

To a Place Beyond

Dissimilar choral works — Same journey

When we are particularly delighted by a piece of music, perhaps that is because it transported us to a special place beyond ourselves, where we felt especially moved. And sometimes this happens regardless of the musical genre we were listening to!

In this program Oriana presents choral works from *five very different musical genres, each perhaps equally capable of moving us:*

Tomás Luis de Victoria's ***Missa O magnum mysterium*** (1592)

J. S. Bach's early cantata ***Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich*** (1707)

three of John Rutter's jazz-inflected ***Birthday Madrigals*** (1995)

John Wilbye's madrigal ***Draw on, sweet night*** (published 1609)

Frank Li's ***special relativity***, an avant-garde choral work especially composed for Oriana and completed just last January, whose premiere we proudly present!

Bach's cantata is accompanied by a period instrumental ensemble drawn from Boston's early music community. Soloists drawn from Oriana's 27 voices contribute to the program.

Program booklet annotations for all of the above appear on the following pages.

We hope to see you at a concert, and at the reception that will follow!

- I Missa O Magnum Mysterium** 1592
Tomás Luis de Victoria 1548–1611
- directed by Katheryn Currie and Valerie Thomforde
- Kyrie*
Gloria intonation: Adrienne Fuller
Credo intonation: Harry Rosenberg
Sanctus
Benedictus
- Melanie Armstrong soprano
Melanie Donnelly alto
William Budding tenor
- Agnus Dei*
- II Birthday Madrigals** 1995
John Rutter b. 1945
- My true love hath my heart*
Draw on, sweet night
It was a lover and his lass
- intermission—
- III Draw on, sweet night** 1609
John Wilbye 1574-1638
- Adrienne Fuller, Alexandra Tan soprano 1
Stephanie Leah Evans, Kelvyn Koning soprano 2
Melanie Donnelly, Andrea Hart alto
Harry Rosenberg, Irl Smith tenor 1
James Meyers, James Tresner tenor 2
Christopher Pitt, John Schafer bass
- IV special relativity** 2019
Frank S. Li b. 1989
- V Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich** Cantata BWV 150 c. 1707
Johann Sebastian Bach 1685-1750
- 1---Sinfonia
2---Coro *Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich*
3---Aria *Doch bin und bleibe ich vergnügt*
Lisa Wooldridge soprano
4---Coro *Leite mich in deiner Wahrheit*
5---Aria (trio) *Zedern müssen von den Winden*
Katheryn Currie mezzosoprano
James Meyers tenor
Dean Blackette bass
6---Coro *Meine Augen stehen stets zu den Herrn*
7---Ciaccona *Meine Tage in dem Leide*

I Missa O Magnum Mysterium

Tomás Luis de Victoria

1592

1548–1611

Kyrie

Gloria

Credo

Sanctus

Benedictus

Agnus Dei

A special relationship connects Tomás Luis de Victoria's *Missa O magnum mysterium* with his motet of the same name, *O magnum mysterium*.

If you did Oriana the honor of attending the concert program that we presented last December, then you heard us sing Tomás Luis de Victoria's motet *O magnum mysterium*, whose words celebrate the "great mystery" of the presence of humble animals — ox and donkey — at the Nativity. These words, and the Gregorian Chant tune to which they were originally sung, arose in the tenth century.

When Victoria wrote his motet *O magnum mysterium* (published in 1572, in a collection with many other motets) he used the then-six-hundred-year-old words of the chant, but not its tune. To devise the motet's tune he started with a long-held tone that descends to a second tone five steps down the scale, then immediately skips back up. As it does so, a second voice enters, which repeats the tune of the first voice, but at an interval five steps lower in the scale:



It is this descent of the fifth interval and its return, first in the opening voice, then echoed in the second voice, that gives the opening of the motet the mysterious sound that reflects the "mystery" of the words.

In 1565 Victoria had moved from his native Spain to Rome for study and employment, where the above motet was published, during his twenty-fourth year. He returned to Spain in 1587 for musical employment in a monastery in Madrid, where he served as chaplain to the Dowager Empress Maria, the sister of King Philip II of Spain. It was there, in 1592, that he wrote *Missa O magnum mysterium*, one of about twenty choral masses that he composed over his lifetime. This mass — as well as many others among these twenty — is a "parody mass," so called because its music is derived from music of the motet of the same name. In the *Missa*, just as in the motet, the opening voice descends to a second tone five notes down the scale, then returns to the starting pitch, a motive which the second voice imitates. The motet and the *Missa* differ in the details of their musical lines, but the general outline is the same in both:



This re-use of musical material presumably led the communicant, in listening to the *Missa*, recall the motet from which the mass was derived. We can infer that a motet whose music was “parodied” in this manner may well have been quite popular. Indeed, many of the hundreds of choral masses that were composed over the course of the sixteenth century, by noted composers such as Josquin des Prez, G. P. da Palestrina, and Antoine Brumel, were parody masses, whose musical sources were probably well-known to their listeners. (A composer didn’t necessarily use his own music as the basis for a parody mass; the source was often a sacred piece by another composer, or even a secular work.)

In *Missa O magnum mysterium* Victoria does not follow the parody mass principle strictly, for he uses only the opening of his *O magnum mysterium* motet as the basis for his mass of the same name, whereas most parody masses would have gone on to incorporate much more of the source music. The first instance of Victoria’s *Kyrie eleison* echoes the motet, but the following *Christe eleison* and the return of the *Kyrie eleison* do not; they are set to newly-invented music. In the fourth movement of the mass, the word *Sanctus* is based on the opening of the motet, but the *Dominus Deus Sabaoth* that follows is new material.

Well — one may ask — if most of the music of the *Missa O magnum mysterium* was not actually based on the motet *O magnum mysterium*, then where *did* it come from? To answer that question one would have to have intimate knowledge of the musical craftsmanship, the inner soul, and the inscrutable mind of a composer of great genius, and these we do not have.

What we can do, however, is to make a few exterior observations about the relationship between Victoria’s music and the words of the liturgy that he is setting to music. We can sense that the musical substance of Victoria’s *Missa* is, at every moment, *a perfect reflection of the inner meaning of the sacred text*:

In the *Gloria*, firm blocks of chords alternate with passages of close imitation to declaim words of hope and joy: *Et in terra pax... Laudamus te... propter magnam gloriam tuam, Domine Deus...* The musical mood quiets down at the more somber words *Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis*. The jubilation of the concluding *Cum Sancto Spiritu* is reflected by an unexpected switch to triple meter, followed by florid melismas on the word *Dei* at the music’s strong cadence.

The music of the *Credo* reflects, at every moment, the unshakeable strength of belief. Victoria uses the driving rhythms generated by the syllables of words like *visibillum omnium... et invisibillum... et in unum Dominum... genitum non factum, consubstantialiam Patri* to generate powerful statements of religious certainty. The all-important passages come at the center of the *Credo*: At *Et incarnatus est... et homo factus est... passus et sepultus est* the choral setting enters a mood of sublime reverence, which breaks into joy at *Et resurrexit tertia die* (set off, like the *Cum Sancto Spiritu* in the *Gloria*, by an unexpected turn to triple meter). The same joyfulness (and the same triple meter) reappear at the concluding *Et vitam venturi saeculi, Amen*.

The importance of the word *Sanctus* is reflected by the long-drawn-out musical passage that concentrates only on that one word (aided, as noted above, by the

reminiscence of the music of the motet *O magnum mysterium*). Equally long, to reflect their importance, is the declamation of the words that follow: *Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua...* And Victoria again uses the always-effective device of switching to triple meter for the joyful *Hosanna in excelsis*.

A quiet *Benedictus* follows, sung by a trio of soloists, following Renaissance tradition. The mood abruptly returns to joy at the repetition of the triple-meter *Hosanna*.

At the conclusion of this mass, Victoria's new musical ideas remain as inexhaustible as ever. To emphasize the sacred words *Agnus Dei, miserere nobis*, the composer divides the sopranos into two sections so that they can sing a canon — that is, a tune that starts in one voice and is strictly imitated by a second voice, like a round. The start of the tune couldn't be simpler: just four ascending steps of the scale. Before the first voice finishes, the second voice overlaps it; but before this can be finished, the first voice replies with a different motive that harmonizes with the second. Each of the series of motives plays musical leap-frog in this manner, in exact imitation, for the duration of the entire movement.

In most masses the words *Agnus Dei* are sung three times, with the first two followed by *miserere nobis*, and the third followed by *dona nobis pacem*. In this particular mass Victoria seems to have felt that a single iteration was sufficient. Yet this single iteration sounds complete.

The Council of Trent (1545-1563), which initiated the Counter-Reformation, first gathered three years before Tomás Luis de Victoria was born. It concluded when he was fifteen years old, not long before he left for Rome, at eighteen, to continue his musical and clerical studies. Victoria composed his entire musical output in the service of the Counter-Reformation; he wrote no known secular music at all. His work was a perfect blend of consummate musical craft and unwavering faith.

II **Birthday Madrigals**

John Rutter

1995

b. 1945

My true love hath my heart

Draw on, sweet night

It was a lover and his lass

John Rutter's *Birthday Madrigals* were completed in 1995 to honor the British-American jazz pianist George Shearing on the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday. It might be well to introduce this music with comments on the backgrounds of these two musicians, and also on three particular literary and musical figures of sixteenth and seventeenth century England — because threads involving all of these people come together in the *Birthday Madrigals*:

John Rutter is a prolific British composer of sacred and secular choral music that is widely performed and heard in both the UK and the USA. His major influence is of course the tradition of British choral music that stretches back to medieval

times. While in his teens, however, Rutter also became attracted to the USA's indigenous musical traditions: the American spiritual, born of the confluence of Afro-American and Appalachian influences; the fifty-year development of jazz, which was born of the fusion of turn-of-the-twentieth-century southern blues with European influences, and which grew first in the south and later in major cities of the north; and the cross-fertilization of American vaudeville with European influences that led to American musical theater and the dominance of the American "standard" popular song in the mid-twentieth century. Echoes of the latter can be heard in his *Shepherd's Pipe Carol*, a piece which he wrote at age eighteen for accompanied choral voices, and which is often heard in the Christmas season.

George Shearing, born sightless in South London in 1919, began to study the piano at age three. He, like Rutter, was attracted to American musical idioms at an early age. He learned by listening to jazz pianists such as Fats Waller and Teddy Wilson (a jazz soloist and the pianist with Benny Goodman's big band). By his mid-teens Shearing was playing professional jazz piano. In 1947 he came to the United States, where in 1949 he formed the George Shearing Quintet, which soon achieved wide popularity through the distinctive sound of its unusual instrumentation (piano, string bass, guitar, vibraphone, and drums). Contributing to the group's sound were Shearing's tight arrangements for these instruments, dominated by the pianist's "locked-hands" style of playing, in which both hands remained together, within the compass of an octave, with the melody in the octave's top and bottom notes, while the inner notes provided the pianist's always-inventive harmonies. After enjoying three decades of public favor, the Quintet disbanded in the late 1970's, a time when Shearing was becoming interested in music influenced by a blend of jazz and the classics. One product of this era was *Music to Hear*, Shearing's 1985 setting of a number of Shakespearian lyrics for choir and jazz rhythm section — which thus anticipated Rutter's *Birthday Madrigals* by a decade.

Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586) was a soldier and courtier in the service of Queen Elizabeth; he was also a poet whose work was widely admired in his time. Perhaps his most beautiful poem was the sonnet *My true love hath my heart*.

John Wilbye (1574-1638) was a musician and madrigal composer who was employed under the patronage of Sir Thomas Kitson and his wife at their estate in Bury St. Edmonds, Suffolk, northeast of London. His compositions are among the most highly regarded of the entire English madrigal genre. Most of them appeared in two published sets: *The First Set of English Madrigals to 3, 4, and 5 Voices* (1598, 30 madrigals), and *The Second Set of English Madrigals to 3, 4, and 5 Voices* (1609, 34 madrigals). One of the latter was *Draw on, sweet night* — a melancholy through beautiful work, on a poem probably written by Wilbye himself.

In the year 1600 the English madrigal composer Thomas Morley published his collection *First Book of Ayres or Little Short Songs*. Among these tunes was Morley's melody, with lute accompaniment, for a Shakespearian lyric: *It was a lover and his lass*, from the play *As You Like It*.

John Rutter, in 1975, set *It was a lover and his lass* for choral voices in a jazz-inflected style, keeping Morley's words but not his melody, which he replaced with

a tune of his own. Twenty years later, in 1995, he was invited by Brian Kay, director of the Cheltenham Bach Choir, to compose choral settings of madrigal verses in honor of George Shearing's seventy-fifth birthday. Rutter, who was probably very aware of Shearing's jazz choir arrangements of 1985, responded to Kay's invitation with new settings of four lyrics from the English madrigal era, which he added to his *It was a lover and his lass*, to make a set of five. The music was premiered in June of 1995 by the Cheltenham Bach Choir, with Rutter directing.

Oriana presents three of Rutter's five *Birthdays Madrigals* in these concerts:

Philip Sidney's *My true love hath my heart* seems never to have been set to music during the English madrigal era, but this sonnet is a wonderful vehicle for Rutter's sensitive harmonies, which may prompt listeners of a certain age to recall the American "standard" popular song that was heard everywhere during the middle of the twentieth century.

Draw on, sweet night is Rutter's perfect blend of the English madrigal idiom and the American song idiom. The principle of the English madrigal is that the music must reflect the sense of the words at every moment. Listen closely, then, to Rutter's harmonies on John Wilbye's words "*painful melancholy*" and "*My griefs when they be told / To shades and darkness, find some ease from paining*" — and you'll get the idea. Rutter is using sharp American-derived jazz dissonances to emphasize these words, whereas Wilbye, in his 1609 musical setting, used the simpler dissonances of his own era. But the madrigal principle remains the same.

Rutter's setting of Thomas Morley's *It was a lover and his lass* is characterized by moving block chords in the lower voices (which imitate what a piano might play), over which the sopranos sing the lyric. In the second verse the baritones take over the melody (the two voice ranges symbolize the "lover and his lass"), and Shakespeare's delightful bawdiness becomes clearly evident: "*Between the acres of the rye, / With a hey and ho, and a hey-nonny-no, / These pretty country folks would lie / In springtime, in springtime...* ". Rutter's choral setting ends with a brief jazzy coda on the words (not by Shakespeare!) "*'cos the sun shines.*"

My true love hath my heart, and I have his,
By just exchange one to the other given:
I hold his dear, and mine he cannot miss,
There never was a better bargain driven:
My true-love hath my heart, and I have his.

His heart in me keeps him and me in one;
My heart in him his thoughts and senses guides:
He loves my heart, for once it was his own;
I cherish his because in me it bides:
My true-love hath my heart, and I have his.

Draw on, sweet Night, best friend unto those cares
That do arise from painful melancholy;
My life so ill through want of comfort fares,
That unto thee I consecrate it wholly.

Sweet Night, draw on; my griefs, when they be told
To shades and darkness, find some ease from paining;
And while thou all in silence dost enfold,
I then shall have best time for my complaining.

It was a lover and his lass,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey-nonny-no,
That o'er the green cornfields did pass,
In spring time, in spring time,
The only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding-a-ding, ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring.

Between the acres of the rye,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey-nonny-no,
These pretty country folks would lie,
In spring time, in spring time,
The only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding-a-ding, ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring.

And therefore take the present time
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey-nonny-no,
For love is crowned with the prime
In spring time, in spring time,
The only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding-a-ding, ding;
Sweet lovers love the spring — *'cos the sun shines!*

III Draw on, sweet night
John Wilbye

1609
1574-1638

John Wilbye was briefly mentioned above. He was the son of a prosperous Norfolk farmer; his musical talent attracted the attention of Sir Thomas Kitson, a wealthy merchant, landowner, and patron of the arts, who had built a vast estate in Bury St. Edmonds, in the adjoining county of Suffolk. Wilbye, at the age of twenty-one, became a resident musician in Kitson's household, where he gave musical

instruction to the members of the large family, played the lute, wrote madrigals, and managed a sheep farm that Sir Thomas gave him.

As noted above, 30 of Wilbye's madrigals were published in 1598 and 34 in 1609; these, along with two others, formed his total output of 66 works in the madrigal genre. As with all madrigals, Wilbye's madrigals are always a musical reflection of the sense of the text. His, however, lack the sudden changes of mood that are found in most other madrigals of the era: any particular madrigal of his tends to have a prevailing mood rather than a series of changing moods, and this feature actually makes his madrigals sound more unified than those of others.

Draw on, sweet night (probably set to Wilbye's own poem) is scored for six voices, a thick combination that lends the music a somber sound, which thereby reflects the nature of the poem. All six voices sound at the same time only at the culminating points of the poem's phrases, however: for the first 25 measures of the music, Wilbye has no more than four voices sounding at the same time, and by alternating different combinations of these voices, he achieves constant shifts of musical color.

At the cadence on the final iteration of the words "...from painful melancholy", all six voices finally sound simultaneously. Then, at "*My life so ill...*", as the key changes abruptly from D major to F major, the words are again conveyed by sparse groups of voices, sometimes three, sometimes four. All six come together again at the cadence on "*...I consecrate it wholly.*" The next words, "*Sweet night, draw on*", are an inversion of the opening words, and are set, appropriately, to a variation of the opening music.

From "*My griefs when they be told*" until the first iteration of "*And while thou all in silence dost enfold*", something very interesting happens: the six voices sound *five times* again in sparse combinations, in groups of only three voices each. A different selection of voices in each group gives each successive phrase a different musical color from the preceding phrase.

All six voices join together once more for the last cadence of the words "*...all in silence dost enfold*". Then, for the poem's final line, "*I then shall have best time for my complaining*", we again hear small groups of voices, first of three, then of four, until all six combine one last time for the madrigal's final cadence.

(The text of *Draw on, sweet night* appears above, in Rutter's *Birthday Madrigals*.)

IV special relativity

Frank S. Li

2019

b. 1989

The Oriana Consort is proud to present the premiere of *special relativity*, which was written especially for Oriana by Frank S. Li, an emerging composer in the Boston area and a member of Oriana's bass section.

In *special relativity* we stand face to face with an *avant-garde* musical work. The *avant-garde*, whether in literature, art, architecture, or music, is typically characterized by an abandonment of comfortable convention and the embrace of maybe-not-so-comfortable experiment. It follows that the reader, viewer, or listener of an *avant-garde* work, in order to absorb it, *must be prepared not to anticipate convention*, as we all normally do — however reassuring convention may feel, or however well convention may have worked in the past. He or she must be prepared, on the other hand, to *accept the premise that experimentation is valid on its own merits*.

Thus, in listening to *special relativity*, perhaps it is advisable to expect that *no* convention that one usually associates with choral music is going to be in effect. Instead, it may be well to *expect the unexpected*, for this work contains the unexpected in abundance:

One must expect many moments in this work when conventional boundaries of harmony have been ignored, and even many moments when conventional notions of what constitutes choral sound have been set aside. One must expect moments when the texture is made up not of previously known musical sounds, but of aleatory, i.e. random, sounds, which will probably change from one performance to another. One must also expect a considerable part of the music to consist not of sound, but of silence.

That said, however, one can also expect many moments of very pleasing (if newly conceived) harmonic and rhythmic effects, as well as a most inventive manner of setting the text — a poem which was also written by the composer, and which in itself is an *avant-garde* work.

Here is what the composer of *special relativity* has written about his piece:

“There is a thought experiment in relativity. The idea goes: so no information can move faster than the speed of light, right? Say you had a metal pole light-years in length. I stand at one end and you the other, and I pushed on the pole. The pole itself does not have to move all of those light-years, but since you can feel the push on the other end, we've transmitted information faster than the speed of light!

“But no. In reality, each individual atom cannot move faster than the speed of light, so when I push the pole, each atom pushes against its neighbor, one by one, down the pole, slower than the speed of light. This piece explores a magnificent moment — that moment of intense desire and anticipation, when the air in the room changes — within a metaphor of that thought experiment.”

Please do bear in mind that many works of literature, art, architecture, and music that are *now in the standard canon* were considered *outrageous* at the time they were introduced. Just a few of these are: Igor Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Arnold Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht (Transfigured Night)*, Alexander Scriabin's *Mysterium*, Charles Ives' *The Unanswered Question*, and — believe it or not — Ludwig van Beethoven's *Symphony No. 3*, because it contained an intentional French horn entrance on the “wrong notes”.

seeking the evening's collapse
and pierce me
enmesh in midnight cloudless bright
as the minutes tick by.

and her mind aglow with cosmic riddles:
solar fusion neutron star.

she turns to peek
across the boundless lowland between us
and I tense with want to succumb
as radiant heat
and I am deafened by her starlight hands
hydrogen candescence
as the minutes
as the hundred thousand pulsar waves
stellar collapse and I,

but the second hand ticks ahead
and petite atoms defy deify human dictate
content in aluminum sluggishness to dance
at only speed of light.

V Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich Cantata BWV 150 c. 1707
Johann Sebastian Bach 1685-1750

Among Bach's cantatas, *Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich* is unusual. It contains much more choral music than most of his other cantatas: there are four choral movements, whereas others usually contain two choral movements at most, or just one, or none. No copy of this cantata exists in Bach's handwriting; the work is known only from a copy made after Bach's death by one of his pupils. Internal evidence has been found to suggest that the cantata was probably written in the spring of 1707 — during Bach's first significant musical position, in the town of Arnstadt — for the 70th birthday of an official in the town of Mühlhausen, where Bach was known to be searching for his next musical position. The cantata may therefore have been a test piece in his search for employment in Mühlhausen, for which he was indeed chosen

and which he commenced in the summer of 1707. Most scholars therefore currently believe that *Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich* is Bach's earliest cantata.

Most of Bach's cantatas were written for specific occasions — church services, weddings, funerals, commemorations — but no occasion for *Nach dir, Herr* is known, so we won't know the purpose of this work.

The texts of three of the four choral movements (2, 4, and 6) are taken from Psalm 25, and the texts of the other movements are freely written, though it is not known by whom.

Following the Lutheran tradition, the texts of this cantata are *intensely personal*. Each of the six vocal movements shows that the singer is really an individual, not a group — even though a group is singing — and that that individual is in an intimate personal relationship with his or her Lord.

The mood of the cantata begins on a somber note, with an instrumental *sinfonia* whose chromatically descending lines anticipate the choral melodies of movement 2. That movement continues the somber mood, with upward octave skips in each of the four choral voices, followed by a chromatic descent in tiny half-steps. These choral lines represent the *longing* which begins of this verse. The mood changes at “...*ich hoffe auf dich (...I hope for thee)*”, which is declaimed in a sudden *allegro*, followed by the fervent plea of “*Laß mich nicht zu schanden werden (Let me not come to dishonor)*” and then the reason why not: “*daß sich meine Feinde nicht freuen (lest my enemies be pleased)*”, which is sung as a quiet but intensely felt up-tempo fugue.

Since there is still much choral music to come, Bach cleverly doesn't bring on another choral movement right away, but instead introduces a soprano aria at this point. Its mood is cheerful, though Bach doesn't miss the chance to express the word *Toben (rage)* with sudden arpeggios in the soprano voice, reflected by swift sixteenth-note figures in the violins. And the words *Tod, Höll (death, Hell)* are emphasized by the affective drop of a diminished seventh in the vocal line.

In movement 4, though the full chorus sings “*Leite mich... (Lead me...)*”, it is significant that the object of the verb is *me*, not *us*. Again: in the Lutheran tradition, everything is *personal*. And a detail of German grammar is also significant here: If the words had been “...*in deine Wahrheit*”, they would have meant “...*to thy truth*.” But the words are “...*in deiner Wahrheit*”. The preposition's object is in a different case, so that the words mean “...*within thy truth*.” That is: we don't need to be led to the truth, because we are *already within it*; we just need some guidance while we're there.

Movement 4 concludes with iterations of the resolute statement “*täglich harre ich dein (daily do I wait for thee)*”, in long notes surrounded by swift counterpoint.

An aria for three solo voices follows, whose text is a distant reference to Psalm 29. The trio sings of cedar trees, which, though strong, can become twisted in the furious wind — while the words and deeds of the Lord keep us steadfast. The wind is represented by the extremely active sixteenth notes played by the cello, while the steady word of the Lord is portrayed by the sturdy quarter notes of the singers. Only

once, briefly, do the sturdy voices falter, at the word "*widerbellet (barks back)*", but they quickly recover.

In movement 6, the eyes that look always toward the Lord — the essence of serenity — is reflected by the gently rocking motion in the instrumental ensemble (like that of a Venetian barcarolle). The mood quickly shifts in the second line, "*denn er wird meinen Fuß aus dem Netze ziehen (for he shall pluck my foot out of the net)*", which is sung to another rapid and intense fugue, as though one were in fear of the foot *not* being plucked out.

In the concluding seventh movement, Bach brings in an entirely new musical device (is he inexhaustible?), namely the *ciaccona* ("each one"). This device, conventional in much European music of the time, features a ten-note bass *ostinato* which repeats over and over, while, at each repetition, something new happens in the upper vocal and instrumental voices. We hear the *ostinato* first in the cello and violone, with the higher instruments harmonizing; then it returns under the choral voices, which sing of "*My days of suffering...*". We have to wait while the instruments play over another bass *ostinato* before we can hear what the next words are; only then can we hear the happy resolution: "*...God will yet end with joy.*" And the word *joy (Freude)* is sung in beautiful undulating parallel sixths by the sopranos and altos as the basses repeat the *ostinato* once more.

Musical variety is added by the unexpected entry of four solo voices, each of which sings a brief though charming line. These little solos occupy the third through the sixth lines of the poem. After some more anticipation-building instrumental activity (all still over the *ostinato*, of course), the choral voices re-enter with the culminating words of the cantata: "*Christ, who stands at our sides, / Helps me daily to struggle victoriously*". (Note the individual within the Lutheran community: stands at *our* sides; helps *me*.)

The undulating parallel sixths are passed to the tenors and basses, who soon return them to the sopranos and altos, after which this final movement — all of which has been in a minor key — concludes on an optimistic major chord.

It is interesting to note that Bach wrote *Nach dir, Herr* about a year after he returned from his leave in the north German town of Lübeck to study with Dietrich Buxtehude, which (as is well known) he overstayed by about three months, much to the annoyance of his Arnstadt employers. From Buxtehude he learned the art of constructing an entire cantata using a chorale melody as its basis: the chorale would not only be a hymn sung during the cantata, but its melody (and its symbolism) would be woven into the cantata's choral movements and arias. Thus, later in 1707, after composing *Nach dir, Herr*, he also wrote the Easter cantata *Christ lag in Todesbanden (Christ lay in the bonds of death)*. The latter is an excellent example of a chorale cantata; the former is not, though its four choral movements show a thorough mastery not only of the mechanics of counterpoint and composition for voices and instruments, but of making that mastery serve a higher spiritual purpose. Not bad for a young musician of twenty-two.

To provide a little perspective to the above information, here is a simple table showing the years of Bach's five major musical positions, their locations, and the age of the composer at the beginning and end of each position:

Arnstadt	1703-1707 (1705-1706: Lübeck visit)	18-22
Mühlhausen	1707-1708	22-23
Weimar	1708-1717	23-32
Cöthen	1717-1723	32-38
Leipzig	1723-1750	38-65

1---Sinfonia

2---Coro

Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich.
Mein Gott, ich hoffe auf dich.
Laß mich nicht zu schanden werden,
daß sich meine Feinde nicht freuen über mich.

*For thee, Lord, do I long.
My God, I hope for thee.
Let me not come to dishonor,
lest my enemies be pleased on my account.*

Psalm 25: 1,2

3---Aria

Doch bin und bleibe ich vergnügt,
obgleich hier zeitlich toben
Kreuz, Sturm und andre Proben,
Tod, Höll, und was sich fügt.
Ob Unfall schlägt den treuen Knecht,
Recht ist und bleibet ewig Recht.

*I am and remain cheerful,
although in time here do rage
cross, storm and other trials,
Death, Hell, and things like that.
Even if misfortune befalls the true servant,
What is right is, and remains, eternally right.*

4---Coro

Leite mich in deiner Wahrheit, und lehre mich;
denn du bist der Gott, der mir hilft;
täglich harre ich dein.

*Lead me within thy truth, and teach me;
for thou art the God who helps me;
daily do I wait for thee.*

Psalm 25: 5

5---Aria (trio)

Zedern müssen von den Winden
Oft viel Ungemach empfinden;
Oftmals werden sie verkehrt.
Rat und Tat auf Gott gestellt;
Achtet nicht, was widerbellet,
Denn sein Wort ganz anders lehrt.

*Cedars, from the winds, must
Often experience much privation;
Frequently they are twisted.
Put word and deed upon God;
Pay no attention to what barks back,
For his Word teaches entirely otherwise.*

6---Coro

Meine Augen sehen stets zu dem Herrn;
denn er wird meinen Fuß aus dem Netze ziehen.

*My eyes are always looking toward the Lord;
for he shall pluck my foot out of the net.*

Psalm 25: 15

7---Coro

Meine Tage in den Leiden
Endet Gott dennoch zur Freuden;
Christen auf den Dornenwegen
Führen Himmels Kraft und Segen.
Bleibet Gott mein treuer Schatz,
Achte ich nicht Menschenkreuz;
Christus, der uns steht zur Seiten,
Hilft mir täglich sieghaft streiten.

*My days of suffering
God will yet end with joy;
The power and grace of heaven
Lead Christians upon their way of thorns.
If God remains my faithful treasure,
I do not heed mankind's burdens;
Christ, who stands at our sides,
Helps me daily to struggle victoriously.*