

Crucifixion Staging: giving life to the libretto: Some ideas

Including suggestions from Colin, Mo, Peter Mitchell, Charles, Jon and Ed

With inspiration from [Jonathan Miller's interpretation of the St Matthew Passion](#), we suggest giving the spoken words in the libretto enhanced understanding by letting some of the action described be played out. No actions not included in the text are suggested. The possibilities mentioned here are presently for discussion only. Only after we know the size and layout of the choir, and have actually tried out these ideas, would any be proposed for inclusion.

Hagbourne Church could create a virtual stage covering the area below the chancel, in front of the pews, leaving room for the conductor, keyboard and cellist. The narrator could sing from the pulpit when needed, otherwise sitting with the choir at the bottom of the steps. There could be three light "crosses" of about head height. One could be in front of the pulpit stairs, one attached to the lectern, and one at the top of the central aisle mounted on a "sunshade upright". At the start in the Gethsemane garden, the left and right crosses could be disguised as trees by hanging some leaves on them. There could be some flowers. The central cross could not be in place yet, but its base (say a sunshade holder) could be in place aligned with the centre of the aisle about 2' into the "stage". The conductor could be to the left of the stage near the north aisle next to the continuo (keyboard and cello).

Canon Jason could come up and lead with a prayer

1. "And they came to a place named Gethsemane". Jesus could come in from the North with two (non-singing) disciples. Jesus could sing "Sit ye down" from near his cross positions and they could sit down on chairs to the left of the stage. Jesus could pray. The disciples could slowly "fall asleep".

2. "Could ye not watch with me". Jesus could sing from the front glancing at the disciples. The choir could sing the "Jesus, lord Jesus" from the back of the church. This series is repeated.

Page 6: "and they laid their hands upon him." Two (non-singing) soldiers and the singer "High Priest" could come in from the North. They could hold Jesus and take him towards the High Priest. The libretto dialogue could be followed by the Narrator, Jesus and High Priest. Two soldiers could enter and "carry him away" to the North Aisle. Jesus and the "High Priest" could go to the back of the church along the North Aisle. Remove the tree leaves and flowers.

3. The organ plays the Processional to Calvary. The large cross could lie at the back of the church. Jesus could pick it up and slowly lead up the aisle carrying his cross and could be followed by the whole choir in an informal crowd. As they arrive at the top of the nave, Jesus' cross could be taken from him and placed centre stage at the top of the aisle in the cross "base". The whole choir could sing "*Fling Wide*" around the cross. The choir could be across the nave, spread out looking rather randomly, although they could be grouped in parts: Sop, Tenor, Alto, Bass left to right. "How sweet" could be sung by a lady from the choir.

4. "And when they had come", Jesus and the two malefactors could have been standing in front of their crosses. The choir could slowly walk back informally to the open area between the choir stalls revealing just the malefactors and Jesus. The soloist could sing: "They crucified Him". When this is finished, the malefactors could then walk into their stalls followed by Jesus as the choir enters their stalls.

5. "**Cross of Jesus**" is sung by everyone with the choir in the stalls.

6. "He made himself" could be sung in "flash mob" style by a non-choir singer remaining standing after the hymn and singing these words (probably with organ) from a place near the back of the congregation.

7. "King ever glorious" could be sung from the pulpit.

8. "And as Moses" could be sung by the narrator from the lectern. A singer (Moses) could stand to the North of the stage, and Jesus could stand in front of his cross. As the narrator sings "And as Moses lifted up the serpent" he could lift up a large snake. As he sings "Son of man be lifted up" Jesus could lift his hands high.

9. "*God so loved*" is sung by the choir from the stalls. Some silence.

10. "**Holy Jesus**" could be sung by everyone.

11. The narrator sings "Jesus said". The Jesus stands by his cross and could look all around the whole church and choir and sing "Father forgive them". Jesus could sing the first tenor (accompanied by the men of the choir humming). This format could apply cases when Jesus' words are sung.

12. "So thou liftest" sung by two voices (any sex) either side of the central cross

13. "**Jesus the crucified**" could be sung by everyone.

14. "And one of the malefactors". Jesus and the two malefactors could come out and stand in front of their crosses and follow the libretto alternations. The narrator could be in the pulpit. The last line could again be sung by Jesus.

15. "**I adore Thee**" could be sung by everyone

16. "When Jesus saw..." A lady "mother" and a disciple could leave the choir and come to the front, standing to the left and right behind the cross. Jesus could stand in front of his cross looking to each separately and singing "Behold the son" and "Behold thy mother".

"There was darkness" could be arranged.

17. "Is it nothing". Jesus could stand in front of his cross, the whole choir could come out of their stalls in an irregular line and ostentatiously look away from Jesus as they "pass by". Only when they were out would Jesus sing.

18. "*From the throne*" could be sung by the whole choir in the main church

19. "After this" The choir could be standing around Jesus, and a member could offer a sponge of vinegar.

20. "**All for Jesus**" could be sung by everyone, choir still at the front. Silence!

