

The Passion of Lavinia Andronicus

For choir, soloists, organ and instruments

Background

Titus, a Roman general, returns to Rome after a victorious campaign against the Goths. In tow as captives are Tamora (Queen of the Goths) and her sons—one of whom, Alarbus, is sacrificed at the hands of the sons of Titus. Saturnius, the newly declared emperor, is feuding with his younger brother Bassianus, who is betrothed to Titus' daughter Lavinia. Demetrius and Chiron, Tamora's other sons, avenge their brother Alarbus' execution by killing Bassianus in the woods. They then rape and mutilate Lavinia, leaving her without a tongue to speak or hands to write. This pushes Titus to the brink of insanity. Lavinia manages to identify her violators by using a stick between her teeth to scrawl their names in the dirt. The ensuing violence claims many victims, including Lavinia herself. She is killed by Titus, who is unable to reconcile the shame of his daughter's violation.

The Oratorio

'The Passion of Lavinia Andronicus' takes Shakespeare's play 'Titus Andronicus' as a starting point. In the play, we get to know very little about Lavinia, Titus' only daughter. She delivers very few lines, and spends the majority of her stage-time unable to speak because of a terrible crime committed against her, and much of her character and inner world are left up to the imagination of the audience. This oratorio is an exploration of Lavinia's inner world.

The solo vocal group, consisting of a soprano and four male singers (countertenor, two tenors and a baritone) collectively speak with Lavinia's 'voice'. The choir act as external commentary.

This work is dedicated to Soundstreams Canada

O. Daniel