

David M. Sterrett

THE CROSS

for Viola and Harp

PROGRAM NOTES

This piece was inspired by the following passage of scripture from the Bible, and my personal reflection (below) on this passage serves as the foundation for the piece:

One of the Criminals who were hanging beside Jesus was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!"

But the other criminal answered and said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? We indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong."

And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You enter into Your kingdom."

And Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise."

– Luke 23:39-43

Deeply humbled by Jesus' loving sacrifice on the cross, the sinner feels broken, worthless, and deserving of death. In his despair, the sinner cries out to Jesus...

...instead of rejecting the sinner with judgment and accusation, Jesus responds with love, acceptance, and promise – *"Truly I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise..."*

...the sinner hears these words but struggles to accept them as he feels undeserving of such unconditional grace...

...but the sinner becomes overwhelmed by the weight of glory and he is filled with joy: his sins are forgiven, his brokenness repaired, his worthlessness replaced; his soul is fulfilled in Christ...

...the redeemed sinner gives his last breath, and his spirit is released into heaven, into eternal unity with his Lord.

In the music, the dialogue between the sinner and Christ is represented by the viola and harp: the viola represents the dialogue and emotions of the sinner, and the harp represents the dialogue and emotions of Christ. Each character has his own theme which is developed and transformed throughout the piece in parallel with the progression of the story.