

St Christopher's Cathedral
Sunday 26 September 1999



The Canberra Bach Ensemble, directed by Andrew Koll, is a recently established group of choristers and instrumentalists who have a strong interest and devotion to the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. The performances for the remainder of this year are in preparation for a series of concerts to be presented in 2000 for the 250th anniversary of Bach's death. The CBE is primarily dedicated to performing Bach's sacred repertory, namely cantatas, oratorios, motets, masses and organ works. The CBE also performs suitable and compatible works by other composers.

The CBE has chosen this repertory to be its central focus of performance because the aesthetic, intellectual and spiritual integrity of Bach's music is of the highest order. Bach's compositional output demonstrates a sophisticated web of musical and liturgical relationships which is endlessly fascinating. It is a most satisfying experience to identify and explore the relationships between hundreds of sacred works across various genre, in order to reveal the depth, breadth and intensity of Bach's creative craft.

The CBE performed two of Bach's early cantatas last June, *Aus der Tiefe rufe ich, Herr, zu dir* (BWV 131) and *Christ lag in Todesbanden* (BWV 4). Recently the choir presented an a capella program including Byrd's *Great Service*, Purcell anthems and Bach's motet *Komm, Jesu, komm* (BWV 229).

This afternoon's all Bach program includes two cantatas, *Herr, gehe nicht ins Gericht mit deinem Knecht* (BWV 105) and *Brich dem Hungrigen dein Brot* (BWV 39), as well as the *Missa Brevis* in G minor (BWV 235). All of these works are typical of Bach's later Leipzig style which include choruses, chorales, arias and recitative that move through a variety of dramatic emotions and moods. These works demonstrate some very fine writing, particularly in the choruses, and prove that the quality of Bach's composition for individual movements in his cantatas are of equal quality and scale to that of the larger oratorios. Often the cantatas are overshadowed by works such as the St Matthew and St John Passions and the Mass in B minor, yet other works such as BWV 105, 39 and 235 show that there is much more that Bach wrote which is well worth devoting our attention to.

We hope you enjoy this afternoon's concert and look forward to seeing you at our next performance.

Herr, gehe nicht ins Gericht mit deinem Knecht BWV 105

1. *Chorus*: Herr, gehe nicht ins Gericht mit deinem Knecht
2. *Recitative (Alto)*: Mein Gott, verwirf mich nicht
3. *Aria (Soprano)*: Wie zittern und wanken
4. *Recitative (Bass)*: Wohl aber dem, der seinen Bürgen weiß
5. *Aria (Tenor)*: Kann ich nur Jesum mir zum Freunde machen
6. *Chorale*: Nun, ich weiß, du wirst mir stillen

Brich dem Hungrigen dein Brot BWV 39

Prima Parte

1. *Chorus*: Brich dem Hungrigen dein Brot
2. *Recitative (Bass)*: Der reiche Gott wirft seinen Überfluß
3. *Aria (Alto)*: Seinem Schöpfer noch auf Erden

Seconda Parte

4. *Aria (Bass)*: Wohlzutun und mitzuteilen
5. *Aria (Soprano)*: Höchster, was ich habe
6. *Recitative (Alto)*: Wie soll ich dir, o Herr!
7. *Chorale*: Selig sind, die aus Erbarmen

INTERVAL

Missa Brevis in G minor BWV 235

1. *Kyrie (Chorus)*
2. *Gloria in excelsis Deo (Chorus)*
3. *Gratias agimus tibi (Bass)*
4. *Domine Fili unigenite (Alto)*
5. *Qui tollis peccata mundi (Tenor)*
6. *Cum Sancto Spiritu (Chorus)*

Two great Leipzig cantatas; Mass in G minor

In his letter of resignation addressed to the people of Mühlhausen, dated 25 June 1708, Bach wrote:

“Even though I should always have liked to work toward the goal, namely, a well-regulated church music, to the Glory of God and in conformance with your wishes ... yet it has not been possible to accomplish all this without hindrance ...”

And so Bach left Mühlhausen, a year after his arrival, and set off to Weimar. But it was not until his appointment in Leipzig that he was able to make a start on his greatest undertaking: five complete yearly cycles of cantatas (produced, so famously, at the rate of one cantata a week for some of that time).

That the Leipzig Town Council had their concerns about Bach is demonstrated by the fourteen-clause ‘memorandum of understanding’ that they made Bach sign (and date: 5 May 1723, almost a month before taking up his post), which included the requirement that he would:

“(7) In order to preserve the good order in the Churches, so arrange the music that it shall not last too long, and shall be of such a nature as not to make an operatic impression, but rather incite the listeners to devotion.”

We know from council minutes and various letters that Bach did not always live up to all the points of his agreement; in some cases it would be fair to say that he acted in flagrant violation of it.

On point (7) listed above, we invite *you* the listeners to be the judge. On first glance, the evidence would not seem to be in Bach’s favour: even in the Weimar cantatas (from c. 1714 onwards) he had taken on board the reforms of Erdmann Neumeister, who had introduced operatic-style *recitatives* and *arias* into his cantata texts.

How then can this apparent paradox be reconciled? The answer is simple: the sacred/secular distinction that we are familiar with these days post-dates Bach, who never applied the terms ‘sacred’ or ‘secular’ to any of his own music. Indeed, for Bach, all music was in the service of God. How else could he so systematically reuse elements of his ‘secular’ cantatas in a liturgical context: in church cantatas, and most notably in the Christmas Oratorio?

Herr, gehe nicht ins Gericht was written soon after Bach’s arrival in Leipzig and premiered on 25 July 1723. The texts for that Sunday contain warnings against idolatry and immoral acts, as well as the parable of the unrighteous steward who squandered his master’s possessions. The cantata text contains allusions to these texts and to several others; the text of the opening chorus (taken from Psalm 143) is reminiscent of the parable.

The cantata opens with a subdued chorus which, in its ‘prelude and fugue’ motet style, looks back to early cantatas such as *Aus der Tiefe*. The fugue itself is particularly strict; its form, known as the *permutation fugue*, was a particular favourite of Bach. The key to understanding the soprano aria *Wie zittern and wanken* is Bach’s own understanding of Friedrich Erhardt Niedt’s book on the realisation of figured bass ie. the use of a keyboard instrument to lay down the foundation – the bass line – and to fill out the sound. Niedt wrote:

“The thorough bass is the most perfect foundation of music, being played with both hands in such manner that the left hand plays the notes written down while the right adds consonances and dissonances, in order to make a well-sounding harmony to the Glory of God and the permissible delectation of the spirit; and the aim and final reason, as of all music, so of the thorough bass should be none else but the Glory of God and the recreation of the mind. Where this is not observed, there will be no real music but only a devilish hubbub.”

By silencing the continuo (keyboard and lower strings) – an extremely rare occurrence in his music – Bach depicts a life without trust in God as its sure foundation: indeed, a life of confusion.

The wavering of the strings in the aria is resolved only in the unusual closing chorale, where it is transformed into a lulling sound portraying the calming of the tormented conscience.

Brich dem Hungrigen dein Brot was first performed on 23 June 1726. The text deals with some of the social justice aspects of the Christian life; both the Biblical texts and the other verses motivate care for the poor and those in need by placing such behaviour in context: God has dealt generously with us, so generosity to others can be the only response.

The complicated opening chorus shows us the mature Bach, in complete control of vocal and orchestral forces and using them to bring out all of the nuances of the text. For instance, the opening dialogue between the recorders, oboes, and strings is not a mere fancy; it symbolises the distribution of bread to the hungry. The remainder of the cantata is in stark contrast; the arias make only sparing use of the instrumental possibilities.

Part Two opens with a special type of movement that is somewhere between an aria and an arioso. Bach sometimes used these for declamation of a Biblical text, and labelled such movements simply *Basso solo*, the bass symbolising the voice of Christ. Note that the text itself is from the letter to the Hebrews, not one of the gospels; so in doing this Bach has put words into Christ’s mouth to give them extra authority and to emphasise that the text deals with the church’s response to his saving work.

In the four Lutheran masses we find Bach as recycler of his own music, although only by making use of movements of church cantatas. Nonetheless, Bach was harshly criticised, particularly by nineteenth-century scholars, for taking music written for one text and reusing it with a completely different text. It is ironic that many of them heaped praise on the Mass in B minor, which itself is almost entirely a parody work! Today’s listeners need not bother themselves with what we would now consider pretentious ignorance; we need only content ourselves that in the masses we can hear what Bach himself thought was his best work.

The Mass in G minor is particularly fine; the extraordinary Kyrie comes from *Herr, deine Augen sehen nach dem Glauben* (BWV 102), the opening of the *Gloria* from *Alles nur nach Gottes Willen* (BWV 72), and the solos and final chorus from *Es wartet alles auf dich* (BWV 187). The *Kyrie* contains not one fugue but two, and the end of the second links seamlessly, and miraculously, into a restatement of the opening theme.

The intensity is maintained: the outer movements of the *Gloria* are a severe test of stamina for singers and instrumentalists and show us Bach at his most demanding.

Further reading and listening

Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel, *The Bach Reader*, revised edition, Norton, 1966. (The source of the Bach and Niedt quotations.)

John Butt (editor), *The Cambridge companion to Bach*, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Alfred Dürr, *Die Kantaten von Johann Sebastian Bach*, sixth edition, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag and Bärenreiter Verlag, 1995. (In German)

Christoph Wolff (editor), *The world of the Bach cantatas: early sacred cantatas*, Norton, 1997.

Recordings by Philippe Herreweghe, and the accompanying booklets.

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Herr, gehe nicht ins Gericht mit deinem Knecht

1. Chorus

Herr, gehe nicht ins Gericht mit deinem Knecht!
Denn vor dir wird kein Lebendiger gerecht.

2. Recitative

Mein Gott, verwirf mich nicht,
indem ich mich in Demut vor dir beuge,
von deinem Angesicht.
Ich weiß, wie groß dein Zorn und mein
Verbrechen ist,
daß du zugleich ein schneller Zeuge
und ein gerechter Richter bist.
Ich lege dir ein frei Bekenntnis dar
und stürze mich nicht in Gefahr,
die Fehler meiner Seelen
zu leugnen, zu verhehlen!

3. Aria

Wie zittern und wanken
der Sünder Gedanken,
indem sie sich untereinander verklagen
und wiederum sich zu entschuldigen wagen.
So wird ein geängstigt Gewissen
durch eigene Folter zerrissen.

4. Recitative

Wohl aber dem, der seinen Bürgen weiß,
der alle Schuld ersetzt,
so wird die Handschrift ausgetan,
wenn Jesus sie mit Blute netzet.
Er heftet sie ans Kreuze selber an,
er wird von deinen Gütern, Leib und Leben,
wenn deine Sterbestunde schlägt,
dem Vater selbst die Rechnung übergeben.
So mag man deinen Leib, den man zum
Grabe trägt,
mit Sand und Staub beschütten,
dein Heiland öffnet dir die ewigen Hütten.

5. Aria

Kann ich nur Jesum mir zum Freunde machen,
so gilt der Mammon nichts bei mir.
Ich finde kein Vergnügen hier
bei dieser eiteln Welt und irdschen Sachen.

**"O Lord, do not enter into judgement with
your servant, for before you no one alive
will be justified." (Psalm 143:2)**

**My God, do not cast me away –
for in humility I bend before you –
from your presence.
I know how great your wrath and my
crime are,
that you are both a ready witness
and a righteous judge.
I lay before you a free confession
and will not fall into the danger
of denying or concealing
the errors of my soul.**

**How the thoughts of sinners
tremble and sway,
for they accuse each other
and on the other hand dare to excuse themselves.
In this way a troubled conscience
tears itself apart through self-torture.**

**But happy is the one who knows his guarantor,
who makes substitution for all sin,
so the slate will be wiped clean
if Jesus sprinkles them with his blood.
He himself fastens them to the cross;
he himself will, of your goodness, body, and life –
when the hour of your death strikes –
give an account to the Father.
Thus one may cover your body – which is carried
to the grave –
with sand and dust;
your Saviour opens up the eternal dwellings to you.**

**If I could but make Jesus my friend,
then riches would mean nothing to me.
I find no pleasure here
in this conceited world and in earthly things.**

6. Chorale

Nun, ich weiß, du wirst mir stillen
mein Gewissen, das mich plagt.
Es wird deine Treu erfüllen,
was du selber hast gesagt:
daß auf dieser weiten Erden
keiner soll verloren werden,
sondern ewig leben soll,
wenn er nur ist Glaubens voll.

**Now I know you will calm
my conscience, which torments me.
Your faithfulness will fulfil
what you yourself have said:
that on this wide earth
no one shall be lost,
if he only be full of faith,
he shall live eternally.**

Brich dem Hungrigen dein Brot

Prima Parte

1. Chorus

Brich dem Hungrigen dein Brot und die, so
im Elend sind, führe ins Haus! So du einen
nacket siehest, so kleide ihn und entzeuch
dich nicht von deinem Fleisch. Alsdenn wird
dein Licht herfürbrechen wie die Morgenröte,
und deine Besserung wird schnell wachsen,
und deine Gerechtigkeit wird für dir
hergehen, und die Herrlichkeit des Herrn
wird dich zu sich nehmen.

**"Divide your bread with the hungry, and
lead those who live in poverty into the
house. When you see someone naked,
clothe them, and do not hide yourself from
your own flesh. Then your light will break
forth like the sunrise, and your recovery
will grow quickly, and your righteousness
will go before you, and the glory of the
Lord will protect you." (Isaiah 58:7-8)**

2. Recitative

Der reiche Gott wirft seinen Überfluß auf uns,
die wir ohn ihn auch nicht den Odem haben.
Sein ist es, was wir sind; er gibt nur den Genuß,
doch nicht, daß uns allein nur seine Schätze laben.
Sie sind der Probestein, wodurch er macht
bekannt,
daß er der Armut auch die Notdurft
ausgespendet,
als er mit milder Hand,
was jener nötig ist, uns reichlich zugewendet.
Wir sollen ihm für sein gelehntes Gut
die Zinse nicht in seine Scheuren bringen;
Barmherzigkeit, die auf dem Nächsten ruht,
kann mehr als alle Gab ihm an das Herze dringen.

**The God of riches showers his abundance on us,
who without him would not even have breath.
What we are is his; he alone gives satisfaction,
but not only us do his riches refresh.
They are the touchstone by which he makes
known
that he has also provided the poor with their
needs,
as he, with a gentle hand,
gives to us richly what to them are necessities.
For his blessings we need not
bring the tithe into his storehouses;
compassion shown to our neighbour
can penetrate his heart more than any gift.**

3. Aria

Seinem Schöpfer noch auf Erden
nur im Schatten ähnlich werden,
ist im Vorschmack selig sein.
Sein Erbarmen nachzuahmen,
streuet hier des Segens Samen,
den wir dorten bringen ein.

**To resemble - even in shadow -
one's creator while still on earth,
is a foretaste of bliss.
Imitating his mercy
scatters blessing's seed here,
that we will gather in over there.**

Seconda Parte

4. Bass solo

Wohltun und mitzuteilen vergesst nicht;
denn solche Opfer gefallen Gott wohl.

**"Do not forget to do good and to share; for
such offerings please God." (Hebrews 13:16)**

5. Aria

Höchster, was ich habe,
ist nur deine Gabe.
Wenn vor deinem Angesicht
ich schon mit dem Meinen
dankbar wollt erscheinen,
wilt du doch kein Opfer nicht.

**Almighty, all that I have
is but your gift.
If I should wish to appear
before you in gratitude
for what I have,
you would desire no offering.**

6. Recitative

Wie soll ich dir, o Herr! denn sattsamlich vergelten,
was du an Leib und Seel mir hast zugut getan?
Ja, was ich noch empfang, und solches gar nicht
selten,
weil ich mich jede Stund noch deiner rühmen kann?
Ich hab nichts als den Geist, dir eigen zu ergeben,
dem Nächsten die Begierd, daß ich ihm dienstbar
werd,
der Armut, was du mir gegönnt in diesem Leben,
und, wenn es dir gefällt, den schwachen Leib der Erd.
Ich bringe, was ich kann, Herr! laß es dir behagen,
daß ich, was du versprichst, auch einst davon mög
tragen.

**How then, shall I, O Lord, amply repay you,
for what you have done for my body and soul?
Indeed, for what I have already received, and
that not seldom,
since I can boast of you every hour?
I have nothing but my own spirit to yield to you;
to my neighbour, the desire to be of service to
him;
to the poor, what you have granted me in this life;
and, if it pleases you, to the earth, my weak body.
I will bring what I can, O Lord; may it please you,
so that I may one day partake of what you have
promised.**

7. Chorale

Selig sind, die aus Erbarmen
sich annehmen fremder Not,
sind mitleidig mit den Armen,
bitten treulich für sie Gott.
Die behülflich sind mit Rat,
auch, wo möglich, mit der Tat,
werden wieder Hülfe empfangen
und Barmherzigkeit erlangen.

Mass in G minor

Kyrie

Kyrie eleison.
Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison.

Gloria

Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.
Laudamus te,
benedicimus te,
adoramus te,
glorificamus te,
gratias agimus tibi
propter magnam gloriam tuam.
Domine Deus, Rex coelestis,
Deus Pater omnipotens.
Domine Fili unigenite,
Jesu Christe.
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei,
Filius Patris.
Qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Qui tollis peccata mundi,
suscipe deprecationem nostram.
Qui sedes ad dextram Patris,
miserere nobis.
Quoniam tu solus Sanctus,
tu solus Dominus,
tu solus Altissimus
Jesu Christe.
Cum Sancto Spiritu
in gloria Dei Patris.
Amen.

**Blessed are they, who out of mercy
take on the needs of strangers,
are sympathetic with the poor,
pray faithfully for them to God.
Those who are helpful with advice,
and also, where possible, with deeds,
will in turn receive help
and gain compassion.**

**O Lord, have mercy.
O Christ, have mercy.
O Lord, have mercy.**

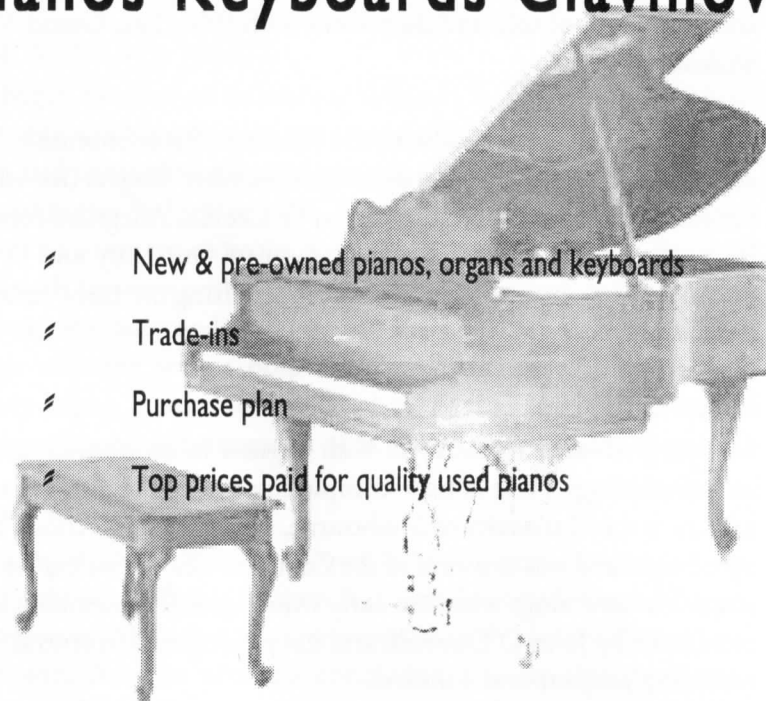
**Glory to God in the highest.
And on earth peace to men of good will.
We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give thanks to you
for your great glory.
Lord God, King of heaven,
God the Father almighty.
Lord, only-begotten Son,
Jesus Christ.
Lord God, Lamb of God,
Son of the Father.
Who takes away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.
Who takes away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer.
Who sits at the right of the Father,
have mercy on us.
For you alone are holy,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the highest,
Jesus Christ.
With the Holy Spirit
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

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Biographies

Helen Thomson (soprano)

Helen Thomson made her debut as a soloist at ten years of age in the premiere performance of Donald Hollier's *In Dulci Jubilo*. Since then, her activities have included a stint with The Song Company, touring Gesualdo's *Tenebrae Responsories* for Holy Week to the Adelaide Festival in 1996; solo and ensemble work with Judith Clingan in the premieres of *Nganbra* and *Adam's Rib* as well as in forthcoming recordings; solo work with the ANU Choral Society in Faure's *Requiem*, Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*, Vivaldi's *Gloria*, Handel's *Israel in Egypt* and *Messiah*; and a program of solo and duet work with Riley Lee, Grand Master of Shakuhachi.

As well as her involvement with the Canberra Bach Ensemble, Helen is currently a member of the Australian Chamber Singers (for whom she has sung solos in Britten's Hymn to St Cecilia, Allegri's *Miserere*, and Bach's *Jesu meine Freude*), and the choir of Our Lady and St Cecilia. Helen teaches music for a living, specialising in early music vocal technique.

Peter Campbell (alto)

Having graduated from ANU with degrees in economics, art history and musicology Peter is now completing a Ph.D in Australian music history at the University of Melbourne. He has sung in choirs since the age of eight and was treasurer of the Canberra Choral Society for thirteen years. He now sings with the early music group Ensemble Gombert, conducted by John O'Donnell, and has participated in several freelance recording projects and concerts.

Marco Agostini (tenor)

Marco Agostini was born and brought up in Cologne, Germany, and came to Australia in 1996 to study journalism at the University of Canberra, where he recently graduated. He now studies under Angela Giblin in his first year of a Bachelor of Music degree at the Canberra School of Music, specialising in Voice Performance.

He has performed as a chorister with various choirs in Canberra, as well as in the roles of Alexis (*The Sorcerer*), Mendel (*Fiddler on the Roof*) and currently Frederic (*Pirates of Penzance*) for the Queanbeyan Players. He has sung with the Canberra Bach Ensemble since its inception by Andrew Koll in 1999 and this is his first solo performance for the CBE. Marco is also a founding member of the Canberra Academy of Music and Related Arts (director Colin Forbes) and holds one of four St. Philip's Scholarships for Young Singers.

Richard Anderson (bass)

Richard began his musical training at Sydney's St. Andrew's Cathedral, singing treble and then bass in the cathedral choir. He then moved to Canberra and continued his studies at the Canberra School of Music. Since returning to Sydney in 1996, Richard has become a sought after participant in a variety of projects especially in Renaissance, Baroque and twentieth century performances. He has appeared at the Barossa Festival and the Burwood Early Music Festival, and in concerts and recordings with the Song Company, the Contemporary Singers and the Sydney Alpha Ensemble et al. Richard is currently engaged with Opera Australia and is the organist of St. John the Evangelist, Balmain.

Andrew Koll (Director)

Having completed his honours degree in musicology last year at the Canberra School of Music, Andrew is currently completing a Masters in conducting at the Sydney Conservatorium with Henryk Pisarek and Mats Nilsson. Andrew recently concluded a successful three year association with the Canberra Community Orchestra, performing a wide range of symphonic repertoire from the classical period through to the twentieth century, included new works by Neylon and Elizondo. Last year, Andrew attended a masterclass on Bach's motets with Stuttgart conductor Frieder Bernius in Namur, Belgium. Andrew's main interest and research area is on Bach's music and the evolution of performing trends over the last half century.

Choristers

Soprano

Lucie Alexander
Kate Atkinson
Helen Thomson
Alice Richardson

Alto

Peter Campbell
Alison Cone
Jaki Kane
Richard Walker

Tenor

Marco Agostini
James Carter
Graeme Hill

Bass

Robin Darroch
Andrew Freeman
Alex Roose
David Woodgate

Instrumentalists

Violin

Frances Davies (Leader)
Naomi Durston
Nile Kim
John Ma
Imogen Perley
Alessandra Pretto

Viola

Craig McHugh
Mitzy Pepper
Catherine Turnbull

Cello

Rowena Higgs
Gillian Pratten

Double Bass

Chris Gilbert

Recorder

Lara Dodds Eden
Angela Vivian Bolt

Oboe

Mira Parish
Sylvia Page

Bassoon

Lisa Goldberg

Continuo

Peter Young



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