

CAROL BARNETT
THE TEARS OF MARY AND MARTHA
for divisi Chorus

Text by St. Romanos the Melodist,
Translated by M.C. Steenberg

Commissioned by the Gordon College Choir
Oliver Goodrich, director

Premiered March 31, 2007 by Gordon College Choir,
Oliver Goodrich, director
at Annunciation Church, Newburyport, MA

c. 9 minutes

PROGRAM NOTE

Kontakion on the Raising of Lazarus was written in the 6th century by the evocatively named St. Romanos the Melodist. I have adapted some nine stanzas from the original twenty of Matthew C. Steenberg's translation to reflect, first, the Lazarus narrative, and second, the prayerful contemplation of what that narrative means in our own lives. Musically, I chose to use the simple but powerful primary harmonies of Greek Orthodox chant, mixed with richer chromatic sonorities and textures to enhance the narration, always returning to some form of the melodic contour associated with the refrain "the tears of Mary and Martha," the lovely phrase that originally drew me to this text.

THE TEARS OF MARY AND MARTHA

O Christ, Thou who knowest all things,
Thou hast asked to learn where the tomb of Lazarus is,
And arriving there, Thou hast raised him up on the fourth day,
O All-powerful One,
Taking pity, Merciful One,
On the tears of Mary and Martha.

Together sustained by faith,
The two announced to Christ and God the death
Of their brother, saying,
"Hasten, come, Thou who art always present...,
For Lazarus whom Thou...love is ill: if Thou come near,
Death will vanish, and Thy friend will be saved from corruption,
And the Jews will see that Thou, ...Merciful One,
Hast taken pity on
The tears of Mary and Martha."

They all...arrived together,
When Mary and her sister came to meet them, crying bitterly,
"Lord, where wert Thou? For he whom Thou lovest has departed,
And lo, he is not here."
As they cried out these words, He, himself, wept.
But he asked, "Where is the tomb of my friend?
...I [will] release him from the chains of Hades,
Since as the only lover of mankind, I take pity on
The tears of Mary and Martha."

When they arrived at the tomb,
He who is in the bosom of His Father called out:
"Thou hast sent me into the world
That I might bring life to the dead.
I have come, then, to raise up Lazarus
And to reveal to the Jews that I [will] arise from my tomb
On the third day, I who after the fourth day resurrect my friend
And now take pity on
The tears of Mary and Martha."

When the command was given with a nod of His head,
Hades was made to totter,
And also the power of Death and the arrogance of the Devil.
With the sound of His voice,
He raised up from the depths of the earth
The one who was four days dead.
When they saw this, Abraham and all the righteous cried out:
"Now, take courage, since the resurrection of all has come.
He has delivered from the bonds of death
The one whom He loves, as He, the Merciful One, takes pity on
The tears of Mary and Martha."

O Thy unspeakable compassion, all merciful Jesus!
Who didst consent to come for me and to me,
How didst Thou calmly ride upon the ass
And advance into the city of God-slayers?

...

O Savior, all came with palms...
Crying, "Hosanna!" to Thee.
Now all of us bring hymns to Thee out of piteous mouths,
As we wave the branches of our spirit and cry out:
"O Thou, truly among those on high, save the world
Which Thou hast created, Lord,

...

"Save us, Thou who didst will to become man.
And resurrect us from the tomb of our sins, Thou, alone immortal,
Through the prayers of Thy friend, Lazarus,
Whom Thou didst raise up, O Lord, ...checking
The tears of Mary and Martha."

Let us depart the mere material world...
And hasten to meet Christ the Savior in Bethany.
Let us then dine with Him
And with... Lazarus and the apostles
So that we may, by their prayers, be delivered from our...sins.
If we cleanse every stain from our hearts, we shall see...
His divine resurrection, which He offered to us when He took away
The tears of Mary and Martha.

adapted from *Kontakion on the Raising of Lazarus* by St. Romanos the Melodist (6th century)
translated by M. C. Steenberg

this document found on-line at
http://www.monachos.net/great_lent/lazarus_saturday.shtml
copyright 2000-2006 Monachos.net, M. C. Steenberg; All Rights Reserved
used with permission