

John Debney - The Passion of the Christ (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack) [2004]



1. *The Olive Garden/Night Sky (Medley)* 1:56 2. *Bearing The Cross* 3:42 3. *Jesus Arrested* 4:37 4. *Peter Denies Jesus* 1:58 5. *The Stoning* 2:25 6. *Song Of Complaint* 1:33 7. *Simon Is Dismissed* 2:25 8. *Flagellation/Dark Choir/Disciples (Medley)* 5:54 9. *Mary Goes To Jesus* 2:47 10. *Peaceful But Primitive/Procession (Medley)* 3:36 11. *Crucifixion* 7:38 12. *Raising The Cross* 2:13 13. *It Is Done* 3:37 14. *Jesus Is Carried Down* 4:39 15. *Resurrection* 5:04
John Debney - Composer, Synthesizer Programming, Vocals Ahmed el-Asmer - Vocals Mel Gibson - Chant, Vocals Gingger - Double Violin, Vocals Shannon Kingsbury - Vocals Aaron Martin - Synthesizer Programming, Vocals Shankar - Double Violin, Vocals Ron Allen - Flute Chris Bleth - Duduk, Woodwind Pedro Eustache - Woodwind Karen Hua-Qi Han - Erhu Jan Hendrickse - Bamboo Flute Lévon Minassian - Duduk Naser Mousa - Oud Martin Tillman - Electric Cello London Voices Choir Nick Ingman & his Orchestra Nick Ingman - Conductor

The test of the mettle of any original soundtrack, particularly where an original score is present, is whether that music stands on its own apart from the film that inspired it. Composer and multi-instrumentalist John Debney's score for Mel Gibson's controversial film *The Passion of the Christ* is such an offering. It succeeds as a coherent, moving, well-executed musical statement whether or not one has seen the film. Nearly 55 minutes in length, it seamlessly flows from beginning to end, creating aurally panoramic soundscapes and textural vistas with masterful employment of percussion, folk instruments from many traditions, and Eastern-tinged harmonics. Solo and choral voices encounter the tension of an outside narrative, resolve, and even transcend it. The music here is not visionary, however, and that is not necessarily a criticism. It owes a great debt to Peter Gabriel's truly visionary soundtrack/score to Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ*. Gabriel, of course, made liberal use of Near Eastern scalar inventions as well as traditional melodies and harmonies that were not his own. But he combined them with startling sound effects and masterful pairings of seemingly disparate talents, coming up with something out of time and space. It was inevitable given his own path as a musician obsessed with the music of the world enough to found a label to showcase it.

Debney has seemingly followed a similar path; his use of Indian master violinist and vocalist L. Shankar (who was also featured prominently on Gabriel's *Passion*) and singer/double-violinist Gingger Shankar is evidence in and of itself, and his reliance on the earlier score for notions of pace, dynamic, and color are problematic if one is looking merely for originality. But Debney could not help but make use of Gabriel's score (though he should have at least thanked him in the credits) -- it is far too influential and far-reaching not to -- any more than Gabriel could help making use of the folk musics of antiquity for his. Debney's deft appropriation of classical strategies from the early 20th century and his wonderfully taut choral elements that shape-shift across history from Gregorian chant and Eastern Orthodox Byzantine liturgies as well as the operatic requiem masses of Mozart, Verdi, and John Rutter are also stellar choices not merely for the effect of movement and emphasis, but also have a profoundly meditative quality to them. Debney also furthers the use of the aboriginal tropes first introduced by Gabriel in that he fully integrates them into his Anglo and Celtic maxims. Debney's core is a haunted work, one that resonates with conviction, devotion, and taste. The seemingly dissonant strains are there to provide the authenticity and universality of the human voice as it beholds and meditates upon the subjects in his serial segments. It is a stunner, one that will offer those who choose to encounter it a far-reaching and deeply affective listening experience that is as aesthetically beautiful and unsettling as it is evocatively familiar. Highly recommended. ---Thom Jurek, Rovi

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