

4500

ENGLISH - HIGHER LEVEL - PAPER I

WEDNESDAY, 11 JUNE - MORNING 9.45 - 12.15

Total Marks: 160

BOTH SECTIONS of this paper (Composition and Unprescribed Prose) must be attempted.

I. COMPOSITION - (100 marks)

Write a prose composition on one of the following subjects:

- (a) Breakthroughs in modern technology.
- (b) The art of conversation.
- (c) Time will tell.
- (d) The food industry in Ireland.
- (e) "Blessed are the peacemakers."
- (f) Things that still puzzle me.
- (g) Freedom of the press.
- (h) "I am a bundle of prejudices."

II. UNPRESCRIBED PROSE - (60 marks)

Read this passage carefully, and then answer the questions which follow it.

On Good Friday Bach's *St John's Passion* was to be performed in a small German church. I arrived just as the doors opened and secured an aisle seat at the front. The programme gave all the words in German and a note at the bottom said *Bitte Kein Applaus* (No applause, please). This was not to be a performance for our entertainment then, we could not applaud the singers and the orchestra. It had to be a form of worship on a Good Friday. The radiators were under the seats; the church was cosy and warm and it filled up quickly. The audience, even the young, were serious-looking, modestly-dressed people.

The opening words of the first chorus were even more arresting in that small church now that the sacred context was restored, than they were on a CD-player in my small house in Dublin on a Sunday morning. The choir sang with immense commitment, letting the slow unfolding of the drama work like magic on the audience. The whole effect was beautiful because the choruses had, in their overwhelming harmonies, huge healing qualities, enormous power that seemed to soar beyond the story that was being told. I was spellbound. Every time the choir stood I knew that once more the sound would be uplifting, that they would combine the notions of sin and of redemption, that they would capture the sense of mankind as fallen and as saved.

There was a genuine excitement in the voices in the scene where Peter denied Jesus. When it came to the part after the scourging at the pillar, the violinist and the viola player stood up to play; the atmosphere grew more tense as the bass began *Betrachte, meine Seel* (Bethink thee, O my soul). The next piece for the tenor starts with the word *Erwage* (Imagine) repeated. Both were sung with feeling as though the bass and tenor wanted to rouse us, spark something off in us.

From these moments of rapture we went back to the narrative, the simple story of the Gospel telling us that Jesus came forth. This was followed by *Sehet, welch ein Mensch* (Behold the man) sung by Pilate with enormous solemnity. Some of the choruses were sung softly, others were more declamatory. I was waiting for the aria *All is fulfilled*. I had known the song as sung in English by Kathleen Ferrier. In her singing of this song the tempo suddenly changes halfway through when she sings the phrase *The Lion of Judah fought the fight*. Now it was being sung in German and I was waiting for this phrase as the contralto began to sing. I was worried in case I was not concentrating enough. And then it came: the sudden change to signify that the world of sin had ended and the world of salvation had begun. When the narrator sang now about the veil of the temple being torn in two and the earth quaking there was dark drama in his voice.

The performance came to an end with two choruses, the second more subtle in its harmonies, the rhymes in the German more definite than before, each couplet complete, like something being accomplished, reaching its inevitable end, hearing its own echo soaring beyond it. The choir stood still and let their voices resonate around the small German church. There was no applause. No one moved. The conductor did not move. There was a sort of stunned silence, but it was deliberate. It lasted one minute maybe, perhaps more. And then there was a shuffling of paper, but no coughs or whispers. The performers remained still. No one spoke. People began quietly to move from their seats.

1. It is clear from the second paragraph that this performance was a most moving experience for the writer. How is this conveyed in that paragraph?

2. To what extent does the writer's familiarity with Bach's *St John's Passion* contribute to his enjoyment of the live performance?

Support your answer by reference to the passage.

3. In the third and fourth paragraphs how does the writer convey the dramatic qualities of *St John's Passion*?

4. Answer **EITHER** (a) **OR** (b).

(a) A note at the bottom of the programme requested the audience not to applaud. Do you think that this request was appropriate?

Justify your answer by accurate reference to the passage.

OR

(b) What, in your opinion, is the mood at the end of the performance? How is this mood conveyed by the writer?