

Soloists

Lei Soprano
Lui Baitone

Vocal Ensemble : Gli altri

2 Sopranos
Contralto
Tenor
Baritone
Bass

Orchestra

Flute (also Piccolo)
Oboe
English Horn
Clarinet
Bass Clarinet
Bassoon

French Horn
Trumpet
Trombone

Baroque double manual harpsichord (*modern tuning*)


Keyboard (*synthesizer or master keyboard*)


Harp

Oud

2 Violins
Viola
Cello
Double Bass

Notes for the singers


 breathy singing


 breath only

(This notation also applies to the wind instruments.)

I realize that the "breath only" indication is idealistic, but it is a vocal style which comes quite naturally to singers. In baroque singing, it is easy to see moments when the voice is nothing more than its *own disappearance*, merely breathing out, and the singing then appears as nothing more than the *shadow* of the note. I have a great love of Monteverdi, and after listening to such music for so long, I am aware of this form of vocal expression, and singers are quite familiar with it. What is *said* by the music **with** the text...


I would, however, like to stress that all singers must follow the indications on intonation.

 breathing out

 breathing in

This notation is used throughout *Passion*, the idea being to breathe in or out as marked in the composition. Accurate indications are always given. Breathing must be a dry movement from the back of the throat, and a very deep movement, as this is the expression of a feeling or an emotional state, not simply a vocal effect.

 → hum


 → normal voice

Composer's Notes

Gli altri

There are a number of passages for this madrigal-like ensemble of six voices. The manuscript of *Passion* refers to the singers as "Gli altri" (*the others*); they are not characters in their own right, and the staging should avoid any manifest personification. They never come into contact with *Lei & Lui*. While they are clearly the others, their passages are invariably sung off stage. They sing with *Lei & Lui*, but next to them. They watch, listen and wait while singing their own texts (*sul finir del giorno...*), but may also provide an echo-like extension to the soloists' text and vocal parts; and they may comment on some of the interplay between *Lei & Lui*. The ensemble must be vocally homogeneous, with good experience singing together. I would therefore prefer an established ensemble to be chosen for the production. These voices are not a collection of soloists singing alongside one another, but rather a group of performers singing with one voice.

Some passages require amplification or electronic processing via a contact microphone (e.g. the "serpent passage" in *Passion 5*).

In such cases,  is the symbol of the cue for the stage manager to turn on the sound system.

Lei & Lui

Lei has a voice in the soprano range; the voice is very flexible and agile, able to produce the most subtle pianissimo notes in the high range, while also having an even, authentic bass range that is full and mysterious. It is not a dramatic type of voice; quite the opposite; it is almost intimate, and the music of *Passion* does not need a soprano with a solemn, forced voice. The voice of *Lei* is disturbed and tormented, yet her vocal expression is always clear, transparent and firm, free of vibrato. *Lei* is a driven woman, driven on by an irrevocable decision.

Lui has a baritone voice. I do not want an excessively male voice, i.e. inflated by self-assurance. The voice of this particular baritone is the exact opposite of the one I wanted for my opera *Faustus, the Last Night*. The timbre can be very gentle and limpid, yet able to express sudden anger. *Lui* is a brave man, but he is also a man who doubts and hesitates. He is not a hero. He is often overwhelmed by apprehension and anxiety, and therefore knows what it is to be afraid. He never hides it. The voice of *Lui* is warm, able to move with ease and achieve restrained expression in the higher register, and has a good falsetto.

Baroque double manual harpsichord (*modern tuning*)

The harpsichord in *Passion* is the vestige of a distant memory. It is also a metaphor for shade or shadow... The harpsichord passages are intended, musically, to be a distant presence. The suggestion for the stage director and conductor is to have the harpsichord positioned backstage, with a small level of amplification to compensate for the physical distance. If it is technically impossible to arrange this in the theater, the idea could be adapted to an orchestra pit.

Keyboard (*synthesizer or master keyboard*)

With an expression pedal able to fade away completely. The programming of sounds required and annotated in the score and the electronics will be covered by special notes to be issued after the première. (*see also notes on electronics*).

Oud

The Oud is played very little, and only towards the end (*Passions 9 & 10*). For the première and following performances at the 2008 Aix-en-Provence Festival, with the Ensemble Modern from Frankfurt, the instrument will be played by the second violinist who can play the oud. There is therefore no second violin part when the Oud is being played.

An appropriate solution will have to be found for later performances by other orchestras.

Strings

Passion was devised and composed for 5 string instruments as solo parts, but this ensemble could be expanded as desired, going up to 4/3/4/3/2. If this option were chosen, a score would have to be drawn up, clearly distinguishing the solo parts and tutti, as some elements are not written for a larger string section (e.g. the virtuoso passages with harmonics and quick bowing changes).

Electronics

The electronic system is devised for simple purposes, but is quite complex to set up. It involves sounds for the keyboard (*see above*); this is original sound material composed to cues marked in the score, plus some musical effects produced using technology including muscle sensors positioned on the throats of the solo singers; their physical energy (*the preliminary movement*) then undergoes live electronic processing.

The orchestra is never amplified. In rehearsal, however, certain parts by instrumentalists may be picked up by the microphones in the electronic system. I would like to repeat that no accurate plan of the electronic score can be made until the first performances are given. A full and detailed description of the system will be sent after the first performances, as it is impossible for me, at this stage, to set down each point with the accuracy I generally use when composing.

The electronic applications of the system are currently being developed jointly with Thierry Coduys / Studio La Kitchen.

Pascal Dusapin
English translation by Shan Benson