



A SPECIAL "SCUOLA DELLA CATTEDRALE"

19 MARCH 2026 AT 7.30 P.M.

MILAN CATHEDRAL - RETROCHOIR

PASSION OF JESUS ACCORDING TO JOHN FROM
THE HOLY WEEK OFFICE BY TOMÁS LUIS DE VICTORIA

LISTENING AND PERFORMANCE GUIDE
AS PERFORMED BY THE SCHOLA CANTORUM OF THE VENERANDA
FABBRICA DIRECTED BY MASSIMO PALOMBELLA

History of the composition

The Passion according to John by Tomás Luis de Victoria is part of the *Officium Hebdomadae Sanctae*, published in Rome in 1585 by Alessandro Gardano, one of the most important collections of Holy Week music from the late Renaissance.

Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548–1611), a priest and Spanish composer active in Rome during the Counter-Reformation, wrote this collection for the liturgy of the Easter Triduum. The work includes responsories, lamentations, hymns and the Gospel Passions, among which is the one taken from the Gospel of John, intended in the Roman Rite for the Good Friday liturgy.

According to the tradition of the Roman Rite, the solemn proclamation of the Passion Gospel is sung by three deacons who interpret the Johannine text in a dialogic–dramatic form. One of them, in a tenor range and reciting on the pitch of C, performs the part of the Evangelist narrator; the second, in a solemn bass register, intones the words of Jesus, recited on the pitch of F; the third, using a falsetto voice, delivers the lines of all the other characters in the scene. The falsettist moves on the same F pitch sung by Jesus but an octave higher: he represents all those who, participating in the events of the Passion, are distant from the Truth and, as the very term falsetto suggests, "speak falsely" so that Jesus may be condemned to death. The choir also takes part in the Passion narrative, performing in polyphony the interventions of the turba, at times the chief priests, at times the soldiers, at times the Jews, creating moments of strong dramatic tension.

In keeping with Victoria's spiritual aesthetic, the music unites liturgical sobriety with intense expressiveness, fully reflecting the spirit of the Catholic Reformation: the evangelical word remains central while the polyphony amplifies the theological and dramatic meaning of the narrative of the Passion.



THE TRADITIONAL EASTER CONCERT OFFERED TO THE CITY BY THE VENERANDA FABBRICA

1ST APRIL 2026 AT 7.30 P.M.

MILAN CATHEDRAL

PASSION OF JESUS ACCORDING TO JOHN BY J.S. BACH

LABAROCCA INSTRUMENTAL AND VOCAL ENSEMBLE, THE OFFICIUM
MUSICUM INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE AND THE SCHOLA CANTORUM
VENERANDAE FABRICAE DIRECTED BY RUBEN JAIS

History of the composition:

The Johannes-Passion (BWV 245) is the first of the two great Passionsmusiken by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) known today, the other being the Matthäus-Passion (BWV 244). The first performance of the Johannes-Passion took place on 7 April 1724 in Leipzig—at the Church of St. Nicholas—during Holy Week, although a previous version composed during Bach’s Weimar years (around 1717) cannot be excluded. It represents the most monumental musical setting of the Passion of Christ written up to that time.

The Johannes-Passion was revised several times by Bach (arias replaced, instrumentation altered, choral movements relocated), yet the essence of the work has remained unchanged.

The musical genre of the “Passion” has very ancient roots: from the earliest centuries of Christianity, the recitation of the Historia Passionis was one of the central moments of the Holy Week liturgy. Over time, the Passion evolved into an autonomous musical genre: dividing the text among multiple singers and introducing polyphony opened vast new compositional possibilities.

The Johannes-Passion is structured in two parts (originally, a sermon was delivered between them). Rich in dramatic intensity, the composition opens and closes with two grand choral movements. The Passion of Christ is narrated by the Evangelist, with interventions by various characters (Jesus, Pilate, Simon Peter and others). The action unfolds through their voices in the form of recitative, supported by the basso continuo (organ).

The score also includes numerous chorales, eleven in total, to reflect Lutheran tradition, along with arias and ariosi for soprano, alto, tenor and bass. During these musical sections, intended for contemplation, the dramatic action pauses. The characteristics of these solo pieces and the significant role of the instrumental ensemble bring the Passion genre closer to that of opera.



SCHOLA CANTORUM VENERANDAE FABRICAE

Established by the Veneranda Fabbrica del Duomo di Milano with the aim of supporting and promoting young professional musicians at an international level, the Schola Cantorum is an ensemble dedicated specifically to concert activity grounded in study and research. It is recognized for its methodological rigor and scholarly approach, with a particular specialization in Renaissance repertoire.

LABAROCCA INSTRUMENTAL AND VOCAL ENSEMBLE

LaBarocca Instrumental and Vocal Ensemble boasts an extensive repertoire ranging from late-Renaissance compositions to works from the Classical period of the eighteenth century. Major Baroque masterpieces, including Handel's *Messiah*, Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* and *Easter Oratorio*, are performed annually and have become cherished traditions for the city of Milan during the respective festive seasons. LaBarocca Instrumental and Vocal Ensemble collaborates regularly with internationally renowned artists such as Stefano Montanari, Karina Gauvin, Roberta Invernizzi, Sonya Yoncheva, Deborah York, Maria Grazia Schiavo, Celine Scheen, Lenneke Ruiten, Stefanie Iranyi, José Maria Lo Monaco, Sonia Prina, Filippo Mineccia, David Hansen, Paolo Lopez, Cyril Auvity, Makoto Sakurada, Clemens Loeschmann, Randall Bolls, Christian Senn, Benoit Arnould, Klaus Kuttler, Carlo Vincenzo Allemano, Ugo Guagliardo.

OFFICIUM MUSICUM INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

Officium Musicum Instrumental Ensemble, part of the Cultural Association of the same name, is dedicated primarily to the performance and interpretation of works from the musical Renaissance and Baroque while also embracing repertoire from later periods. The Ensemble's musicians bring a rich variety of academic and professional experiences, having studied at Milan's two foremost music institutions: the "Giuseppe Verdi" Conservatory and the "Claudio Abbado" Civic School of Music. Although the Ensemble is composed of young musicians, several of them already hold significant experience gained both in Italy and abroad, having performed in prestigious venues and with ensembles of notable international relevance.

MASSIMO PALOMBELLA

Born in Turin in 1967, he was ordained a priest for the Salesians of Don Bosco in 1996. Founder and Director of the Coro Interuniversitario di Roma, he worked in the university pastoral ministry of the Diocese of Rome from 1995 to 2010. He taught Sacramental Theology, Eschatology and "Music and Liturgy" at the Pontifical Salesian University and at the Guido Cantelli Conservatory of Novara, within the postgraduate specialization program in Sacred Music, teaching Composition for the Liturgy, Roman Polyphony and Legislation of Sacred Music. He also taught Languages of Music at Sapienza University of Rome. At the Turin Conservatory and the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music in Rome, he taught Liturgy. From 1998 to 2010 he served as editor of the liturgical music journal *Armonia di Voci*, published by ElleDiCi. From 2010 to 2019 he was Director of the Sistine Chapel Choir, appointed by Pope Benedict XVI and reconfirmed in 2015 by Pope Francis. Under his direction, the Sistine Chapel Choir began recording exclusively with the label Deutsche Grammophon, winning in 2016 the Echo Klassik in the category "Choral Recording of the Year" for the album *Cantate Domino: The Sistine Chapel and the Music of the Popes*. From 2021 until June 2025 he served as Director of Milan Cathedral's Music Chapel. Under his leadership, the choir not only ensured the full presence of the proper Ambrosian Chant in all liturgical celebrations, but also became regularly involved in concert series and was invited to perform at Teatro alla Scala on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the birth of Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, performing the *Missa Papae Marcelli*. Since June 2025 he has served as Superintendent of the Musical Heritage of the Veneranda Fabbrica del Duomo di Milano.

RUBEN JAIS

Born in Milan, Ruben Jais pursued both university studies and musical training in his hometown, graduating from the Giuseppe Verdi Conservatory with top marks in Choral Music and Choral Conducting, as well as in Vocal Polyphonic Composition. He subsequently earned a diploma in Composition from the same Conservatory, where he also undertook orchestral conducting studies, later refining his skills through masterclasses abroad. He served as Chorus Master of the Coro Sinfonico di Milano from its foundation in 1998 until 2007, collaborating during this period with conductors such as R. Gandolfi, R. Chailly, C. Abbado, L. Berio, O. Caetani, C. P. Flor, C. Hogwood, V. Jurowski, and H. Rilling. From June 2016 to July 2019 he held the dual role of Artistic Director and Executive Director of the Fondazione Orchestra Sinfonica e Coro Sinfonico di Milano Giuseppe Verdi, where he had previously served as General Director and Artistic Director. His repertoire spans the great masterpieces of Baroque music and the major works of the Classical period (the symphonies and sacred music of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven), as well as the rediscovery of lesser-known works by composers from the 16th to the 19th centuries (including Zelenka, Scarlatti, Durante and Sammartini). He also conducts contemporary music, particularly by Italian composers such as Castiglioni, Zanolini, Anzaghi, Nova, Ligeti, Messiaen, Califano and Vacchi. In 2008 he founded laBarocca Instrumental and Vocal Ensemble, dedicated to historically informed performance of music from the Baroque era and adjacent periods. With this Ensemble he regularly tackles major instrumental and operatic masterpieces: since 2009, laBarocca has been a stable presence in the Stagioni della Fondazione concert season, offering series dedicated to the masterpieces of the 16th–18th centuries, both in Milan and on tour.

He has conducted instrumental, choral and symphonic repertoire at various Italian and international institutions, including the Biennale di Venezia, Teatro Comunale di Bologna, Milano Musica, Teatro alla Scala, RTSI Lugano, Festival di Saint Moritz, Teatro Real di Madrid, Orchestra Nazionale del Cile, UiS Stavanger Norway.

He served as Music Director of the Mailänder Kantorei, the Ensemble associated with the German community of Milan, with which he focused particularly on the German repertoire from the Baroque to the Romantic era, including a complete cycle of J.S. Bach's Cantate sacre.

Noteworthy milestones with laBarocca include his 2016 debut at London's prestigious Wigmore Hall, where he has since been reinvited multiple times, regular appearances at the MITO Festival in Milan and Turin, the inauguration of the restored Teatro Gerolamo, where he appears annually, and invitations to major international festivals such as the Enescu Festival (Bucharest) and the Gluck Festival (Nuremberg). He will soon embark on a second Italian tour organized by CIDIM, featuring performances across the country from North to South.

Since November 2023, he has served as Superintendent of the Fondazione Toscanini.

JACOPO FACCHINI

After completing his diploma in Piano and his degree in Choral Conducting and Composition, Jacopo Facchini earned a diploma in Voice, refining his vocal training over the years with Sara Mingardo, Gloria Banditelli, Monica Bacelli, Romina Basso, Michael Chance, René Jacobs, Gérard Lesne, and, regarding twentieth-century and contemporary repertoire, with Alda Caiello. In 2017 and 2018 he served as Chorus Master at the Opéra National de Montpellier Occitanie for productions of *La notte di un nevrastenico* (cond. Francesco Lanzillotta), *I Puritani* (cond. Jader Bignamini), *Siberia* (cond. Domingo Hindoyan), and *La Chauve-Souris* (cond. Jérôme Pillement), and subsequently at the Opéra National de Lorraine for *Hansel et Gretel* (cond. Thomas Roessner), *Káťa Kabanová* (cond. Mark Shanahan), and *Un ballo in maschera* (cond. Rani Calderon).

Since 2019 he has been a regular conductor of *laBarocca* Vocal Ensemble in Milan and collaborates with the Coro Sinfonico di Milano on various projects. He has also served as Gianluca Capuano's assistant in productions such as Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* directed by Robert Carsen at the Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, and Handel's *Ariodante* directed by David Alden at the Bolshoi Theatre.

He began his collaboration as guest conductor of the Virgo Vox Ensemble, a group specializing in contemporary vocal music. With this ensemble, he received a nomination in 2025 for the Preis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik for the recording of *Aswalaq, Zoos Humanos* by Manuel Contreras Vázquez.

In 2022 Jacopo Facchini conceived and served as musical director of *XV de c(h)oeur*, a production combining medieval and contemporary music, directed by Damien Robert at the Opéra de Montpellier. In the same year, he was Chorus Master of *Il Canto di Orfeo* in *La clemenza di Tito* on a European tour with Les Musiciens du Prince – Monaco, conducted by Gianluca Capuano and featuring Cecilia Bartoli in the role of Sesto. From 2023 to 2025 he served as Chorus Master of *Il Canto di Orfeo* for productions of Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, Haydn's *L'anima del filosofo*, Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito* and *C-moll Messe*, Monteverdi's *Vespro* and a world premiere by Mantovani, all under the baton of Gianluca Capuano and within the context of the Salzburg Festival.

With "Il Canto di Orfeo" he also took part in *Hotel Metamorphosis*, an acclaimed operatic pasticcio based on music by Antonio Vivaldi, recognized by The New York Times as one of the best classical performances of 2025.

In 2024 and 2025 he joined *Il Canto di Orfeo* for *Orfeo ed Euridice* on tour in major European venues with Les Musiciens du Prince – Monaco, conducted by Gianluca Capuano and featuring Cecilia Bartoli in the title role.

In 2025 and 2026 he is Chorus Master at the Opéra de Lausanne for *Don Pasquale* (cond. Giuseppe Grazioli) and *Dialogues des Carmélites* (cond. Jacques Lacombe).

As a singer, he has collaborated extensively with vocal and instrumental ensembles specializing in early music, including Il Canto di Orfeo, Teatro dei Cervelli, Concerto Romano, Cantar Lontano, Ensemble Pian & Forte, laBarocca, the Cappella Musicale Arcivescovile di S. Petronio, Dramatodía, L'Armonia degli Affetti, and Anonima Frottolisti.

He took part in Zimmermann's *Die Soldaten* (cond. Ingo Metzmacher) at Teatro alla Scala; performed as soloist in the world premiere of Guarneri's *L'amor che move il mondo e l'altre stelle* (cond. Pietro Borgonovo); appeared with the Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano (cond. Sylvain Cambreling) in a Kurtág tribute program; and has collaborated with the Divertimento Ensemble, FontanaMIX Ensemble, Mdi Ensemble, Tempo Reale, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra with Roberto Cacciapaglia, Cesare Picco, and the Orchestra I Pomeriggi Musicali (cond. Carlo Boccadoro).

He has recorded for Arts, Christophorus, Decca, Dynamic, E Lucevan Le Stelle, Glossa, Kairos, Naxos, Pan Classics, Ramée, Sony Music, Stradivarius, and Tactus.