St. Luke's Shipwreck

Music and libretto (after Acts 27) by Jonathan Pease















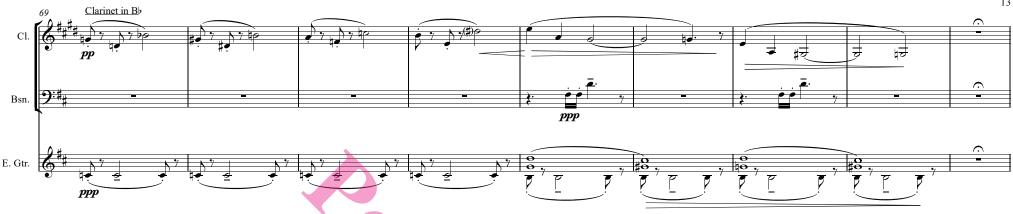








Guarded by some very nasty soldiers, three hundred prisoners are boarding an enormous ship bound for Italy, where they will be tried by the Emperor Caesar. You might well ask how I got to see all this. Well, the centurion, Julius, wasn't a very fierce centurion – a bit too nice for his own good, you might say. He had a special liking for St. Paul, and said he could take a friend on board with him: hardly standard practice for criminals in solitary confinement!























Chorus kicks!











However, there was no sign of a change in the weather, and the journey to Italy was a scary prospect. Eventually St. Paul piped up: "This voyage is going to be disastrous, and bring great loss to this ship and its cargo – and to our lives as well!" But for once, Julius didn't listen to St. Paul. "Now, now, St. Paul," he said, "Normally I'm open to discussion, but we today really must crack on." The merchant started to lose patience. "Look, St. Paul, I don't have time for this. I've got luxury goods from all over the world on this boat, and crates of the finest food and wine. If I don't deliver them on time, my clients will be furious. And do you know what that means? No money!"

Choir A

b 5































The prisoners gave up all hope of making it to Italy alive. And when things go wrong, you can always rely on St. Paul to pipe up. "Friends, you should have taken my advice and not sailed in these dreadful conditions! Look at all this damage and loss." What a know-it-all! But St. Paul had more to say. He said that during the night, he'd been visited by an angel. God had sent [him/her] down to say that everything would be OK and that the boat and the prisoners were being watched over.

"And you, my friends, must have the same faith," he said.

SOMEBODY'S WATCHING























THE STORM SONG (reprise)







Among the ship's crew were three seasoned sailors. They knew exactly what was going to happen. They used their expertise to take soundings, and worked out that they were getting closer and closer to the land. "Let's wake everybody up and tell them!" one said, "We're heading for disaster!" But another sailor told him to be quiet."If you wake everybody up, they'll all panic and want to escape. There are just a couple of rickety old lifeboats on this thing. Let's just keep this to ourselves, shall we?" In the end, the sailors decided to take the lifeboats for themselves and sail to safety. Pretending that they were going to lower the anchors and protect the other people on board, they made for the decks alone and planned their escape.

TRAITORS

























But St. Paul soon put a stop to their plan. He warned the centurion and the soldiers: "If these sailors escape from the ship, we'll never get out of here alive." So the soldiers cut the lifeboat from its ropes and let it sail away into the sea. As dawn came up, St. Paul urged everybody on board to eat. "For the last fourteen days, you have been in constant suspense and have gone without food. Now I urge you to eat some bread: you will need it to survive. I promise you that nobody will lose even a single hair from their heads."





ST. PAUL'S PRAYER



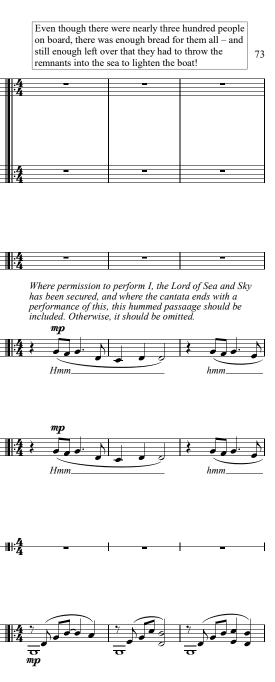














Eventually, dawn turned into daylight, and they saw a sandy beach in the distance. They cut loose the anchors, hoisted the sail and let the ship blow into the coast. They hit the beach with such force that the ship's nose got caught and would not move, and the body of the boat was smashed to piece by the pounding waves. The soldiers had planned to kill the prisoners to stop them from escaping before they could face trial... That's rough justice! But the Centurion wanted to spare his friend Paul's life and stopped the soldiers from carrying out their plan. Those who could swim got to the land first, and those who couldn't grabbed planks of wood from the broken ship and used them as floats. Everybody arrived safely on the beach, on a Southern European island known... as Malta.

Either of these two bars, at conductor's discretion:



SAFE AT LAST

f = mp























Perc.







For the time being the island proved a safe place for the prisoners. The residents showed them great kindness and hospitality: they say that "islanders" are a friendly bunch. St. Paul did his usual thing, showing off and performing miracles, until eventually we found another ship and carried on our journey under better conditions. God showed great mercy that day: to his servant Paul, to the Centurion, to humble prisoners, to a not very pleasant bunch of sailors, and – oh yes! I nearly forgot – even to your author.



