

Perpetua's Diary

A Musical for the Persecuted Church

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Song "Praise to God Creator of the Heavens" © Eleanor Battley 1978

Other music © Rosie Hamilton 2017

Arrangements © Kari Fedde 2017

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Introduction

Perpetua's diary actually exists. In March 203AD, six new Christians were martyred for their faith in Carthage on the orders of the Roman state. Their young leader, a twenty-two-year-old Roman married woman named Vibia Perpetua (Vibius being her family name), kept a diary of her prison experiences and her prophetic visions and handed it to a church leader the night before she died. That diary, with a preface and a conclusion written by another Christian writer, has survived as a treasured document through the centuries and is known and studied today.

It is a remarkable testimony, both as an early woman's voice in a male-dominated world and as a direct voice from the martyrs. Through her diary we learn about the treatment of such prisoners, the family stresses and personal fears they endured, the faith experiences that sustained them, and their final heroic deaths.

Perpetua and Felicity, and their companions, have been remembered for 1800 years as martyrs for the Christian faith. In these times, when the killing of Christians for their faith is increasing around us, we do well to remember them and the faith that sustained them and to be challenged by their courage.

The circumstances of this story

By 200AD, Carthage was a major Roman city on the shore of North Africa where Tunis is today. Christianity had been growing steadily, despite intermittent persecution from Roman authorities. Its appeal was mainly to the lower classes who found hope for themselves in its faith, its care systems, and its promise of a blessed future. Other more educated Roman citizens also embraced the faith, including our young heroine Perpetua.

At that time, the Roman Empire was troubled by natural disasters, famines and some military defeats. Superstitious Roman leaders attributed this to the Roman gods being offended by so many citizens failing to honour them so the authorities decided to make it illegal for anyone to convert to either Christianity or Judaism, both of which taught people not to give honour to pagan divinities. This was a change from previous policies of trying to remove the leaders of the faiths - this time the attack was to prevent their growth. Those who were already Christians were not targeted at the time, but their converts were.

In early 203AD, five catechumens - new believers being trained for baptism -were arrested about 30 miles south-west of Carthage and taken there to face trial. Their catechist, a deacon-teacher, also chose to join them. This is their story.

Historical Notes

While it is not certain that the Carthaginian theologian Tertullian was the editor of the Diary it is a reasonable theatrical assumption. He did write the letter "To the Martyrs" at that time and his most famous line is "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church," as at the start of Act 2. The baptism and Lord's Supper scenes are based on documents of the times.

Writers and composers

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| Original writer | Vibia Perpetua, d. March 203AD |
| Script and Lyrics | Don Battley, Eleanor Battley |
| Music | Rosie Hamilton, Eleanor Battley |
| Orchestration | Kari Fedde |

Cast

The Christians

Tertullian, a Christian theologian and witness of the martyrdoms

Saturus, a deacon and teacher of the catechumens

Pomponius and Tertia - deacons

The Catechumens:

Vibia Perpetua, a young Roman married woman and mother

Felicity, her hand-maid/slave, who is 8 months pregnant

Revocatus, a slave and Felicity's husband

Saturninus, a slave

Secundulus, an older man

The Romans

Septimus Severus, Emperor of Rome

Publius Aelius Hilarianus, Governor of Carthage

Pudens, a Centurion

Two Gaolers

Sundry senators and soldiers

The Family

Perpetua's father

Perpetua's mother

Perpetua's brother

Perpetua's infant son

In the Heavenlies

Jesus in glory - old man/young face, dressed as a shepherd

Angels and Elders

In the Arena

The Dragon

The Egyptian

Perpetua's deceased brother Dinocrates

Sundry gladiators and seconds

Dancers of the spirits of Perpetua, Saturus and Felicity (if required)

A Horned Cow

PERPETUA'S DIARY - A Musical**Script and Lyrics**

Overture of the principle melodies culminating in a harsh Roman march.

ACT ONE**Scene 1:1 A Roman Forum**

A procession of Roman soldiers and senators enter, followed by the Emperor Septimus Severus.

#1 Song: Hail to the Emperor (SATB)

1. All Hail to the Emperor
Our Glorious Emperor.
All hail to Caesar we adore.
All Hail to the Emperor
Our Glorious Emperor
Our high exalted Lord.
2. Rome is our strong father
Rome is our faithful mother;
Rome is our mighty Empire;
Rome is our pride and joy!
3. All Hail to the Emperor
Our Glorious Emperor.
All hail to Caesar we adore.
All Hail to the Emperor
Our Glorious Emperor
Our high exalted Lord.

Emperor *is seated* My brother senators of Rome, our ancient and noble people have suffered many recent catastrophes - crop failures in Sicily and Carthage; plague in Egypt; wild storms and floods in various places and regrettable defeats of our legions on the borders. I am convinced that our Roman gods are angry with us because too many of our people no longer honour them. The people are turning to other religions and superstitions. We must bring them back to honouring our own gods - but how?

Senator 1 O illustrious One! It is the Jews and the Christians who are leading the people away to strange beliefs they have brought from the East. If they could be crushed, worship of our gods could be restored and Rome made great again.

Senator 2 We have learned that it does not work to kill their leaders. More just rise up; they defy death and their superstitions increase.

Emperor I agree that killing their leaders seldom works. I suggest this: that we stop the movement of new believers into Judaism and Christianity. Let us make it illegal for Roman citizens or their slaves to become Jews or Christians. We can have them arrested and put on trial if they do: they will be offered the opportunity to make an offering to the gods. If they make the offering, they can be warned and let go free. If they refuse, they will obviously be traitors and can be executed in the games in the usual way. If we do this, the people will be deterred from joining these detestable superstitions. Let an edict be pronounced to this effect.

General assent; salutes; and exit to a reprise of Song #1 music.

Scene 1:2 Tertullian Introduction

Tertullian (a theologian), robed as a Christian priest of the period, is at a pulpit or teacher's chair right front stage.

And so in the year of our Lord two hundred and three, in the tenth year of the reign of Emperor Septimus Severus, began the persecution of our most vulnerable members - those who had found faith in Christ and were preparing for baptism. These new Christians found themselves facing the cruel wrath of the Roman state.

The tale we tell is of one such group who were arrested as catechumens - those being trained before baptism - in a small town south of Carthage, our main city in North Africa. They were Vibia Perpetua, a Roman woman "nobly born, liberally educated and honourably married"; *(each catechumen could enter centre stage and sit as they are named)* Felicity, her servant and her servant husband Revocatus, and two other slaves, Saturninus and Secundulus. With them was a deacon, Saturus, who was their teacher. All were to face the ultimate test of faith - whether they could withstand the Roman state's wish to compel them to honour the old gods, and would lay down their lives for Christ's higher kingdom.

Strikingly, Perpetua kept a journal of their prison ordeal and of the wondrous revelations she and her colleagues received. Let us receive their witness with open hearts and expectant spirits.

Scene 1:3 Catechumen scene

The five catechumens are gathered and some seated centre stage with their teacher Saturus, a deacon.

2 Song: Catechism Song Saturus (tenor-baritone) and quintet

When you follow Jesus, when you follow Jesus,
He calls you to walk in His ways
To follow His footsteps in virtue and truth,
To offer Him all of your days.

This path may be filled with sorrow or joy

You may have to lay down your lives.
 You will follow a Master who suffered so much
 Through the Cross His glory derives.

So do not fear any threat or danger
 For Christ is your eternal reward.
 If called on to testify boldly
 He will give you His courage and word.

We rejoice in this new way of living;
 His faith will forever endure.
 Whether we live or die in his service,
 Life eternal is forever secure.

Chorus by all six (Possible dance)

When we follow Jesus, when we follow Jesus
 He calls us to walk in His ways,
 To follow His footsteps in virtue and truth,
 To offer Him all of our days.

This path may be filled with sorrow or joy
 We may have to lay down our lives.
 We will follow a Master who suffered so much
 Through the Cross His glory derives.

We do not fear any threat or danger
 For Christ is our eternal reward.
 If called on to testify boldly
 He will give us His courage and word.

optional finale

We rejoice in this new way of living;
 His faith will forever endure.
 Whether we live or die in his service,
 Life eternal is forever secure.

Loud knocking on the door - alarm amongst the catechumens. Saturus calms them; soldiers and centurion pour in - -

Pudens (the centurion) We are arresting you, you filthy pagans, for adopting a foreign religion and for treason to the state!

To the soldiers Arrest them and bind them!

As they do so Perpetua cries out, as they try to bind her.

Perpetua I am a Roman citizen! My father is a military officer!

Pudens The courts will decide that lady. You are clearly attending a Christian meeting. You are under arrest! *(They bind her, and the others).*

Saturus *offers to be bound* Aren't you arresting me too?

Pudens We can't arrest you. You are already a Christian. It's these converts we have to put before the courts.

They are led out, Saturus is left behind.

#3 Song: How Can I Not Be There? Saturus Solo (tenor-baritone)

How can I let them go
To judgement and loss of life?
I am their mentor and guide;
I taught them to stand up to such strife.

How can I, their teacher, not go?
How can I not be there
In the prison, the judgement, the dying?
How can I not be there?

I, too, must stand to that judgement,
I must plainly my faith declare;
I must stand with those I have taught.
How can I not be there?
How can I not be there?

He follows them out

Scene 1:4 Tertullian

Tertullian rises to speak to the audience.

So Perpetua, Felicity, Revocatus, Saturninus and Secundulus were imprisoned in Carthage to be tried as Christian converts, although none had yet been baptised.

Scene 1:5 Prison Scene front stage left

The five are brought into a grimy stone dungeon by Pudens and two guards and spoken to roughly.

Guard 1 Here is your pen, you filthy pigs. Traitors, mockers of the gods. You deserve everything that's coming to you. *(With menace and glee)* If you don't sacrifice to the gods, you will go to the wild beasts - or the gladiators - or be burned as living torches! Death to traitors to Rome!

Perpetua *resisting him* May we have two buckets, for our personal needs?

Guard 1 One is all you get!

Perpetua But we are women and men - and this woman is pregnant! We need two!!

Guard 2 Who cares? One is enough for the likes of you!

Revocatus How do we eat?

Guard 1 When your friends bring you food. It's up to them to feed you. I've put clean straw on the flagstones (*Nastily*) Enjoy your stay!

Saturus *appears. To Pudens* Put me in with them - I belong with them.

Pudens But you are one of the clergy. You are exempt from this.

Saturus I'm not exempt! I was their teacher. I choose to join them.

Pudens Please yourself! *Shows him in. The others greet him.*

Guards depart; prisoners settle down.

Felicity *to Saturus* Brother, you did not have to join us here.

Saturus O yes, I did! The shepherd guards the sheep. I had to be with you - to teach you still, and if necessary to share your destiny.

Revocatus You are a brave man.

Saturus Me? A brave man! No, brother, not I, but we follow the One who braved the Cross. How can we do less?

Let us pray for strength. Lord Jesus, you faced enmity, injustice, cruelty and death. You told us not to be surprised if the world hates us, because it had hated you first. We place ourselves in your care; we reach out for your faith; we hold fast to your love. Be with us Lord Jesus, through all that will come, for you passed through death to eternal life. *All say Amen. The prayer flows into song.*

4 Song: Prison Song "Here We Stand" - all six singers

Here we all stand, within these prison walls alone

Our love as strong as death for the One who is on the throne.

Lord Jesus, You are our Saviour, our Redeemer and our friend.

We are prepared to die for you, but this is not the end.

Remember this when you call us home

When we come into your Paradise.

We give our lives as an offering

and a willing sacrifice.

We have been bought by the sacrifice of Jesus' precious blood.

Now we can offer back to him our lives he has made his own.

We belong to him; we've been bought with a costly price;

Life eternal is our destiny as we take our journey home.

Remember this when you call us home
 When we come into your Paradise.
 We give our lives as an offering
 and a willing sacrifice.

Remember this when you call us home
 When we come into your Paradise.
 We give our lives as on offering and a willing sacrifice,
 Remember this when you call us home
 When we come into your Paradise.
 We give our lives as on offering and a living sacrifice.

They settle down together.

Saturninus Brother, what is likely to happen to us now?

Saturus Sometime soon we will be brought before the courts, charged with being Christians and challenged to burn incense to the gods . . .

Perpetua and Felicity Never!!

Saturus Well - that's the test. Any of us who burn the incense will be set free - possibly after a brief flogging - but those who don't (*shoulder shrug*) will almost certainly be sent to the arena and executed in some brutal way.

Secundulus We knew that was the risk we were taking when we believed. I've chosen Christ and I won't go back!

Revocatus (*taking Felicity's hand*) Nor will we!

(A pause as they process their thoughts).

Perpetua Brother Secundus. If I am to die for Christ, I would like to be properly baptised before I do. Could that be done for us?

Saturus Now there's a question! Baptisms in a prison? We might need some help with this.

The deacons Pomponius and Tertia, (one male, one female) enter. They greet the catechumens with the kiss of peace.

Pomponius Brothers, sisters, the local church has sent us to visit you and see to your needs. They send you greetings and prayers in Jesus' Name.

Tertia We have food and drink here for you (*gratitude*), some warm clothing and some oil for your care . . .

Felicity How beautiful. (*They distribute some of the food*)

Pomponius Let's pray first: Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Who gives food for our bodies, wine for our thirst, oil for our healing. Great are your mercies, Living God.

All Amen. *They share the food.*

Pomponius I have another gift for you - from our local teacher Tertullian. When this persecution began he wrote a message for those who would face possible martyrdom. I have brought you a copy as his gift to you all. May you find much strength in it.

Saturus I have heard of this. What does he say?

They gather around the script as Tertullian begins to read.

Scene - To The Martyrs [this is a loose translation of the actual document].

Tertullian speaks from his pulpit

To those facing martyrdom, I write to you to nourish your spirit where others will nourish your bodies.

For your spirits should not be deprived; they will need strong food, just as gladiators are fed the richest foods.

Unworthy though I am to counsel you, I say first to you,

"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit", for the Spirit has entered the prison with you, and shares your captivity and hardships.

The prisoners pass the document around.

Saturus reads Even if prison is the devil's abode,
yet you may tread him beneath your feet.

So he will flee from you, as a serpent is smoked away.

Your peace is your guardian, so cherish peace among yourselves that Satan will find you guarded and armed.

Revocatus As you have been separated by Christ from worldly desires
now by prison are you separated from the darkness of the world.
Indeed you have been translated from the world of darkness to a place of safe-keeping. Even in darkness, you are light.

Felicity Despite prison's bonds, you are free;
Despite its stench you are sweetness;
Although judged, you will be judges;
You are free now from worldly temptations;
You dwell in the wilderness where the prophets met God.
The Lord himself heard the Father's voice in the wilderness.

Felicity sings

#5 Song: Roam Freely

Roam freely in spirit, dear martyrs
As spirits, walk to and fro.
In your dreams look for visions;
In your visions find your destiny.

Secundulus speaks We know that 'the flesh is weak; the spirit is ready'.

Let the spirit prevail o'er the flesh, rising above sword, cross and fire. Many have so overcome, and by the Spirit's power you will likewise prevail.

You have been called to holy battle as soldiers on a battlefield.

Perpetua Even you blessed women, whatever hardship befalls you

go forth as wrestlers to prevail;
 Take up your training that you may obtain an incorruptible crown!
 For your prison is your wrestling ground and on it your virtue will be proved.
 Saturninus And yet glory should not be our goal.
 Man's resort to cruelty and torture are a disease of the mind.
 And those who die to satisfy its lusts have died for nothing.
 Without Christ, they are mere vanity. We die for the glory of His name.
 So turn captivity into freedom;
 Turn suffering into triumph;
 Turn darkness into light
 Turn judgement into truth.

#5B SONG: Reprise (with harmony)

All six *sing* Roam freely in spirit, dear martyrs
 As spirits, walk to and fro
 In your dreams look for visions;
 In your visions find your destiny.
 Roam freely in spirit, dear martyrs
 As spirits, walk to and fro
 In your dreams look for visions;
 In your visions find your destiny.

Perpetua What a document! How inspiring.

Secundulus Daunting too. Who can be equal to this?

Saturus By the Spirit's power and the Lord's grace, we will do it.

Pomponius Have you any other needs?

Saturus Yes! a baptism bath!

Pomponius and Tertia A baptism bath!?

Saturus These five need to be baptised before they go before the court. Could it be arranged?

Pomponius We would need to buy the guard's cooperation - - - and bring in some kind of bath. *To*

Tertia Let's see what the church can do.

First Family Conflict.

Tertia Your parents are here and your father seems furious.

Father and mother enter as Pomponius and Tertia leave. Father is a Roman cavalry officer.

#6 Song - What Shame Is This? Bass-Baritone and soprano solos + duet

Father What shame is this? (spoken)

1. A child of mine in prison bound,
 A Roman born and raised,

In a Roman prison is now found,
Whose pride is now erased?

2. Who are these trash who share this pit?
this darkness sit?

These slaves who in

Were you raised thus to bring us to dust?
Were you so wronged you could break our trust?

3. Renounce this folly, daughter of mine.
Return to our gods who make this nation fine.
Repent this myth, this false conceit
Honour the old ways; reject this new deceit.

4. Who is this Jesus you claim to know?
A man who came from far below?
A man who then was crucified
In a shameful death, whom Rome denied!

5. This is not a place or cause for you,
A Roman born, a Roman true.
Return to our ways and forget this shame.
In the Vibius family lies your name!

Perpetua's reply.

Perpetua My father true, (*spoken*)

1. Your faithful child here is found
Amongst true friends, we equal stand.
It is to Christ that I now am bound!
In His strength we firmly stand.
2. These are my friends, brothers, sisters too;
We all are slaves to the God most true.
I have been raised from dark to light,
From superstition to greater sight.
3. You have not wronged me
But I have wronged the One
Who my sins has washed
By His blessed Son.
4. His name I strongly do proclaim
As Saviour Jesus in whose Name

Though he once was crucified
by His holy death, is death defied.

5. No shameful faith, nor shameful way
has claimed this Roman born.
I gladly give my Roman name,
as in Christ I am reborn!

Duet *verses sung simultaneously*

Perpetua No shameful faith, nor shameful way
has claimed this Roman born.
I gladly give my Roman name,
as in Christ I am reborn!

Father A child of mine in prison bound,
A Roman born and raised,
In a Roman prison is now found,
Whose pride is now erased?

Father This is heresy and shame! You will die my daughter, by the cruellest means - torn
apart by beasts or slaughtered by the sword!

What good purpose will be served by this? What honour, good or virtue will be displayed when your
broken body is dragged before the crowd?

Let these slaves die, if they so choose, but you my daughter have so much to lose. An infant child, a
husband true, a family name and years to live! What foolish dream would lead you so amiss, and bring
your parents down to this?

*He drops pleading to the floor. As Perpetua seeks to comfort him, she gestures to one of the others to
pass her the pitcher. She coaxes his head up, and sets the pitcher before him.*

Perpetua (*gently*) Father, see you this?

He nods his head.

Perpetua What is it called?

Father It is called a pitcher.

Perpetua Can it be called by any other name?

Father No. It is a pitcher.

Perpetua So it is now with me. I am a Christian. I cannot be called by any other name.

Father *groans* The name of death!

Perpetua No, father, No! It is the name of life. All life is from Christ. All life goes to Christ. In
Christ we live and move and have our being.

Father *stands, enraged, to Saturus* This is your doing! Your madness! You have turned her head
to folly and her heart from her duty. Were you under my charge, I would flog you till you were almost
dead!

Saturus *quietly* As your people did to our Jesus.

Father turns in rage - goes to the door - turns again and shouts to Perpetua

You are shaming this family and defying my authority!!

He storms out.

Scene 1:6 The Baptism Scene

Pomponius, Tertia and others enter with a round bathing tub or bath sufficient for a candidate to stand or kneel in for baptism. (No water?).

Pomponius Good news! The church has been able to pay the guards to allow you to use a larger area in the prison and we are able to bring a bath in for you. We told the guards you needed to be 'washed' before you go to trial. *(The iron grill is folded back? and they move to centre stage)*

Other Christians arrive while the five are disrobed. Tertullian joins the scene to conduct the baptisms. [The candidates were baptised naked at the time - might it be possible to use flesh-coloured underclothing on these actors to express that? The women's hair was unbound].

7 Song: Glory Be To God On High Company song with harmony

Glory be to God on high

Whose love and grace are always nigh.

Glory to the God who brings

Salvation as on angels' wings.

Glory be to the Holy Son

Who makes the Church the holy One.

Glory to the Spirit sure

Who washes by water and makes us pure. Amen, amen, amen.

Tertullian *prays* Blessed are you, Our Lord and God, who gives water to nourish and cleanse all life. Bless and sanctify these waters by your Holy Spirit that they may cleanse your servants and unite them with Jesus' death and resurrection.

All say Amen [The liturgy here is based on documents of the time]

Perpetua steps into the bath, stands in prayer, hands open.

Tertullian Vibia Perpetua, do you believe in God, the Father Almighty?

Perpetua I believe.

Tertullian pours 'water' over her.

Tertullian Do you believe in Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who was born of the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and rose again the third day and ascended into heaven and will come to judge the living and the dead?

Perpetua I believe.

Tertullian pours 'water' over her again.

Tertullian Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the sanctifier, and in the holy Church, and the resurrection of the body?

Perpetua I believe

Tertullian pours 'water' over her a third time and lays his hand on her head and prays.

Come Holy Spirit and impart all your gifts and powers to this your servant in Jesus' name.

All say Amen

Tertullian I anoint you with this holy oil that all God's gifts may be yours.

He might anoint her forehead, eyes, ears, lips and upper chest - or maybe just her forehead?

Perpetua responds to the invocation, and then steps shining from the pool. The deacons robe her in a suitable 'Christian' garment. The baptismal process continues for the others (silently) while Perpetua sings.

8 Song: Washed - All Washed Away Soprano solo and quintet

Perpetua Washed - all washed away

My every shame; my every blame.

Gone the past; blessed the new

Lord Jesus, I live alone for you.

Shines the world in colours light;

Creation never shone so bright!

The sounds so sweet in harmony meet;

Creation made new, with glory shot through.

I hear His voice in accents new

He speaks so clear; his words are few.

He whispers hope into my ears

And with sweet words he calms my fears.

My heart is filled with love so strong;

For this I've waited these years long.

Now all is filled with joy and praise

And to his glory my voice I raise.

Refrain

Come God; Come Jesus; Come Spirit too;

One Holy Trinity, I yield to you.

My life I give, in You I'll live

For all my days, short or long

Your praise shall be my endless song.

Your praise shall be my endless song.

*Felicity and the three men join her and the **Quintet** sings*

Come God; Come Jesus; Come Spirit too;

One Holy Trinity, we yield to you.

Our lives we give, in You we'll live.

For all our days, short or long

Your praise shall be our endless song.

Your praise shall be our endless song.

Second Family Scene

Tertia Your family have returned.

Perpetua's father and mother, with her child, and her brother enter.

Father What is happening here?

Perpetua We have just been baptised as Christians. It is the greatest day of my life! Please, please, join me in this!

Father Never! I forbid it!

Mother to Perpetua Here is your child, my daughter.

Perpetua reacts with joy; receives her child, begins to feed him. Her father softens.

Father *gently* Here is your life, my daughter. Here is our future; here is your hope. Return to us now and forget this folly. Await your husband's return and dwell in the safety of your loving family. Raise this child - enjoy his growing years. THIS is the life that matters - not some wild myth about Jews who rise from the dead!

Perpetua My darling boy - how my heart aches for you. Feed well, sweet one; feed well. . .
 Father, I cannot go back on what I have willingly done. This is no fable I have embraced. It is the way of life; the way of hope; the future of the world. I sacrifice all I have - my child, my family, my reputation, and even my life for Him who is saving mankind. There is no way back from what I have chosen, father - no way back with honour and truth.

Her father sinks to his knees before her imploringly.

Father See what you are doing, my daughter! I am becoming an old man in a few days as my treasure, my child, throws her life away. Have mercy on this old man!! I have succoured you; given you all you have needed in life. Why do you reject me now?

Perpetua Because a greater has claimed my loyalty - a greater even you must bow to, father. Even the claims of family must bow to the Lord of life - the Lord of all mercies and love.

Father Love! Where is love in this? This is the cruellest hatred I have ever met. I know of men dying willingly in battle, but for a young woman, a mother of a child, to throw her life away for a useless cause? I despair of you. I am in torment and despair!

Her mother moves to comfort him as he is crushed to the floor; Felicity moves to support Perpetua who watches her father with love and sorrow but is unflinching.

Perpetua I will always love you, father, mother, but I am resolved.

I belong now to Christ and his Kingdom, and I long that you should too.

Her father groans and shakes his head. Her mother helps him to his feet.

Father *in tears* I will take your child and raise him as a Roman!

Mother Love him while you can. I will raise him for you when the time comes.

They leave in sorrow.

Brother My sister, I know Christ will take care of you.

Perpetua You!? You believe!

Brother I have for some time, but I haven't told father yet.

Perpetua May Christ be praised!

Brother Dear sister, you are specially privileged. I believe God will speak to you in some special way, to strengthen and to guide you. Ask Him for a vision and watch your dreams closely. He speaks in mine. He will speak also to you.

Perpetua He speaks frequently with me. I will listen closely. *They exchange the kiss of peace and he leaves.*

Saturus It has been a long day - we need to rest through the night.

As they settle, Perpetua sings to her child.

9a Song: Perpetua's Lullaby Soprano Solo

Go to sleep little one, safe in my arms,

Your mother is here, keeping you safe from harm.

God's angels keep vigil for you all through the night.

Your grand dad is waiting to take you far from this plight.

I know God will care for you all through your life from now,

Make me proud and be brave my darling boy!

The moon and stars are shining down on you, God's watching too.

I know things are hard now but you will come through.

Instrumental as Perpetua weeps.

God's angels keep vigil for you all through the night.

Your grand dad is waiting to take you far from this plight.

They fall asleep.

Scene 1:7 First dream sequence. *[It has been suggested that the five dream sequences could be performed before the show opens, videoed and projected on the back of stage, or they could be enacted live if the stage could provide a two-tier stage. If done live, dancers would represent the sleeping prisoners]. Each dream sequence is to be danced with music throughout and spoken lines said or sung.*

Dance music #9b *As the prisoners sleep light rises on the main stage where an upper stage is revealed with a ladder of steel and bronze rising from the main stage to the upper level. The ladder is narrow so only one person can climb at a time and up its sides are dangerous knives and spears, daggers and spikes. At its foot is a dragon/alligator creature who would prevent people mounting the ladder.*

Dancers (or the actual actors if the dreams are pre-filmed) arise from Saturus and Perpetua (the actors remain sleeping). Saturus moves to the ladder to ascend it. Perpetua hangs back, anxious. Saturus ascends the ladder part-way then turns and calls to her.

Saturus Perpetua, I am waiting for you. But take care; do not let the dragon bite you.

Perpetua He will not harm me!

She approaches the dragon who menaces her.

She declares In the Name of Christ Jesus! and stamps on its head, using him as the step to access the stairs. She mounts the stairs quickly and gracefully. As she enters the upper stage, there is a wide garden, and in it a grey-headed man with a young man's face seated in shepherd's clothes. He is

milking sheep (??). Around him are many people in white garments. [There may be side stairs for them to ascend and stand on??]

Shepherd looks at Perpetua and says I am glad you have come, my child.

He gives her a mouthful of milk or curd or cheese and she receives it in cupped hands and consumes it. She bows in worship.

All sing Amen. Amen. A-a-amen!

Perpetua awakes in prison with a start; touches her mouth which seems sweet, and wakes Saturus. The heavenly vision remains open for scene 1:8.

Perpetua Saturus! I have had a vision of us! We ascended to heaven and met the Lord! We are destined to die and to be with him forever!

Saturus You are sure of this?

Perpetua Without any doubt. I asked the Lord for a word, a vision - and he has answered me. We will tread Satan under our feet, suffer danger and pain, and be received into the Shepherd's presence.

Saturus It will be an eternal honour.

Perpetua Can we find paper and pen? I must write all this down. *The Romans used a stylus which was tied to the writing board.*

She starts to write as the light fades on the prison and rises on the upper stage and on Tertullian.

Scene 1:8 Revelation 7

Tertullian front stage right; + upper stage scene revealing the heavenly choir.

#10 Song Who Are These in White Robes? Baritone solo with chorale

Tertullian Who are these in white robes?

Who are they? Where did they come from?

Chorale We have come out of great tribulation.

We have washed our robes and made them white
in the blood of the lamb.

Therefore we are before the throne of God
and serve him day and night in his temple.

And He who sits on the throne
Spreads his covering over us;
He will pitch his tent over us.

Refrain Never again will we hunger;

Never again will we thirst.

The sun will not beat upon us
Nor any scorching heat.

For the Lamb who sits on the throne
Will be our eternal shepherd;

He will lead us by springs of living water.

And God will wipe every tear from our eyes.

God will wipe every tear from our eyes.

God will wipe every tear from our eyes.

God will wipe every tear from our eyes.

God will wipe every tear from our eyes.

[Revelation 7:13-17 NIV].

END OF ACT 1

ACT TWO

Full company scene as Christians.

Scene 2:1 # 11 Song: The Blood of the Martyrs is the Seed of the Church

Baritone Solo with full Company chorale

Lights up on all stages (prisoners sleeping).

Tertullian The Blood of the Martyrs
 Is the Seed of the Church.
 The deaths of the Martyrs
 Brings the fragrance of life.

As seeds fall a-ground
 And new life arises;
 As fresh life springs up
 Grows a sweet-smelling fragrance -
 The fragrance of hope -
 The fragrance of faith -
 The fragrance of lo - - ve.

Chorale. *Cast sing from both levels - the angelic and the earthly except the six prisoners who remain asleep.*

Thus will the Gospel prevail;
 Thus will Rome crumble to dust;
 Thus will the nations be humbled,
 By the blood of the Martyrs .
 Thus will the Gospel prevail;
 Thus will Rome crumble to dust;
 Thus will the nations be humbled,
 By the blood of the Martyrs -
 The Seed - - of the Church.

Reprise (optional).

The Blood of the Martyrs
 Is the Seed of the Church.
 The deaths of the Martyrs
 Brings the fragrance of life.

As seed falls to ground
 New life arises;

As fresh life springs up
 Grows a sweet-smelling fragrance -
 The fragrance of hope -
 The fragrance of faith -
 The fragrance of love.
 Thus will the Gospel prevail;
 Thus will Rome crumble to dust;
 Thus will the nations be humbled.
 By the blood of the Martyrs .
 Thus will the Gospel prevail;
 Thus will Rome crumble to dust;
 Thus will the nations be humbled.
 By the blood of the Martyrs -
 The Seed - - of the Church.
Lights fade except on the prison scene.

Scene 2:2 Prison Scene

Clash of gates; some sort of alarum impact.

Entry of Pudens, gaolers and Perpetua's parents and brother, with Pomponius and Tertia with food.

Pudens Wake up you lot! Get yourselves ready. You are to go before Governor Hilarianus for judgement.

Prisoners awake; Perpetua feeds her child.

Pomponius Here's some food for today.

Tertia Oh, look at you!

She begins to wash their faces and hands and try to tidy their clothing.

Secundulus appears to be unwell. They begin to feed.

Third Family Confrontation

Father to Perpetua, pleading

Perpetua - my darling - my beautiful daughter! Look at me. *She looks away.* Look at me! Have pity on your father. I have favoured you above all your brothers; Do not abandon me.

Think of your brother; think of your mother; think of your child who will not be able to live when you are gone. *Perpetua shrinks from him.*

Give up your pride! Honour the Emperor! You will destroy us all! None of us will be able to hold up our heads freely again if this happens to you!

Perpetua *gives the child to Felicity.* Oh my father! My dearest faithful father. I love you; I honour you; I grieve for you, but I cannot do what you ask. I am Christ's and His Father now is mine.

Father collapses in grief as she holds him.

Father, we who are Christ's know that if we die for this faith our families will rejoice that we are with God and that Christ has been honoured by our deaths. I wish you could believe that, and share that joy.

Father I have no such hope.

Perpetua I pray that you may find it. We will make our stand in the courtroom. Be assured that we will not be alone for we are all in God's power.

Father to Felicity Give me the child!

He advances on Perpetua and places the child on her shoulder or neck. She receives him reluctantly.

Father Be merciful to us, daughter. Raise your child! Live with us!

Perpetua thrusts the child into her mother's arms.

Perpetua Get away from me, you workers of iniquity! I no longer know you!

She steps resolutely and defiantly back to the prisoner group. It is stand-off. Her brother gives her the kiss of peace; the family depart with the child.

Perpetua and Felicity embrace as Perpetua sings.

12 Song: Perpetua's Lament Soprano solo

Perpetua Farewell my precious babe, my heart will always be with you.

Dear father! He now depends on your love.

Lord Jesus, take my spirit; I'm ready to leave this life

I place myself into your arms above.

Lord Jesus, you are my Saviour, I'll spend eternity with you;

This moment will be remembered for all time.

My life now will end but my spirit will live on;

I know my death will not be in vain.

Who will separate us now from the love of Jesus Christ?

To live is Christ; to die is gain.

Duet Perpetua and Felicity.

To be in your presence, what joy awaits us now?

To see you face to face, oh my Lord.

To see you face to face, oh my Lord.

Centurion and guards enter with manacles and chains.

Pudens To the forum. The Governor awaits.

Each person is manacled and they are chained together. Two of the men have to support Secundulus.

Scene 2:3 Trial in the Forum. *They enter the forum which is crowded. The Governor will be seated on a high seat and there will be a platform or dock for the prisoners. An altar of incense stands before them.*

The Governor burns some incense before commencing.

Hilarius You are brought before this court on the charge of becoming Christians against the edict of the Emperor. If you offer incense on this altar your life will be spared. If you refuse to do so, you will die in the arena on the next feast day. First prisoner.

Saturus steps up.

Hilarius Are you a Christian?

Saturus Yes, I am.

Hilarius Will you burn the incense?

Saturus No. I will not.

Hilarius You are condemned. Next?

Saturninus steps up

Hilarius Are you a Christian?

Saturninus Yes, I am.

Hilarius Will you burn the incense?

Saturninus No. I will not.

Hilarius You are condemned. Next?

Saturninus steps back and assists Secundulus to stand in the dock.

Hilarius Are you a Christian?

Secundulus Yes, I am.

Hilarius Will you burn the incense?

Secundulus No. I will not.

Hilarius You are condemned. Next?

Revocatus and Felicity step up together. (F being heavily pregnant).

Hilarius You are married?

Both Yes, your honour.

Hilarius Answer individually. Are you a Christian?

Revocatus Yes, I am.

Felicity Yes, I am.

Hilarius Will you burn the incense?

Revocatus No. I will not.

Felicity I will not.

Hilarius You are both condemned. The man is to die on the next feast day. The woman only after her child has been born.

Felicity No!! *She is waved aside.*

Perpetua steps up.

Hilarius Your name, madam?

P. Vibia Perpetua.

Hilarius You are a Roman-born citizen?

P. Yes, your honour.

Hilarianus It is a shame that one born to honour should stand on such a charge.

Father bursts in with the child in his arms and tries to drag her from the dock.

Father Perpetua! It is not too late. See your child. Just burn the sacrifice! For the god's sakes and ours, burn the sacrifice!!

Perpetua remains silent, looking away.

Hilarianus Woman, have pity on your father! Consider your child. Offer the sacrifice!

P. I will not.

Hilarianus *very deliberately* Vibia Perpetua, are you a Christian?

P. Yes, I am a Christian.

Hilarianus Will you burn the incense?

P. No. I will not.

Father Spare her! She is deceived by these fools. Spare her and I will discipline her.

Hilarianus She is of age. She spoke freely. She is condemned with the others.

Father tries to intervene shouting No!

Hilarianus Stop him! *Soldiers throw him to the ground.*

Perpetua watches him in deep silent grief as he is taken away.

Perpetua whispers Forgive me. Forgive me.

The prisoners are led away.

13 Song: All Hail to the Emperor reprise.

Company sings as the scene departs.

1. All Hail to the Emperor

Our Glorious Emperor.

All hail to Caesar we adore.

All Hail to the Emperor

Our Glorious Emperor

Our high exalted Lord.

2. Rome is our strong father

Rome is our faithful mother;

Rome is our mighty Empire;

Rome is our pride and joy! *Verse 2 fades out as they depart.*

Scene 2:4 The Prison - death of Secundulus

As the prisoners re-enter the prison Secundulus collapses, gasping for his life.

As his life ebbs the Centurion nods to the armed guard.

Pubens End it! *and with one thrust of the sword Secundulus is despatched.*

Felicity screams Oh, dear Lord! *Revocatus supports her.*

Perpetua and Secundus exchange a look and lead in prayer.

Into your hands, Lord Christ, we commit your servant. He was faithful unto death and made the great confession. Receive him into your glory. Amen.

Guards remove the body.

Pudens I'm impressed.

Saturus Impressed? With what?

Pudens I've been on the battlefield. I've seen courage. You all have it. It's one thing to die for Rome - but to die for a god? You seem unafraid of dying for something you cannot see? You are amazing people. If what you say is true - this world will be changed forever. I will do all I can to make your last days comfortable.

Perpetua Washing water, please! We smell so foul.

Pudens nods and exits.

Saturus Time to pray.

Prisoners turn to prayers. As they pray Perpetua cries out.

Perpetua Dinocrates!

Felicity What's happening Perpetua?

Perpetua My brother. I heard his name. My dear brother Dinocrates.

Felicity The one who died so young?

Perpetua Yes, you remember. He was only seven - and he got this horrible growth on his face - and it gradually killed him in great pain. I haven't thought of him in years. Why do I think of him now? *She thinks.* Of course! I must pray for him. He did not know the Lord. Where is his spirit now? Is he at peace? Is he distressed? Yes - I think he is in need. Pray with me for Dinocrates.

Heavenly Father, my brother Dinocrates has need of you and of your mercy. Wherever he is now, please reach out to him, rescue him, and bring him to Jesus' light. Amen

Saturus *prays* Lord, it is evening and time for us to rest. Be with us by your Holy Spirit; bless our sleep and meet us in our dreams. Prepare us for whatever lies ahead and grant us certainty of your eternal love. In you, we take our rest and place our hope. All Amen. *They fall asleep.*

Scene 2:5 The Dinocrates Visions - part 1

Dance Music #14a *Dinocrates, aged seven, enters main stage, [appears to come out of a dark hole where there are many others (?)]. He is hot, thirsty, pale and dirty. On his face is a large cancer growth. Before him is a pool or fountain of water too high for him to drink from. He tries time and again to drink but fails to. He departs weak and needy.*

Perpetua awakes with a start.

Perpetua Dinocrates! I saw him. Thirsty - filthy - lost - in a deep pit. O pray with me! Pray for Dinocrates. Surely we can help him - we who know Jesus and his resurrection.

She prays in tears and deep sighs.

Lord Jesus - Lord Jesus - My brother Dinocrates. He suffers and is lost in the dark. He thirsts for the water of life. He needs your rescue - his eternal healing. Lord Jesus, please visit my brother and bring him to your light.

All say, Amen.

They fall asleep again.

Dinocrates Vision - part 2 *(dance sequence).*

Dinocrates appears again, clean, well-dressed, the growth gone. The fountain is lower and he comes to drink from it repeatedly. Above the rim is a golden bowl from which water falls [optional in my opinion] - then he begins to play as children do. Cartwheels? Perpetua 2 dances with him. Light fades.

Perpetua awakes.

Perpetua He is free! I saw him again. He is renewed, refreshed and plays joyfully like a healthy child.

Saturus Thanks be to the Lord.

Felicity He has heard our prayers.

My sister, my brothers. If the Lord can hear our prayers for Dinocrates - who died many years ago - surely he can help us now? I am so grieved that I will not be able to die in your company - that I will have to wait and die later amongst common criminals.

I am glad that my baby may be spared - as Roman law provides - but I long to give birth to him soon. Pray with me! Please pray with me that I may be delivered early of my child.

Perpetua We do not wish to leave you behind. We belong together on the same road of hope. To prayer, brothers! To prayer!

Saturus God of life and love, we ask you to deliver our sister here and now of her child that she may witness with us in the arena. Giver of life, hear us.

Others Giver of life, hear us.

Saturus Bringer of new life, hear us.

Others Bringer of new life, hear us.

Saturus Living Lord Jesus, deliver us.

Others Living Lord Jesus, deliver us.

Labour pains begin.

Perpetua Guards! Guards!

Gaoler Madam, what's happening?

Perpetua Our sister's child is coming. We need lights; water - and please call our companions.

Gaoler This'll cost, y'know.

Perpetua For mercies sake, just do it, man!

Gaoler exits.

Pudens arrives.

Pudens You five really know how to do it all, don't you? She wasn't due for another month! D'you have magic powers, or something?

Perpetua Not magic, man. Just a God of real power.

Pudens Lady, you may have pain now, but there's a lot more waiting for you in the arena!

Felicity What I bear now I do myself, but in the arena Christ will bear it all with me!

Felicity more birthing pains.

Pomponius and Tertia and Felicity's sister enter and join the action.

While Revocatus, Tertia and Felicity's sister care for Felicity, Perpetua, Saturus, Saturninus and Pomponius sing.

14b Song: The Birthing Song

Come Holy Spirit
Power of the Lord of life.
Come Holy Spirit,
Calm our sister's strife.
Birther of the universe;
Sustainer of all breath
Breathe upon her labour;
Bring life; preserve from death.

Guardian of women;
Midwife of humankind;
Deliver by your Spirit
This life within, unbind.

Worship and praise we offer
To you our Lord and King.
From you all life is birthed;
New breath you daily bring.

Come Holy Spirit,
Spirit of the Lord of life.
Come Holy Spirit
Calm our sister's strife.

With a final scream Felicity is delivered.

Tertia She's a girl!

Perpetua gathers the 'infant' in her arms, wraps her and sings.

15a Song: Welcome, Precious Visitor Trio

Perpetua Welcome, precious visitor
Birthed within the night;
Born in darkest prison
But destined for the light.

Born like our Christ Jesus
Loved, yet cast aside;

Oppressed by cruel men
But destined as a bride.

Revocatus Welcome precious daughter,
Child of our earthly love.
Welcome to Christ's kingdom
And a destiny above.

This world is filled with promise
Although there can be pain.
Welcome to this life;
Long may you here remain.

Felicity Welcome to my first-born;
Welcome to my arms.
This night I'll hold you closely
And guard you from all harm.
Always hold to Jesus;
Hold Him so close and dear;
If I seem far away, my love,
He will bring me near.

Trio (or all) Welcome precious visitor
Birthed within the night.
Born in darkest prison
But destined for the light.
Born like our Christ Jesus,
Loved, yet cast aside;
Oppressed by cruel men
But destined as a bride.

Lights dim as they settle for the night, Felicity with her child. The two deacons exit, Pomponius for a slight costume change as below. Music segues from "Welcome Precious Visitor" to the start of the dream sequence.

Scene 2:6 Third and Fourth Visions. The Fight Dream

Dance Music #15b *Perpetua is sitting in prayer. Her head turns to watch the vision. Music continues throughout the dream. The lines in the vision are spoken over the music. Scene is a*

crowded arena. Company enters to form a crowd in the arena. Pomponius dressed in an unbelted white tunic, wearing elaborate sandals comes to the prison gate, knocks and calls to Perpetua.

Pomponius Perpetua, come. We are waiting for you.

Pomponius and Perpetua enter the arena.

Pomponius Do not be afraid. I am here, struggling with you.

A large vicious-looking Egyptian wrestler enters the arena with seconds; and two other handsome men stand as seconds to Perpetua.

Perpetua is stripped and appears to become a man (if we think it is needed), is rubbed with oil, while the Egyptian throws dust over himself. [Both were preparations for gladiators.]

A Man of Marvellous Stature enters robed in a belted purple tunic with two stripes (one on either side) running down the middle of his chest. He wears wondrous sandals of gold and silver and carries a wand and a green branch of golden apples. Music stops briefly so he can say . . .

The Man/Trainer Silence!! If this Egyptian defeats her, he will slay her with the sword. If she defeats him, she will receive this branch. *He steps back. Fight music rises and the fight ensues.*

Diary says "We drew close to one another and began to let our fists fly. My opponent tried to get hold of my feet, but I kept striking him in the face with the heels of my feet. Then I was raised up into the air and I began to pummel him without as it were touching the ground. Then I put my two hands together linking the fingers and thus I got hold of his head. He fell flat on his face and I stepped on his head. The crowd began to shout and my assistants started to sing psalms. Then I walked to the trainer and took the branch. He kissed me and said . . ."

"Peace be With You" (music is in dance music 15b, bars 36-42)

Trainer *sings* Peace be with you, my daughter. Peace be with you, my daughter. Peace to the one who has triumphed!

Chorale Peace be to you our daughter. Peace be to you our daughter.

Peace to the one who has triumphed!

Perpetua circles the arena in triumph and sings.

16 Song: I Will Prevail! Soprano solo

I will prevail!

The Lord has shown me.

The Lord has spoken.

Victory! Victory! Victory is ours.

To the prisoners.

I dreamt and saw an arena so full;

A trainer so strong;

An Egyptian so vile.

And with him I fought;

With him I wrestled;

Over him I prevailed! I prevailed!

We will overcome!

No evil to fear.

No power too great;

No menace too fearful;
 The victr'y is ours!
 The victr'y is ours!

The gateway of life
 Before me was open;
 Though suff'ring awaits
 Though suff'ring awaits
 Our victory is sure.
 Our victory is sure!
 Our victory is sure.
 Our victory is sure!

She sits and resumes writing her diary. The others sleep. Music segues into the next dream.

Saturus' Vision. *Dance with continuous music (attached to Song # 16)*

Saturus and Perpetua (actors or dancers) arise from the sleepers, exit the prison and are met by four angels in white who lead them into intense bright light centre stage.

Saturus This is what the Lord promised us. We have received his promise.

The angels greet them singing.

16B Song: Why They Are Here (music attached to song #16)

Angels Why, they are here. They are here.

Come; Enter; Meet the Lord.

They are moved through a beautiful garden with cypresses(?) towards the ladder (no dragon) and led upwards.

As they ascend the heavenly choir sings continuously for the rest of the scene.

17 Song: Holy, Holy, Holy.

They meet the old/young-faced man with four elders and others. They approach the throne; kiss the aged man who touches their faces.

Elders Let us rise! Kisses of peace are exchanged.

Elders You may go and play now.

Saturus to Perpetua Your wish is granted.

Perpetua Thanks be to God. I am happier here now than I was in the flesh.

18 Song: All Joy is Mine Duet Saturus and Perpetua sung with **Holy, Holy, Holy** as background harmony.

Perpetua All Joy is mine!

In His presence divine

My life is complete

As I kneel as His feet.

Saturus All joy is mine!

In beauty so fine,
 In a garden so pure
 And a presence so sure.

Duet/Duo To him who sits on the throne
 And to the heavenly Lamb
 Be praise and honour forever and ever,
 Glory and power forever and ever.

Company reprise

To him who sits on the throne
 And to God's Lamb
 Be praise and honour forever and ever,
 Glory and Power forever and ever. Amen, amen, A- men.

Scene fades as Satorus awakes with joy.

Satorus Perpetua! I have dreamed! We were taken through a beautiful garden and up the ladder to meet the Lord! I felt such joy - and you were transported by all that we saw. What is before us is majestic and filled with life. We have nothing to fear. We are safe in God's hands.

Felicity And our names will live for evermore.

Revocatus Provided we stay faithful to the end.

Perpetua We will. I'm sure we will.

Pudens enters with two guards.

Pudens The Feast day is tomorrow when you will die for the birthday of the Emperor's son, Caesar Gaeta.

Felicity We die only for God's Son, the Lord Jesus!

Satorus And the Lord God Almighty will give us new life.

Satorinus And a day will come when Caesars will be no more, and the Lord Christ will rule all the kingdoms of the earth!

Pudens Dream on! *To the guards* I want you to stand close guard on this lot. They could have magic powers that could spirit them out of here, and then what punishment would fall on us?

Perpetua Magic powers? Don't be ridiculous man! We are human like you. Your duty is to see that we are fit to fight in the honour of your Emperor's son's birthday! Would it not be to your credit to feed us adequately? To have us washed and dressed decently? Shame on you!

Pudens *embarrassed* Well, you are entitled like other gladiators to your final feast. The last meal before they die. How do you want it?

Perpetua As we Christians would - we call it our Agape meal - the Love feast. Our church friends will bring us the food we need; we will worship and pray. No-one will try to escape. We choose to face the beasts tomorrow.

Pudens Agreed. Tonight then. *Centurion exits; guards stay.*

Scene 2:7 The Agape Feast scene

Music of the liturgy commences. Pomponius and Tertullian, Tertia and family members (not Father) enter. Church members bring in food, set a table.

The meal is prepared and the participants settle at the table. There could be 13 of them (if possible) - Tertullian, Perpetua, Felicity, Satorus, Saturninus, Revocatus, Pomponius, Tertia, and 5 others. Not all need to sit at table.

[The following liturgy is based on known liturgies of the time].

#19A Song: Grace Is Coming *Recitative.*

Tertullian *sings* Grace is coming and this world is passing away.

All *sing* Hosanna to the Son of David!

Tertullian *sings* If any is holy let him enter; if he is not, let him repent.
Ma-ra-na-tha. Come, Lord Jesus.

All *sing* Amen, amen, amen.

Tertullian *speaks* Brother Pomponius, would you read for us from the prophet Isaiah? *Gives him a text.*

Pomponius But now, this is what the Lord says - "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; when you pass through rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through fire, you will not be burned. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; You are my witnesses, declares the Lord, and my servants who I have chosen".

[Isaiah 43: 1-7 extracts]

Tertullian And sister Tertia, will you read from the first letter of our blessed Peter?
Gives her a text.

Tertia Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. Rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

[1 Peter 4: 12-16 extracts]

Tertullian Brother Satorus, would you read from the Gospel of the blessed John? *Gives him a text.*

Satorus The Lord Jesus said, "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first, but I have chosen you out of the world. Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master'. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me. But when the Counsellor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you must also testify for you have been with me." *[John 15: 18f]*

The community sits in silence receiving the words.

Tertullian *sings* Let us pray

19 Song: Agape Meal Song *Recitative.*

Tertullian On the night he was betrayed

Jesus met at table with His disciples,

"How I have longed to eat this Passover before I suffer.

I shall not eat it again until God's Kingdom comes.

Take this bread; break it; eat it.
This is my body, given for you."

Musical interlude (repetition of melody) for sharing the bread. Pomponius and Tertia distribute the bread.

Then he took the cup and said,
"This is the cup of my new covenant
in my blood, poured out for you.
But the hand of my betrayer is with me on this table.
Woe to those who betray,
Woe to those who betray,
Woe to those who betray the Son of Man!
Woe to those who betray,
Woe to those who betray,
Woe to those who betray the Son of Man!

Music for sharing the cup. Echo of 'Woe to Those' and 'Take this Bread'.

20 Song: I Am The Vine

I am the vine; you are the branches.
You have been cleaned by me;
Remain in me and bear much fruit.
As the Father loves me, so have I loved you.
Abide in my love, so my joy shall be in you
and your joy may be complete.
Abide in my love, so my joy shall be in you
and your joy may be complete.

Community chorale

We are the branches;
He is the Vine.
We are the cups;
He is the Wine.
We are bread broken;
He is the Bread.
One holy nation
By the Words He has said.
One holy nation

By the Words He has said.

Tertullian speaks/prays.

When we remember his death and resurrection in this way, we offer to You, O God, the bread and the cup, thanking you that you have counted us worthy to stand before You and to serve you as your priests.

Send down your Holy Spirit; unite us and grant that all your people may be strengthened in this faith, and may praise and honour You in our lives, here and forever.

All say. Amen. (Could be sung?)

The general meal continues.

Perpetua approaches Tertullian (music entry).

Perpetua Father, may I speak with you? *(They move front centre stage).*

I have been writing while we have been in here. Would you be willing to receive and protect my testimony?

Tertullian. Your testimony! I am not worthy of such a trust, but would treasure it and keep it for others.

21 Song: Perpetua's Testimony Duet and chorale

Here is my diary; here is my final word.

Take it as my testimony to our living Lord.

These are my visions of glory unseen;

This is my witness of where I soon will be.

Keep these forever and let my word ring.

Tell the next generation of what we all sing.

Tertullian responds (baritone).

Here is your treasure to preserve your name;

Of things beyond measure and of lasting fame.

May those who come after know why you all died;

Of hope in the hereafter and of faith not denied.

Come, Living Spirit and brighten their flame;

Guide them through death and bring praise to God's name.

Reprise of the last verse by all voices.

May those who come after know why we all died;

Of hope in the hereafter and of faith not denied.

Come, Living Spirit and brighten our flame;

Guide us through death and bring praise to God's name.

Lights down as the people bid each other farewell and the prisoners settle for the night. Music as scene change is made for the arena scene.

Scene 2:8 Martyrdom Scene

Pudens enters Say your last prayers - it's time for your march to the arena!

Pomponius and Tertia dress the five in their baptismal garments; guards form a march. [This following clothing section is optional and could be omitted to . . .] but as they enter the arena they are met by religious officials who try to dress them in garments as priests of Saturn and priestesses of Ceres.

High Priest You are sacrifices to the gods of Saturn. You must wear these!

Perpetua We will not! We come freely as offerings to Jesus Christ and will not wear these pagan garments! That was our commitment to you and you will honour it.

The men refuse the garments and are allowed to remain in their garments; the women are stripped naked and covered with gladiator netting. The march resumes and circles the arena with the men defying the audience. The crowd start to demand that the women be clothed more modestly; they are hustled back to the prison gate and re-dressed in their own garments...]

Meanwhile Satorus speaks to the audience.

Satorus's Arena Speech *(The diary says the men challenged the whole gathering).*

Satorus proclaims You think you hold the power over us? You - do - not!

All power comes from the one Almighty God - not from your feeble Roman gods *(crowd reactions)*. All that you see will crumble away and only broken stones will remain of this glory.

We proclaim to you the one and only true God - Creator of the world and all that is in it.

And we declare to you that in His Son Jesus Christ a new age has been born - an age of mercy and truth; an age when brutality shall be no more; when lions and lambs will live in peace together, and men will no longer slay each other.

Look on us! Have we harmed anyone of you? Have we stolen, robbed or killed anyone? No - we have not! *(To the governor)* So why do you slay the innocent to protect your power?

Shame on you all! Shame on the Emperor who permits it! *(Big reaction)*.

All this earthly glory will perish - a new kingdom is being born right now!

Governor Hilarianus to soldiers Get on with it!

The three men are dragged to the rear of the stage and somehow their executions are simulated (quickly) with a crowd roar to each death. (They were killed by wild animals). The men's bodies may then be dragged off the stage.

Perpetua and Felicity are then marched forward as in a triumphal procession singing as they come. Perpetua in particular stares the gathering down.

22 Song: Praise to God Creator of the Heavens Perpetua & Felicity duet

Praise to God creator of the heavens

Praise to God the ruler of the earth,
 Praise to God our Father and sustainer,
 Praise to God you children of the earth.

Sing to the glory of God our creator,
 Offer him praises and shouts of joy.
 Sing to the glory of God our creator,
 Offer him praises and shouts of joy.

All the earth shall worship and adore you
 All the earth shall magnify your name,
 You O Lord have made us and sustained us,
 You O Lord are worthy of our praise.

Sing to the glory of God our creator,
 Offer him praises and shouts of joy.
 Sing to the glory of God our creator,
 Offer him praises and shouts of joy. (*Eleanor Battley*)

Hilarianus Women? In the arena? What foolishness dear women! Why do you waste your beauty, your fertility and your lives for this folly? Even now you can be spared if you will offer the sacrifice.

Perpetua & Felicity Never!

Hilarianus Why? What is so important that you would die for it?

Perpetua Not what, Governor, but Who? The man that I would die for is the one who died for me. Jesus is his name!

#23 Song: This Jesus Is Lord to the melody of "The Blood of the Martyrs"

Duet - Perpetua and Felicity.

This Jesus is Lord
 Of the whole universe,
 The beloved Son
 Of the One Holy God.
 As he died for mankind
 And arose from the grave
 New life springs up
 As a sweet-smelling fragrance.

The fragrance of hope

The fragrance of faith

the fragrance of Lo- o-ove.

Thus will his Gospel prevail

Thus will his Kingdom advance

Thus will the nations be humbled

By the blood of the martyrs.

Chorale repeat using all available off-stage singers.

Thus will His Gospel prevail;

Thus will his Kingdom advance

Thus will the nations be humbled

By the blood of the martyrs.

Thus will His Gospel prevail;

Thus will his Kingdom advance

Thus will the nations be humbled

By the blood of the martyrs.

The seed - of the Church!

Hilarianus Weak women! You cannot tame this great empire! I despise you!

Perpetua You may kill our bodies, but you can never harm us!

Hilarianus Prepare them!

Perpetua & Felicity are positioned to face the horned cow holding hands; Felicity seemingly in prayer; Perpetua watching, fully alert. (The 'cow' is one male actor with leather leggings and body costume and a large horned head). The cow charges them, tossing both backwards. The cow continues to the far side of stage and is roped and taken off.

Felicity is mortally wounded; Perpetua less so. She gathers herself up; text says she re-pinned her hair (!); she gathers Felicity to her and stands her ground defiantly as Felicity ebbs.

Perpetua shouts For Christ and His Kingdom!

Hilarianus to a gladiator Execute them!

A young gladiator approaches them, sword drawn, uncertain.

Perpetua to gladiator End her suffering!

He thrusts Felicity through (or cuts her throat) and she falls backwards.

Perpetua readies herself - erect - serene - the master of the scene, poised like a wrestler.

Gladiator approaches - hesitates - presents his sword - stabs it in the ground.

Gladiator Madam, I cannot kill such a virtuous woman.

The crowd boos him.

They stand there - he has his hand on the sword hilt.

P quietly Raise your sword.

The gladiator still hesitates. Audience is all now hushed.

P says clearly Raise - your - sword!

He raises the sword towards her; she guides the blade to her neck. As they stand there she says,

Perpetua Now! and in one swift move he kills her.

Gladiator kneels in the dust. Crowd gives a muted cheer but it turns to silence.

*Crowd starts to sing a song to their god (**All Hail to the Emperor?**) but the song **Holy, Holy, Holy** rises off stage and prevails.*

The heavenly scene is revealed and the men ascend the ladder; then Felicity's spirit followed by Perpetua's. Their bodies remain centre stage with the gladiator bowed beside them until curtain call.

Reprise of #11 Song: The Blood of the Martyrs is the Seed of the Church

Company sings

The Blood of the Martyrs

Is the seed of the Church.

The deaths of the Martyrs

Brings the fragrance of life.

As seed falls to ground

New life arises;

As fresh life springs up

Grows a sweet-smelling fragrance -

The fragrance of hope -

The fragrance of faith -

The fragrance of lo - - ve.

Chorale. Cast sing from both levels - the angelic and the earthly including the six martyrs.

Thus will the Gospel prevail;

Thus will Rome crumble to dust;

Thus will the nations be humbled.

By the blood of the Martyrs .

Thus will the Gospel prevail;

Thus will Rome crumble to dust;

Thus will the nations be humbled.

By the blood of the Martyrs -

The Seed - - of the Church.

and v 3 and Coda of **#12 Perpetua's Lament** (as below) *as the martyrs are received by the Shepherd and the Saints. Full company chorale as all other singers gather on stage to sing.*

Who will separate us now from the love of Jesus Christ?

To live is Christ; to die is gain.

To be in your presence, what joy awaits us now.

To see you face to face, oh my Lord.

To see you face to face, oh my Lord.

END OF ACT TWO

Curtain Call finale song to be selected.

Possibilities are

Centre theme of The Prison Song

Glory Be To God on High

Who are These?

We Are the Branches (from The Agape Song).

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Some Production Suggestions

In presenting this musical, directors should keep in mind that the core clash of the events and musical is the clash between a state which overrides the civil and religious rights of its citizens and the duty of believers to be faithful to what they believe to be true. This theme is very contemporary and the twentieth century in particular saw more Christians martyred for their faith over this issue than in all the preceding centuries. The twenty-first century may be even more murderous.

There is a deliberate juxtaposition of the forcefulness of the 'Roman' music and the sweetness, and ultimately the raw courage, of the Christian songs.

How the scenes are staged and are set will depend on the local circumstances - e.g. whether in a church or a full theatre. Scenes could be done with minimal stage sets, or full representation although the changes from a Roman Forum (Act 1 Sc 1) to a Roman house, then a prison, and ultimately a Roman amphitheatre are issues to be decided locally.

The main challenge is how the upper-level heavenly scenes and the ascending ladder can be executed. It has been suggested to the writer that the dream scenes could be performed and filmed beforehand and projected onto a screen during performances. How the killing of the martyrs is presented is another issue for local decision.

The writer is available at donb.revs2@xtra.co.nz if directors wish to discuss these issues further.

God bless you in your concern for the persecuted church. DHB August 2017