

INTRODUCTION BY THE COMPOSER ABOUT HIS "STABAT MATER FOR MARIUPOL".

This "Stabat Mater for Mariupol" was written from the spring of 2022, when the terrible images of the bombing of this city, unknown to me until then, were going around the world. When I wanted to learn more about this place name, I came across the short but significant history of the city, which was founded in 1779 by a group of Greek merchants who gave it the name "Mary's City". Dedicated to the Mother of Jesus since its foundation, this city soon developed into a rich, open city full of life and culture, and a hub of different ethnic groups and religions that were able to coexist for decades, making the city and its surroundings flourish. In 1941, during the invasion of Russia by German troops, the city was almost razed to the ground and many of its inhabitants were deported to Germany to work in the German war industry. After the war, the city recovered and once again became an important economic and cultural centre, until the sad events of today.

Remembering this history and its name gave me the idea of setting the text of the Stabat Mater to music. The Stabat Mater is one of the most frequently set texts in the Christian tradition of all time and depicts the pain and suffering of the mother of Jesus under the cross. I have thought of grouping the twenty stanzas of the hymn in such a way as to produce fourteen pieces corresponding to the number of Stations of the Via Crucis and divided in a balanced way into choral pieces and solo pieces, the latter being entrusted to the female voices and to be performed at will by the solo voices or chorally by the various female sections of the choir.

For the composition, I have chosen a traditional tonal language, sometimes trying to recreate atmospheres typical of oriental liturgical chants, with the use of long pedals entrusted to the male voices or the orchestra. There are also some elements of musical rhetoric typical of the text being treated. In the first piece (Stabat Mater) there is a chromatic descent in the bass, according to the convention of the *passus duriusculus*. In the second piece (*Cuius animam*), the sharp accompaniment of the solo violin are meant to represent the sword that pierces. In number six (*Pro peccatis*), on the other hand, we find a reminiscence of the great Baroque tradition of *turba choruses*. The aria in number nine (*Sancta Mater*) has the character of a funeral march, albeit in ternary time. The tenth piece (*Tui natis*) is in pastoral style.

Towards the end of the Stabat Mater, I wanted to insert a tribute to the Christian vocal tradition of the Eastern and Western. In number eleven (*luxta crucem*), a famous Marian chant of the Greek Orthodox tradition (*Agni parthene despina*) is quoted, though not literally, in memory of the Greek origins of the city of Mariupol and in an oriental-like musical atmosphere. In contrast, the theme of the fugue of number twelve (*Fac ut portem*) quotes the incipit of the Gregorian melody of the Stabat Mater, albeit in a minor key.

On the compositional path to this Stabat Mater, I was emotionally guided by the work and lives of two people to whom this work is also dedicated. One is the German (but Ukrainian-born) writer Natasha Vodin, author of the beautiful book „She Came from Mariupol“, the reading of which inspired me on many occasions and introduced me to the city of Mariupol through the incredible story of her family told in the book. The other is the Lithuanian director Mantas Kvedaravičius, who made two films, the first in Mariupol in 2014 and the last again in Mariupol in 2022, which I was able to see on several occasions and which are an extraordinary and valuable document about the last years and days of the city, also because they were paid for by this brave man with his own life. Mantas Kvedaravičius was killed by Russian soldiers on 2 April 2022 while trying to escape from Mariupol together with other civilians.

At this point I would like to express my special thanks to the Ukrainian Greek Catholic community in Munich in the person of Pastor Volodymyr Viitovitch and church musician Wasyl Zakopets for their efforts in organising this first performance of my composition.

I thank the MaxVokal - Munich and its director Gerald Häußler for their commitment, patience and enthusiasm in rehearsing and preparing this Stabat Mater of mine, as the various pieces were gradually completed, until the first performance.

But the first dedicatee of this Stabat Mater is the city of Mariupol. May God see to it that this city, once again ravaged by war, soon comes to peace, and that all people of good will who love it rebuild it with care and love, trying to forget the divisions, hatred and resentment that war always brings. Only in this way will this city, consecrated to the holy name of Mary, very soon be able to rise from its ashes and show the new generations the way of peace and brotherhood for the common good.

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