

# Haymarket *Opera company*



## Oratorio per la settimana santa

Thursday, March 8 & Saturday, March 10, 2018

Chicago Temple & Church of the Atonement | Chicago, Illinois

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## DEAR FRIENDS,

We are thrilled to offer our third annual Lenten Oratorio concerts this week with *Oratorio per la Settimana Santa*, one of the earliest known musical settings of the Passion of Christ. This compact, deeply felt work will surely touch your heart, regardless of your faith.

Our seventh season has been a whirlwind of activity both on stage and behind the scenes. Since giving the modern-day world premiere of Marin Marais' 1696 opera *Ariane et Bachus* (please check our website to read the glowing review in *Opera News*), we have been busily preparing the rest of this season's programming and setting things in motion for 2018/19 and beyond.

The rest of our season is, well, luscious. On March 17, the Haymarket String Quartet will perform three of Haydn's *Opus 20* quartets in a concert at St. Luke's Church in Evanston. Less than two weeks later, on March 30, HSQ will present Haydn's "The Seven Last Words of Christ" at Old Saint Patrick's Church with spoken reflections offered by several intellectual and spiritual leaders. On April 19 at the Arts Club of Chicago we hold our second annual Early Opera Cabaret gala. Last year's event was a blast and we met our fundraising goal, all the while enjoying wine, nibbles, and musical merriment.

In June we return to the Studebaker Theater on Michigan Avenue for Antonio Cesti's lyrical comedy *L'Orontea*. This Venetian sitcom was among the 17th century's blockbuster hits. Our post-season Summer Opera Course will draw young vocal artists from far and wide to study Cavalli's *La Didone*, *Feldenkrais*®, Italian, and baroque gesture.

Thank you for coming to hear this Chicago premiere. Without your generous support we could not offer this unique and compelling programming. Please consider making a gift to HOC today.

—Craig Trompeter, *Artistic Director* and Dave Moss, *Executive Director*



*Haymarket Opera Company enriches the musical community of Chicago and the Midwest with performances of 17th- and 18th-century operas and oratorios using period performance practices. HOC seeks to engage audiences of all ages with passionate performances of familiar as well as forgotten works, staged intimately and guided by close attention to details of the libretti and scores.*

# Oratorio per la settimana santa

(Oratorio for Holy Week)

Attributed to Luigi Rossi (c.1598–1653)

Libretto by Giulio Cesare Raggioli

Edition by Jon C. Peterson

## *Prima Parte*


## *Seconda Parte*

*Pontius Pilate* Mark Haddad

*Demons* Mischa Bouvier, Drew Minter

*Multitude/Demons* Kaitlin Foley, Carrie Henneman  
Shaw, Drew Minter, William Dwyer,  
Mark Haddad

*The Virgin Mary* Carrie Henneman Shaw



## *Un Peccator Pentito* (A Repentant Sinner)

Ensemble

Music by Luigi Rossi

Poetry by Signor Giovanni Lotti

Jeri-Lou Zike and Martin Davids, *violins*


Annalisa Pappano, *lirone*

Alison Attar, *harp*

Deb Fox, *theorbo*

Andrew Rosenblum, *harpsichord*

Craig Trompeter, *bass violin* and *music direction*



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# An Oratorio for Holy Week

BY ROBERT L. KENDRICK, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Whoever may have composed its music, the *Oratorio per la Settimana Santa* (text by Giulio Cesare Raggioli [1601–78]) is a remarkable work dating from the very beginnings of the genre, probably c.1640, in Rome. It comes down to us only as two score volumes in the collection of the Barberini family now in the Vatican Library; there is no printed libretto.

Around 1650, the norms of the Italian-language version of this form (the *oratorio volgare*) were still very much in flux, and today's piece is no exception. Its text begins in *medias res* on Good Friday morning as the crowd (“Turba”) at Pilate’s palace demands the release of Barabbas, and the condemnation of Christ. Raggioli included the Gospel details, including the “blood libel” verse of “His blood be on us” (Matthew 27: 20–25). Jesse Rosenberg’s essay elsewhere in this booklet discusses the long and sordid history of Italian anti-Judaism in music, but, especially in the current climate of hate, we dissociate ourselves from any such slanders that were part of Catholic culture at the time.

We then move to Hell, where first a solo devil and then a chorus (scored ATB, just as were the “Turba” passages) rejoice in Pilate’s condemnation of Christ. This is followed by a larger, five-voice demonic chorus, who conclude the first part with parodic rejoicing at the news. Normally the two parts of oratorios were separated by a sermon, and the second part here moves forward in time to Christ’s death, as a (four-part) demonic group rejoices again, only to be interrupted by Mary’s plangent “You heavens and stars, have pity” (an inversion of the demonic underworld). Although the devils and the Virgin do not address each other directly, they proceed with an anti-lament alternating with a lament, respectively, throughout the rest of the piece. Mary’s extended aria “Tormenti, non più”, is set to a descending tetrachord in the bass, a clear sign of mourning. A solo devil mocks her, but she continues to describe her pain as the devils respond with a “battle” moment (“Così d’empio dolor”). Her final aria leads to the second five-voice chorus in the piece, now in the voice of the faithful, calling all to lament and invoking the power of the Cross (“Piangete, occhi, piangete”).

The most striking feature of this piece, set entirely on Good Friday, is of course the presence of the (non-Biblical) demons. Yet the origins of the piece do suggest reasons for this. Raggioli’s only other known text is an aria for music also transmitted in the manuscripts of the Barberini family, who commissioned much

music, art, and spectacle in Rome during the Papacy of their family member Urban VIII (Maffeo Barberini, r. 1623–44). Certainly the most famed musician in Barberini circles was Luigi Rossi (c.1597–1653), and his activity led the 20th-century scholar Alberto Ghislanzoni to attribute the music of our piece to Rossi. Still, one of the copyists of the score, as the research of Howard Smither, Margaret Murata, and Christian Speck has shown, was the almost equally famous castrato Marc'Antonio Pasqualini (1614–91). Ghislanzoni might also have been guided in his attribution by the many textual passages of “Piangete” (“Weep”) in the Virgin’s laments, something found in Rossi’s cantatas and his 1647 opera *Orfeo*. Still, there is no clear contemporary attribution to Rossi, and more recent scholarship by Alessio Ruffatti has cast doubt on the musical authorship of this and other oratorios often assigned to the composer.

The dramatic structure of the piece does, however, resonate with contemporary Roman culture. The presence of demons in the Barberini opera *Il Sant’Alessio* (1631/34; G. Rospigliosi and S. Landi) is noteworthy. The lamenting Virgin was of course a favorite topic of Passion piety; here we might note her emphasis on the pain inflicted by the Nails and by the Cross, relics of which were on view at the basilica of S. Croce in Gerusalemme (the oratorio was unlikely to have been performed there, but more probably in Palazzo Barberini). And the text sets up a set of inverted parallels: the demons’ joy paralleling that of the Turba calling for Christ’s death, and contrasting with the Madonna’s laments. In its lack of narration of the other events of the Passion, the work seems to have been designed for a day (Palm Sunday, Holy Tuesday/Wednesday, Good Friday) when a Gospel account would have been read, and given that its unifying feature is actually the vocalism of the devils, we might even think that it was written to flank a very specific sermon that contrasted demonic rejoicing with the Virgin’s grief, although no printed text of this stamp has yet emerged. Whether the piece, with its total of 6 to 7 singers, basso continuo, and two violins, could have been performed in the small “Chapel of the Crucified Christ” in the Barberini palace is also not clear; if so, the audience must have been limited (and after 1632, Pietro da Cortona’s altarpiece of the Crucifixion would have been present, possibly draped during Holy Week, in the chapel). In any case, the music, which swings quickly from striking depictions of crowd scenes to demonic rejoicing to lament, brings across the messages of Good Friday in a way striking to audiences even today.

# Is the Passion Story Antisemitic?

BY JESSE ROSENBERG

The ethical quandary which the *Oratorio per la Settimana Santa* presents to a modern audience is similar to that presented in works on the Passion theme by J.S. Bach (the *St. John Passion* BWV 245) and G.F. Handel (the *Brockes Passion* HWV 48). In all three, exquisitely moving music is heard in conjunction with a negative depiction of Jews which goes well beyond what is recounted in various gospel accounts of the Passion, where the Jewishness of Mary, Jesus, and the disciples is made unmistakably clear. In the case of the present *Oratorio*, Pontius Pilate's condemnatory description of the Jewish multitude—their blind fury, their unreasoning hatred, and their bloodthirsty insistence that Jesus be crucified—has no counterpart in any of the gospels; nor does the explicit connection of the demonic to the Jewish victimization of Jesus, with the rejoicing of underworld demons over a Crucifixion blamed squarely on Jews. As in so many other Passion-themed works, first-century events are almost entirely clouded by successive religious polemics.

*Nostra Aetate* (1965), one of the most important declarations to emerge from the Second Vatican Council, insisted that the Jewish people did not bear collective guilt for those first-century individuals among them who, according to the gospel accounts, pressed for the death of Jesus, and strongly rejected the idea that later generations of Jews bore responsibility for anything which transpired in Jesus' time. Although widely hailed on many fronts as a significant step forward in Christian-Jewish relations, the declaration could hardly cancel out the long, vexed history of relations between Jews and the Church, from the expulsions and forced conversions of medieval Iberia to the torments of the Inquisition, from *Cum nimis absurdum* of 1555—the papal bull issued by Paul IV less than two months following his ascent to the throne of Peter, which instituted the Roman ghetto and a host of sharp restrictions on the rights of Jews in that city—to the officially sanctioned veneration of Simon of Trent, age two, supposedly the victim of ritual murder by Jews.

Inevitably, countless paintings, sculptures, literary works, and musical compositions bear the marks of that history. Discomfiting as many will find these aspects of the artistic tradition, the works themselves cannot be ignored, any more than the Strasbourg Cathedral, with its paired allegorical sculptures of the Church (upright) and the Synagogue (drooping and blindfolded) on either side of the portal should be demolished. For many of us, at least, the peculiar difficulty lies in the impossibility of separating out what is off-putting in these works from what is noble and inspiring, so intimately are they fused together—a not inappropriate image of humankind, with its extraordinary range of impulses, from the highest to the lowest.

In the second half of the oratorio, polemic gradually recedes out of view as the focus shifts to more universal themes: a mother's suffering over the death of her son, and, in the concluding madrigal, the insistence that suffering be regarded as infused with meaning, a necessary passage on the way to joy and glory.



## UPCOMING 2018 HOC EVENTS

Haydn | *Opus 20 String Quartets (Part II)*  
Saturday, March 17, 2018

Haydn | *The Seven Last Words of Christ*  
Friday, March 30, 2018

HOC Gala | An Early Opera Cabaret  
Thursday, April 19, 2018

Cesti | *L'Orontea*  
June 2, 3, & 5, 2018

Learn more at [haymarketopera.org](http://haymarketopera.org)

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## Early Opera Cabaret

Thursday, April 19, 2018  
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