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The Prince of Peace

John David Frizzell

I began working on *The Prince of Peace* when I came to The University of Southern Mississippi in the fall of 2001. Before I began any composing, I read the first four books of the New Testament, which deal with the life of Jesus. I wrote down many of the verses I found to be important and began organizing a structure for a large-scale orchestral and choral work. I planned the work to be shorter in duration than most oratorios, such as Handel's *Messiah*. The short time the listener spends with the piece should have a profound impact and leave him or her wanting more, just as I long to know more about Jesus.

The main impetus for the composition of this work involved the hardships and joys of my own life. Having grown up away from church, I did not have the biblical teachings of Jesus implanted in my mind when I was a child. However, I always felt an innate sense that something was missing until I became a Christian when I was 16. The more I learned about Jesus and his life and ideas, the more I became fascinated and awestruck by Him.

"And He was Crucified" is an *a cappella* choral selection from a larger musical work written for

choir, orchestra, and handbell ensemble. This work, *The Prince of Peace*, is similar to the liturgical oratorios of the 17th and 18th centuries in that it tells

"The closing piece is called *You Are The Christ* and pulls themes from the first choral number. The timpani resonate, the strings soar, the handbells chime like a carillon, and the choir extols God's glory."

the story of Jesus of Nazareth based on the New Testament gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. It differs in its poignant emotional perspective of the Christian Holy Week from The Last Supper to The Betrayal, The Crucifixion to the Resurrection ranging from utter dismay to ultimate joy from the point of view of the disciples of Jesus.

The work begins on Thursday of what we now call the Holy Week. The orchestra and handbells open the whole piece with awe and wonder in the prelude. The first choral selection mirrors this "awe and wonder" with "Who Do You Say That I Am."

The second song is "The Last Supper," which utilizes the remarkable timbre of the woodwind instrument family. Here, in a symbolic gesture, the orchestra parts double much of the choir, as Jesus became one with his disciples when He broke the bread as his body and poured the wine as his blood.

At this point comes the first Latin chant, which gives this section a certain indescribable sense of purity and humility. The chant is the same the whole way through the work, "facut portem Christi mortem," which translates to "grant that I may bear the death of Christ," That Latin



Frizzell edits a composition in Marsh Auditorium.

excerpt comes from the text of *Stabat Mater dolorosa*, in English, "the pained mother stood." This sequence, often attributed to Jacopone da Todi, was adopted in the Roman Catholic rite in 1927, and assigned to the Feast of the Seven Dolours. The chant occurs twice in the whole work, first as a foreboding omen and then as a mournful lament and prayer.

At the Last Supper, Jesus tells his apostles that one of them will deceive Him. They all look around at each other with disbelief and suspicion. Who could it be? Who would betray their Lord? "The Betrayal" tells the story of Judas, who turns Jesus in to the Roman authorities. This part of the work is dark and haunting. The double basses grumble and the bass drum rattles. The choir sings in *sotto voce* (almost a whisper) for much of the song. Jesus' prediction was true.

"And He Was Crucified" occurs at this point in the work after Judas betrays Jesus. Jesus is being mocked, spit upon, nailed to the cross, and clinging to his last breaths at the penultimate moment of his life. Here, the disciples express their grievances and lamentations as their betrayed savior is wrongly put to death. The choir screams in disbelief in this *a cappella* section, offering a feeling of intimacy and raw emotion that must have been going through the disciples at the time.

"Crucifixus" occurs as Jesus hangs from the cross. Dissonant cries come from all sections of the orchestra, and the choir's chanting becomes louder and louder, until a soloist portraying Jesus exclaims, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" These are the actual Hebrew words for "My God, why

have you forsaken me?" as mentioned in Mark 15:34. *Crucifixus* contains aleatoric aspects; here, the chanting of the choir will be different in every performance of the piece because it is determined by chance.

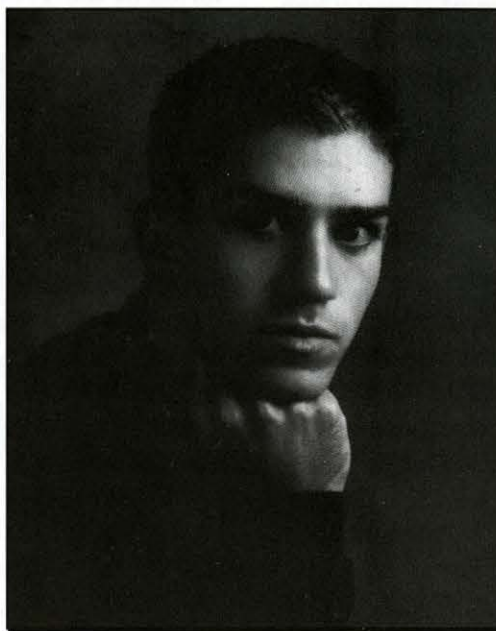
After that comes the last chant, this time with the whole choir, in the prayer of "Grant That I May Bear the Death of Christ," which is also the title of the section. Another *a cappella* selection, this simple and lachrymose prayer begins with chant, and then builds into a remembrance of the horrible crucifixion of the disciple's savior. The piece ends with amen in the relative major key, which denotes the assurance and comfort that the disciples find in prayer, even when all

seems to be lost.

"The Resurrection" tells of Jesus' coming back from the dead, saving all believers from their sins, and granting them eternal life. In this piece, the brass section proclaims joy and the choir bellows amazement.

The closing piece is called "You Are The Christ" and pulls themes from the first choral number, responding to "Who Do You Say That I Am." The timpani resonate, the strings soar, the handbells chime like a carillon, and the choir extols God's glory. Thus the piece ends, with majesty, wonder, excitement, and vigor.

The style of this piece is a unique mixture of consonance and dissonance. I utilize 20th century techniques as well as traditional harmonies. *The Prince of Peace* is designed to share this vicarious experience of Holy Week with everyone, including the singers. When writing the work, I sang every line



The author and composer, Frizzell.
Photo by Charles Routh

"I sung every line over and over again to ensure that each part would be very melodic, keeping its relative independence from the other parts while still blending in as a key component of the overall structure."

over and over again to ensure that each part would be very melodic, keeping its relative independence from the other parts while still blending in as a key component of the overall structure.

I have personally gained so much out of writing this piece, as it was my first musical work of this magnitude and size. It has been an extremely rewarding experience for me as both a creative and emotional outlet as well as a compositional venue for practicing new techniques, chords, and ideas. The Holy Week forever changed the disciples and the world. After writing this piece of music, I will never be the same musician or person again. I can only hope that it will have the same effect on its audience. ♦

About the Author

J.D. Frizzell is a sophomore music composition major from Atlanta, Ga. He sings and plays the piano, alto saxophone, and guitar. He serves on the Freshmen Leadership Council, and is a member of the Presbyterian Fellowship, the Southern Chorale, Carillon, and is on the 2002 USM Leadership Committee. Frizzell is a Leadership Scholar with a 4.0 GPA, and was recognized as the Most Outstanding Freshman Male last spring. In addition to all of his activities, Frizzell finds time to enjoy soccer, reading, and French.

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From *The Prince of Peace*
For SATB Choir, Orchestra, and Handbells

And He Was Crucified

♩ = 80

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

p *accel.* *a tempo* *simile*

E'en so they mocked his ho-ly name E'en

T

B

death of our Lord

so they mocked his ho - ly name The King of

so they mocked his ho - ly name The King of

10 *mf*
 S E'en so they nailed Him to the
 A *mf*
 T E'en
 B Kings Je - sus
 Kings Je - sus

15 *p* *mf* *f*
 S hea - vy cross With nail and spear and
 A *p* *mf* *f*
 T hea - vy cross With nail and spear and
 B With nail and spear and
 With nail and spear and

20 *mp*
 S nail and spear and a crown not fit for a King. Oh! the
 A *mp*
 T nail and spear and a crown not fit for a King. Oh! the
 B *mp*
 nail and spear and a crown not fit for a King. Oh! the

ff
 T Ah! how sore His suf-fer-ring!
 B blood of Christ! Ah! how sore His suf-fer-ring!
 blood of Christ! Ah! how sore His suf-fer-ring!
 blood of Christ! Ah! how sore His suf-fer-ring!

30 *f* *pp*

S Ah! how sore His suf - fer - ing! Oh..

A Ah! how sore His suf - fer - ing! Oh..

T Ah! how sore His suf - fer - ing! Oh..

B Ah! how sore His suf - fer - ing! Oh... E'en *mp*

35 *mp*

S E'en so they mocked His ho -

A E'en so they mocked His ho - ly name. E'en

T E'en so they mocked His ho - ly name. E'en so

B so they mocked His

39 *rit.*

S ly name. They mocked His ho - ly name. E'en to our Lord.

A so they mocked E'en so E'en so to our Lord.

T they mocked E'en so E'en so E'en so to our Lord.

B mocked E'en so E'en so E'en to our Lord, our Lord.