ave crux, spes unica, mundi salus et gloria, auge piis justitiam, reisque dona eniam! Ave crux!	Hail, O Cross our only hope, in this time of suffering. grant justice to the faithful. and mercy to those awaiting judgement. Hail, O Cross!
---	--

To conclude today's program, we will hear the last two settings of Marcel Dupre's Stations of the Cross written for organ solo. The extraordinary sequence of poems by Paul Claudel, "The Stations of the Cross" is a highly personal reflection on Christ's Passion as documented in the Bible. Dupre's musical

commentary on these poems is his magnum opus which he would play throughout the rest of his life including annually during Lent at St. Sulpice, Paris, where he was organist. Listen as Stephen Tharp plays these last two stations on the organ at St. Supice from the JAV Recordings CD.

**Track 16 (3:57) Station 13: The body of Jesus is taken from the Cross and laid in Mary's bosom.**

**Track 17 (7:39) Station 14: The body of Jesus is laid in the tomb.**