

# LES JEUDIS DE LA HARPE

Online Concerts Season 6

Thursday 26 January 2023 - 7.30pm

YouTube : CamacHarpsOfficial

Parker RAMSAY  
USA

Nico MUHLY (\*1984)

From The Street (2022)

Fourteen Meditations on the Stations of the Cross

In its entirety, The Street is composed for harp solo, with narration and plainchant, with texts by Alice Goodman. The texts for the Stations performed here are printed at the end of this programme.

## PROGRAM

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| i. Jesus is condemned to death<br><i>Vinea mea</i>                             | vi. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus<br><i>Plange quasi virgo</i>                    |
| ii. Jesus takes up his Cross<br><i>Crucem tuam</i>                             | vii. Jesus falls for the second time<br><i>Caligaverunt</i>                          |
| iii. Jesus falls for the first time<br><i>Popule meus</i>                      | ix. Jesus falls for the third time<br><i>O vos omnes</i>                             |
| iv. Jesus meets his mother<br><i>Stabat mater</i>                              | x. Jesus is stripped of his garments<br><i>Astiterunt, diviserunt, insurrexerunt</i> |
| v. Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the Cross<br><i>Senex puerum portabat</i> |  |

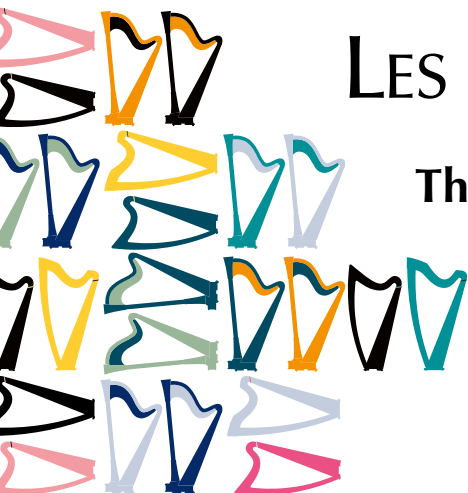
Parker Ramsay is equally at home on modern and period harps, invigorating the existing canon while delving into new and underperformed works. In 2020, the recording of his transcription of Bach's Goldberg Variations was praised as "remarkably special" (Gramophone), "nuanced and insightful" (BBC Music Magazine), "relentlessly beautiful" (WQXR), "marked by keen musical intelligence" (The Wall Street Journal) and "a resounding success" (The Independent).

Parker Ramsay premiered *The Street*, a new concert-length work for solo harp by Nico Muhly (Two Boys, Marnie), with texts by Alice Goodman (Nixon in China, Death of Klinghoffer) on April 16, 2022 in Cambridge UK. The recording was released on King's College Recordings in the autumn. Other projects include a residency at IRCAM in Paris throughout the 2022-3 season, with Latitude 49 to premiere a chamber concerto by Jared Miller, and commissions from Sarah Kirkland Snider, Matthew Ricketts, Alyssa Weinberg, Tom Morrison, Saad Haddad, Aida Shirazi and inti figgis-vizueta.

Parker also is co-director of A Golden Wire, a period instrument ensemble devoted to French and English music from the seventeenth century. He has appeared with the Shanghai Camerata, the Academy of Sacred Drama, Ruckus, Teatro Nuovo and Apollo's Fire.

A native of Nashville, Tennessee, Parker began harp studies with his mother at a young age before moving to the UK at age 16. He served as organ scholar at King's College, Cambridge from 2010-13 under Stephen Cleobury. After receiving his bachelor's degree in history at Cambridge, he pursued graduate studies in historical keyboards at Oberlin Conservatory, and modern harp in Nancy Allen's class at The Juilliard School.





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## PROGRAM

### i. Jesus is condemned to death · Vinea mea

Did you expect it to go any other way? It makes a difference though to hear the words clattering out into the waiting room. The weight of the apprehensive moment. Yes, but he could have died at any time. He could have been stillborn, or slaughtered with the Innocents. He could have died on the road, or of sickness, or by accident. He was always going to die. Conceived as our mortal flesh, he bore our infirmities. Yes, and we killed him deliberately. We put on the black cap and pronounced his death. 'Take him out and crucify him.' There's the Doppler effect in the crowd below, shouting: 'CRUCIFY HIM! CRUCIFY HIM! CRUCIFY HIM!' the pitch dropping as it passes where you stand.

### ii. Jesus takes up his Cross · Crucem tuam

Remember the carpenter's bench; the smell of the cut wood. Cedar, cypress, pine, or oak. Light coming through the door. Or an overcast day, with the sawdust trodden down. Remember learning the names of trees: cedar; cypress; pine. He knows how to bend to lift this beam and how to straighten his back. He's done it before. This is sound wood, and it will bear him. This is the oak of Mamre under whose shade Abraham sat until the three angels appeared. This is the cypress that made the rafter over Solomon's bed. This is the cedar from the forests of Lebanon, the very image of majesty. This is green wood. He bends and lifts it. And all the trees of the field shall know that I am the Lord; I bring low the high tree, and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it.

### iii. Jesus falls for the first time · Popule meus

'My strength is made perfect in weakness.' It's one thing to say it, another to witness. The sheer weight of the cross was unexpected, as was the mass of human depravity, ignorance, cruelty, apathy; the sediment built up since before the Flood. A man fell among thieves, who stripped him and left him bleeding. He never said a mumbling word. These are the street sounds of Jerusalem, layers of them, all the various accents and dialects of those come up for the Passover; throat-clearing, street vendors, laughter, excuses, curses. The sound of a slap and a child's wail. The cattle are lowing, and the sheep and goats bleat together in one herd. Hobnailed sandals scrape the stone. The man falling makes almost no sound.

### iv. Jesus meets his mother · Stabat mater

Nothing can be said to console her. No one is more painfully aware. A sword will pierce your own soul too. Her son is perfect. He has held her finger in the grip of his hand, she has kissed the soles of his feet. She remembers the day of his circumcision: a bridegroom of blood you are to me. First blood shed since the cord was cut. 'Who is my mother?' he asked 'Who are my brothers and my sisters?' For three years she stepped aside, now she has come up to Jerusalem. She takes her place by the side of the road of sorrows to see him and be seen in that first long look between mother and child. 'I now see bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, my self before me.' 'Woman, behold your son.' She sees the place under his rib where the sword will go. 'Behold your mother.'

### v. Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the Cross · Senex puerum portabat

He didn't choose to help. He was compelled. With half an eye they could see he was up to the job; he was a big guy up from the south. O Simon from Cyrene, father of Rufus and Alexander, you were the first to take up your cross and follow. Your cross is the cross of forced labour; your yoke chafes and your burden is as much as you can bear. Jesus is walking in front of you, you are hard

on his heels. What brought you to Jerusalem? Were you here for the Passover? Going up to the Temple to make the sacrifice and eat the lamb? Pharaoh enslaved us and laid burdens upon us, and look, here we are. Blessed are you, O Lord our God, who brought us out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall not oppress a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall not oppress a stranger, for I, the Lord your God am holy. Even here, even in occupied Jerusalem. Your children will praise your name.

### vi. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus · Plange quasi virgo

What became of that woman who stepped into the line of traffic and wiped his face with her veil? She will keep this cloth forever because it smells like his sweat, and because it absorbed a little of his blood, and, it may be, tears and phlegm. She covered her hair modestly before she went out; she covered her face so no stranger would see it; she never told her name. She touched him, not with the hem of her garment, but with the whole cloth. Consider what this means, and whether you'd have dared to do it. Without asking, she unveiled herself to wipe his thorn-crowned face. He is printed in molecules of blood and sweat. 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek,' we say, and through her came to see his face and live.

### vii. Jesus falls for the second time · Caligaverunt

Does his foot hit a stumbling-stone? Maybe one of the Stolpersteine standing proud of the road on the way to Golgotha? Or does he fall beneath the burden of our sins? Not ours. Mine. He falls the second time because of me. My fault. I put out my foot and tripped him. What can I say? I couldn't resist the temptation. The work of an instant. He was looking so pathetic, I couldn't bear it. The whole crowd needed a pratfall to relieve the tension. For my sins, I couldn't bear his sorrow. So he fell for my sins? That's about it. In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread by the roadside, watching him fall and be hauled back onto his feet. Remember, thou art dust and to dust shalt thou return.

### ix. Jesus falls for the third time · O vos omnes

O felix culpa! Happy fall! Don't you see? Jesus falls because he comes down to us, and always has, and we are there on the ground looking up. He came down to be among us. He lowered himself to the ground with becoming gravity, gravity which he himself had created. Willingly accepting the accidents of our nature, humbling himself, going into exile. This falling is a blessing: he touches the earth and blesses it. Jesus, there he is, on hands and knees among the broken vessels. He gathers grace. What he made he can mend, even what we have marred. Holy Jesus, full of grace, you emptied yourself for our sake to fall broken by the stones of your own city. However low I fall, let me not fall far from you.

### x. Jesus is stripped of his garments · Astiterunt, diviserunt, insurrexerunt

They part my garments among them and cast lots upon my vesture. His mother wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, and from that moment to this Jesus has never been seen naked. Do you see him now? Or are you distracted by the soldiers gambling? Or wondering about the seamless garment? None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him to uncover their nakedness: I am the LORD. We have stripped our Lord naked as the day he was born. Jesus is shivering. His knees are skinned like a child's; his back cross-hatched with blood, like a slave's. Are you ashamed that your eyes are drawn irresistibly to the centre of the picture? You want to see, see for yourself, despite yourself. You want to see the organs of generation, the sign of full humanity, vulnerability, and covenant. You want to see Jesus naked as Adam in Paradise, naked, but woefully battered by the Fall.