

**Thieves:**  
**A Chamber Opera in One Act**  
Op. 544 (2004)

*Libretto by Mark Schweizer (b. 1956), Music by Carson Cooman (b. 1982)*

- Chorus     Jesus, in thy dying woes,  
              Even while thy lifeblood flows,  
              Craving pardon for thy foes;  
              Hear us, holy Jesus.
- Savior, for our pardon sue,  
              When our sins thy pangs renew,  
              For we know not what we do;  
              Hear us, holy Jesus.
- O may we, who mercy need,  
              Be like thee in heart and deed,  
              When with wrong our spirits bleed;  
              Hear us, holy Jesus.
- Jesus        Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.
- Man         They know what they do! They know what they do!  
              I curse their names and I curse God, too.  
              How fast our hands and feet are nailed;  
              Our throats with parching thirst are dried;  
              With eyes, now failing, cold and dim,  
              How cruelly we are crucified.
- I look back on such a life as mine and I grow weary;  
              Held aloft to contempt and scorn.  
              Yet what I have done, I have done. I die alone.  
              There are no defenses to proffer.  
              I made my money and, in my world, money is the measure of success—  
              Success and power.
- Woman      A broken heart, a fount of tears,  
              Ask, and they will not be denied,  
              And, with him, may we love and weep,  
              Since we, like him, are crucified.
- My life is a life of sacrifice.  
              I leave this world with tasks undone.  
              The whims of God seem quite unfair,  
              Yet this is how the race is run.
- Chorus     Jesus, loving to the end  
              Her, whose heart thy sorrows rend,  
              And thy dearest human friend;  
              Hear us, holy Jesus.
- May we all thy loved ones be,  
              All one holy family,  
              Loving for the love of thee;  
              Hear us, holy Jesus.

Jesus        Woman, behold your son.

Woman       My children are my life.  
               If I strayed it was for my children,  
               My family, not for myself.  
               If they do not love me for it, am I to blame?

              I grieve that my designs have been  
               Ungratefully received  
               By selfish children, family, friends,  
               In whom I once believed.

Chorus        Though no Father seems to hear,  
               Though no light our sprits cheers,  
               Tell our faith that God is near;  
               Hear us, holy Jesus.

Jesus        My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Man         We are forsaken!  
               Crucified by life and love and all humanity.  
               In the end, all hope has vanished.  
               It is not right that I should end my life this way.  
               If you are the Christ, save us.  
               Save us and save yourself!

Woman       I pray you, do not take the name  
               Of this righteous man in vain.  
               We are done for, let him be.  
               We deserve our fates, not he.

Chorus       Thirst for us in mercy still,  
               All thy holy work fulfill,  
               Satisfy thy loving will;  
               Hear us, holy Jesus.

              May we thirst thy love to know,  
               Lead us from our sin and woe,  
               Where the healing waters flow;  
               Hear us, holy Jesus.

Jesus        I thirst!

Man         I have thirsted for riches and for fame;  
               I found them both in endless measure.  
               The very value of my name  
               Has brought to me repute and treasure.

              Yet what are all my prizes now?  
               They'll come to ashes, then to dust.  
               All that I have, and am, is here,  
               Where thieves are plenty, and treasures rust.

Chorus       Jesus, all our ransom paid,  
               All thy Father's will obeyed,  
               By thy sufferings, perfect made;  
               Hear us, holy Jesus.

              Save us in our soul's distress,  
               Be our help to cheer and bless,  
               While we grow in holiness;  
               Hear us, holy Jesus.

Jesus        Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.

Woman I pray thee, Father, grant them faith,  
Forgive those who mistreated me,  
And grant that I might show a trace  
Of humbleness I see in thee.

I have done whatever I could  
And I have never asked for grace.  
Yet in it all I've understood  
That through my works I'd see your face.

Both Hear me, Lord, and remember me  
when you come into your kingdom.

Jesus Truly, I say to you, today one of you will be with me in paradise.

Man One of us? Which one? Who will be with you in paradise?

Woman It is I!  
I have obeyed the laws and kept the commandments after my way.  
I have attended the church and gave offerings and tithes of all I possess.  
I thank my God that I am not like you, a miserable thief.  
I thank my God that I will not die without friends and family.

Yes, it is I that shall be with him in paradise.  
For you are cursed and all your viper's brood!

Man Lord, be merciful to me,  
And in thy grace and pity forgive all my sins,  
That I may walk in your house  
Now and in eternity. Amen.

Jesus It is finished!

Chorus May thy life and death supply  
Grace to live and grace to die,  
Grace to reach the home on high;  
Hear us, holy Jesus.

Brighten all our heavenward way  
With an even holier ray  
Till we pass to perfect day;  
Hear us, holy Jesus.