



Ricercare a 6

J. S. Bach

From the Musicial Offering

Transcribed by Peter Billam


For sSATBG Recordors

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The Musical Offering

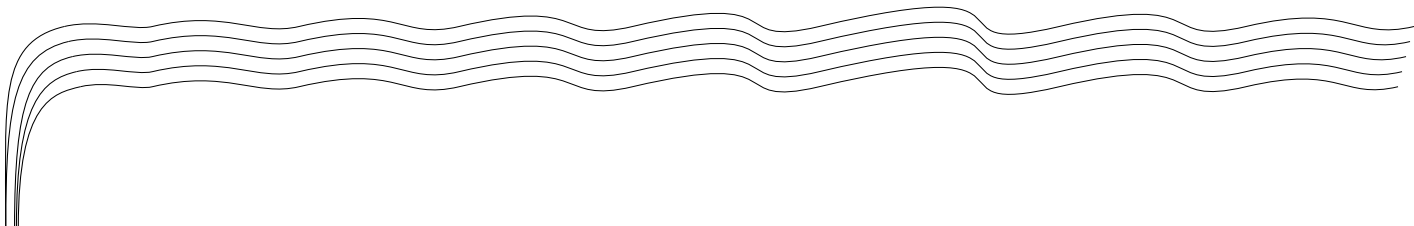
In May of 1747, after finishing the B minor Mass and the second book of the Well-Tempered Clavier, Johann Sebastian Bach travelled to Potsdam, accompanied by his son Wilhelm Friedeman, to visit his successful son Carl Philipp Emmanuel, who was personal harpsichordist to Frederick the Great of Prussia. Johann Sebastian was still a humble schoolteacher; he taught Latin and Music at St Thomas School in Leipzig.

Potsdam was a very musical court. Personal flute teacher to Frederick the Great was Johann Joachim Quantz, the finest flute player in the country, the author of the book "On Playing the Flute", and the only person allowed to find fault with the king's flute playing. Carl Philipp Emmanuel would have spent much time playing music with Quantz, and they must have sounded wonderful. Frederick himself was a fine flute player, and a composer whose works are still played by flute players today.

When Johann Sebastian arrived, the King immediately cancelled the evening's planned concert. He had an extensive collection of harpsichords, and Johann Sebastian, without being given time to change out of his travelling clothes, was ushered from room to room and asked to improvise on each one.

The King also had fifteen of the new fortepianos, which he correctly foresaw as the great new wave in music. They were loud modern inventions, where the strings were so thick that they could not even be plucked, but had to be hit with hammers. Silbermann, of Freyburg, had devised an elaborate mechanism to allow the hammer to rebound even as the key remained pressed. The fortepiano had some of the touch sensitivity of the clavichord, but was loud enough to be played in concert, even in public; however, it could not play vibrato, as the clavichord could. This was the only time that Johann Sebastian played on the new fortepiano, and every piano player since would love to know what he thought of the instrument, and how he played it. Certainly Silbermann was the organ-maker that Johann Sebastian most admired, so the new creation would have been accorded respect.

As is usual with visiting organists, Johann Sebastian was asked to improvise on a given theme. The King sat at the keyboard and played a fine Bach-like theme, rich and dramatic, and asked his guest to improvise a fugue upon it. The King admired the learned treatment of his subject, and asked Johann Sebastian to play it in four, then five, and finally six voices. Nobody knows what Johann Sebastian played in response, and I am sure that it sounded superb, but he probably failed to sustain a six-voice texture, and presumably the King pointed this out.



A six-voice fugue is an almost unheard-of technical challenge – there is none in the Well-Tempered Clavier, for example – and the King's theme, which does not fit in stretto with itself, is particularly unfavourable to treatment in many voices. On the other hand, because of its great eloquence, it is a wonderful subject for a three-voice fugue, and presumably Johann Sebastian pointed this out.

Arnold Schoenberg even suggested that the royal theme had been devised by Carl Philipp Emmanuel as a practical joke, because he knew a six-voice treatment would be impossible. I do think it was written by Carl Philipp Emmanuel, because it shows a superb understanding of Johann Sebastian's style, and is simply too good for the King to have invented. However, I do not think Carl Philipp Emmanuel, at the peak of a brilliant career, and well aware of his father's extraordinary powers, would have felt any need to ridicule him.

The King also desired to hear Johann Sebastian perform on the organ, so the next day he was taken round all the organs in Potsdam. The following day he returned to Leipzig.

The voyage to Potsdam is a defining event in the western musical tradition, because it is the only time Johann Sebastian was accorded public honour, the only time he played the fortepiano, and because it brings him, and all his contrapuntal powers, into contact with the best of the next generation, who were to develop the style which became that of Haydn and Mozart.

Six months later, Johann Sebastian sent to Potsdam a *Musical Offering* which he had had engraved at his own expense. The opening piece is a three voice fugue (*Ricercare a 3*) on the King's theme; this I see as Johann saying to Frederick "When I mentioned that the best setting for this theme was in three voices, this is what I had in mind ..." . The centrepiece is a six voice fugue (*Ricercare a 6*) on the King's theme; this I see as Johann saying to Carl Philipp "You see ? My art is adequate to your test ..." . The finale is a trio sonata, for flute, violin and continuo, largely based on the King's theme, a delight to play, perhaps the greatest and certainly the grandest trio sonata ever written. Between these three pieces are eight smaller ones, all on the King's theme. They include a number of puzzle canons, and the *Fuga Canonica in Epiadiapente* for flute and keyboard.

Then Johann Sebastian Bach turned his attention to the *Art of Fugue*.

Peter Billam

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8 10

divisi

This system contains measures 8, 9, and 10. It features six staves: two treble clefs (top two) and two bass clefs (bottom two). The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). Measure 8 shows the first two treble staves with melodic lines, while the other four staves are silent. Measure 9 continues the first two treble staves and the first bass staff. Measure 10 shows all six staves with active music. A 'divisi' marking is placed below the first bass staff in measure 10.

15

This system contains measures 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15. It features six staves: two treble clefs (top two) and two bass clefs (bottom two). The key signature is three flats. Measures 11-15 show complex polyphonic textures with all six staves active. The music includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.

This system contains measures 16, 17, and 18. It features six staves: two treble clefs (top two) and two bass clefs (bottom two). The key signature is three flats. Measures 16-18 continue the polyphonic texture with all six staves active. The music includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.

20

Musical score for measures 20-22. The score is in 6/8 time and consists of six staves. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). Measure 20 starts with a treble clef and a common time signature (C), which changes to 6/8 in the second measure. The music features a variety of note values including quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, along with rests and slurs. The bass line is mostly silent in these measures.

Musical score for measures 23-25. The score continues with six staves. The key signature remains one flat. The music continues with complex rhythmic patterns and melodic lines across the upper staves, while the bass line remains mostly silent.

25

Musical score for measures 26-28. The score continues with six staves. The key signature remains one flat. The music continues with complex rhythmic patterns and melodic lines across the upper staves, while the bass line remains mostly silent.



Musical score system 1, measures 8 to 30. The system consists of six staves (three treble and three bass clefs). The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 3/8. The music features complex rhythmic patterns and melodic lines across all parts, with various articulations and phrasing.



Musical score system 2, measures 31 to 34. This system continues the six-part texture from the previous system, showing intricate interplay between the voices and instruments.



Musical score system 3, measures 35 to 38. The system concludes the piece with a final cadence. The notation includes various ornaments and phrasing slurs.

Musical score for measures 1-39. The score is written for six staves, each with a recorder part. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 3/8. The notation includes various note values, rests, and phrasing slurs. The first staff begins with a measure rest marked with a '3' and a '9' above it, indicating a 3-measure rest for a 9-measure phrase.

Musical score for measures 40-44. The score continues with six staves. Measure 40 begins with a measure rest marked with a '4' and a '0' above it, indicating a 4-measure rest for a 10-measure phrase. The notation includes various note values, rests, and phrasing slurs.

Musical score for measures 45-48. The score continues with six staves. Measure 45 begins with a measure rest marked with a '4' and a '5' above it, indicating a 4-measure rest for a 15-measure phrase. The notation includes various note values, rests, and phrasing slurs.



System 1 of the musical score, consisting of six staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of two flats and a common time signature. The bottom staff is a bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. The music features various rhythmic values including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.



System 2 of the musical score, consisting of six staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of two flats and a common time signature. The bottom staff is a bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. The number '50' is written above the first staff. The music continues with complex rhythmic patterns and melodic lines.



System 3 of the musical score, consisting of six staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of two flats and a common time signature. The bottom staff is a bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. The music concludes with various rhythmic and melodic elements.

8 55

8 60

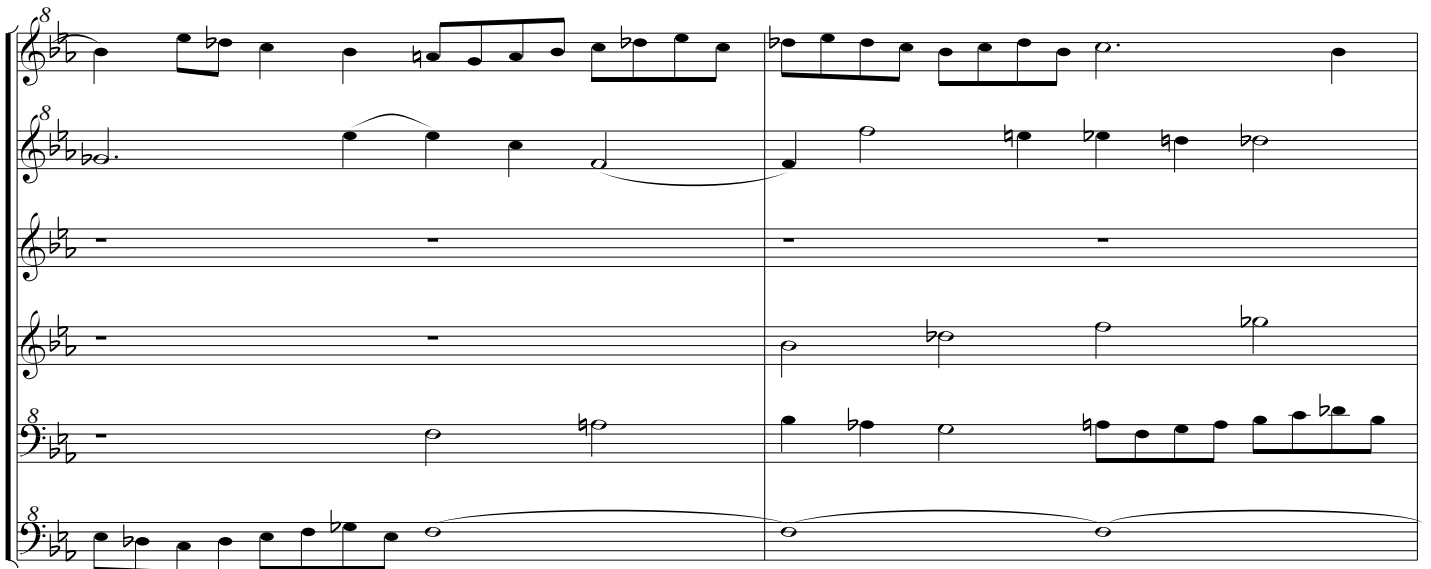
65

First system of musical notation, measures 65-67. It consists of six staves. The top staff has a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The second staff has a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The third staff has a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The fourth staff has a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The fifth staff has a bass clef and a key signature of two flats. The sixth staff has a bass clef and a key signature of two flats. The music features various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.

Second system of musical notation, measures 68-70. It consists of six staves. The top staff has a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The second staff has a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The third staff has a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The fourth staff has a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The fifth staff has a bass clef and a key signature of two flats. The sixth staff has a bass clef and a key signature of two flats. The music continues with complex rhythmic patterns and melodic lines.

70

Third system of musical notation, measures 71-73. It consists of six staves. The top staff has a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The second staff has a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The third staff has a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The fourth staff has a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The fifth staff has a bass clef and a key signature of two flats. The sixth staff has a bass clef and a key signature of two flats. The music concludes with a final cadence.



System 1 of the musical score. It consists of six staves. The top staff (treble clef) begins with a measure marked with a '3' and contains a sequence of eighth notes. The second staff (treble clef) has a measure marked with a '3' and contains a sequence of eighth notes. The third staff (treble clef) is mostly empty. The fourth staff (treble clef) contains a sequence of notes. The fifth staff (bass clef) contains a sequence of notes. The sixth staff (bass clef) contains a sequence of notes.



System 2 of the musical score. It consists of six staves. The top staff (treble clef) has a measure marked with a '3' and contains a sequence of notes. The second staff (treble clef) has a measure marked with a '3' and contains a sequence of notes. The third staff (treble clef) is mostly empty. The fourth staff (treble clef) contains a sequence of notes. The fifth staff (bass clef) contains a sequence of notes. The sixth staff (bass clef) contains a sequence of notes. A measure number '75' is written above the top staff.

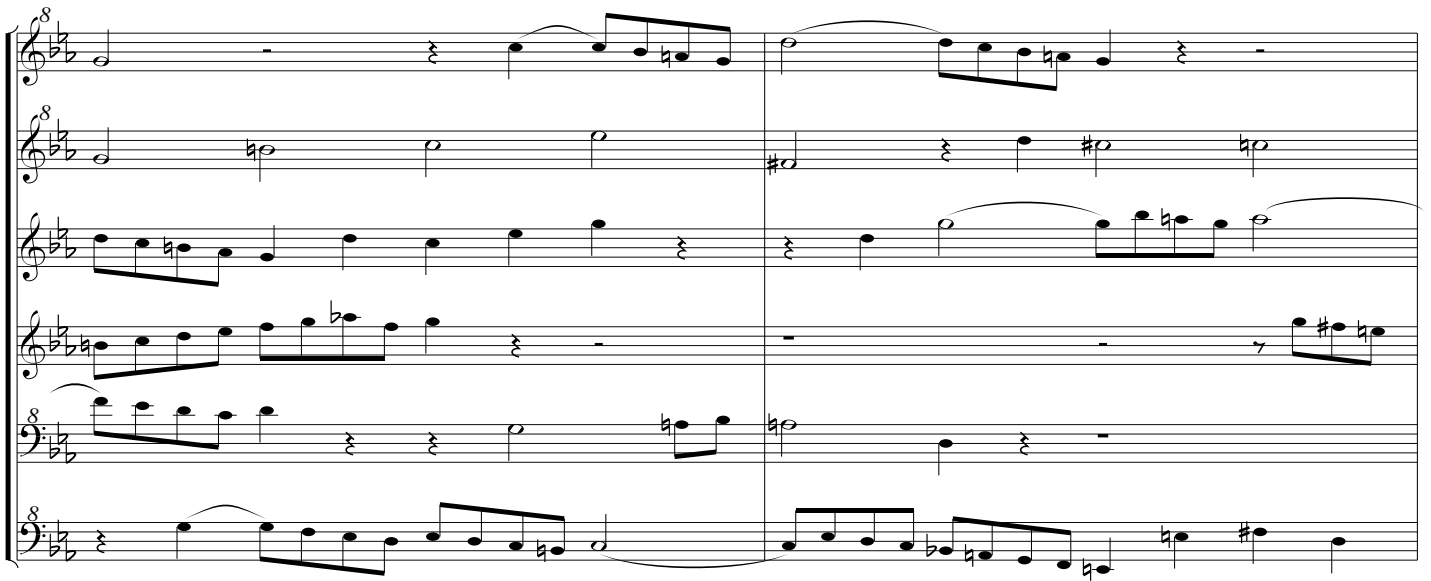


System 3 of the musical score. It consists of six staves. The top staff (treble clef) contains a sequence of notes. The second staff (treble clef) contains a sequence of notes. The third staff (treble clef) contains a sequence of notes. The fourth staff (treble clef) contains a sequence of notes. The fifth staff (bass clef) contains a sequence of notes. The sixth staff (bass clef) contains a sequence of notes.

Musical score for measures 78-80. The score is in G minor (three flats) and 3/8 time. It features six staves: two treble clefs and two bass clefs. Measure 78 shows a complex rhythmic pattern with sixteenth and thirty-second notes. Measure 79 continues with a melodic line in the upper staves and a more active bass line. Measure 80 concludes with a sustained chord in the upper staves and a melodic phrase in the bass.

Musical score for measures 81-83. The score continues with six staves. Measure 81 features a melodic line in the upper staves and a bass line with a prominent eighth-note pattern. Measure 82 shows a continuation of the melodic and bass lines. Measure 83 concludes with a melodic phrase in the upper staves and a bass line with a sustained note.

Musical score for measures 84-85. The score continues with six staves. Measure 84 features a melodic line in the upper staves and a bass line with a prominent eighth-note pattern. Measure 85 concludes with a melodic phrase in the upper staves and a bass line with a sustained note.



System 1 of the musical score, consisting of six staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of two flats and a common time signature. The bottom staff is a bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. The music features various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.



System 2 of the musical score, consisting of six staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of two flats and a common time signature. The bottom staff is a bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. The music continues with complex rhythmic figures. A measure number '90' is written above the top staff.



System 3 of the musical score, consisting of six staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of two flats and a common time signature. The bottom staff is a bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. The music concludes with intricate rhythmic patterns.

95

This system contains measures 95, 96, and 97. It features six staves: three treble clefs (soprano, alto, and tenor) and two bass clefs (bass and double bass). The music is in G minor (three flats) and 3/4 time. Measure 95 begins with a whole rest in the soprano part. The piece continues with intricate counterpoint between the voices and a steady bass line.

This system contains measures 98, 99, and 100. The musical texture remains consistent with the previous system, showing complex interweaving of six voices. The bass line provides a solid harmonic foundation for the vocal parts.

100

This system contains measures 101, 102, 103, and 104. The piece concludes with a final cadence. The soprano part has a melodic flourish in measure 101, and the bass line ends with a sustained note in measure 104.

Ricercare a 6 – Sopranino part

5

Alto ... Soprano ... Bass ...

10 15

Tenor ...

20

25

30

35

40 (An?)

45

50

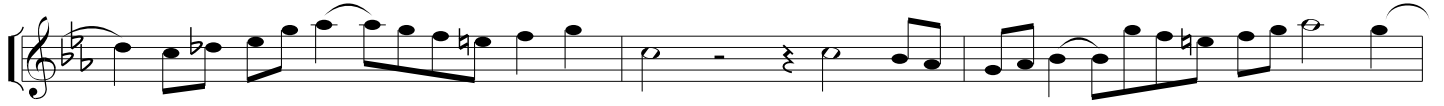
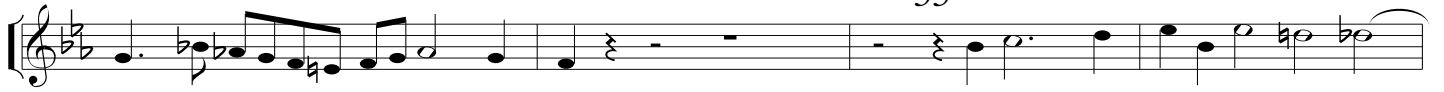
55

Detailed description: This is a musical score for the Sopranino part of 'Ricercare a 6'. The score is written in a single system with ten staves. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 4/2. The music begins with a five-measure rest, with the number '5' above the staff. The first three staves are labeled 'Alto ...', 'Soprano ...', and 'Bass ...' respectively. The fourth staff is labeled 'Tenor ...' and contains measures 10 and 15. The fifth staff contains measures 20 and 25. The sixth staff contains measures 30 and 35. The seventh staff contains measures 40 and 45, with a '(An?)' annotation above measure 42. The eighth staff contains measures 50 and 55. The ninth staff contains measures 55 and 60. The music consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, with some notes tied across measures. The piece concludes with a final rest in measure 60.

Ricercare a₅ 6 – Soprano part

The image displays a musical score for the Soprano part of 'Ricercare a₅ 6'. The score is written in a single system with ten staves. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 4/2. The music begins with a five-measure rest, followed by a series of notes. Measure numbers 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, and 50 are indicated above the staves. The notation includes various note values, rests, and phrasing slurs.

55



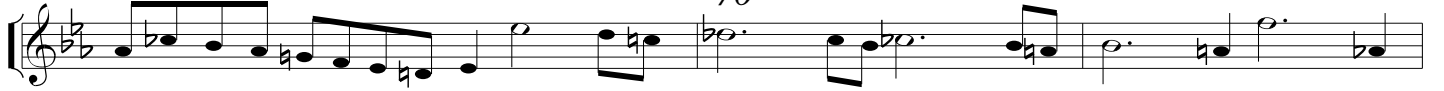
60



65



70



75



80

85



90



95



100



Ricercare a 6 – Alto part

Musical score for Alto part of Ricercare a 6, measures 1-50. The score is written in treble clef, 4/2 time signature, and B-flat major. It consists of 11 staves of music. Measure numbers 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, and 50 are indicated above the staves. The word "divisi" is written above the staff starting at measure 15. The music features various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.

55

60

65

70

75

80

85

90

95

100

Ricercare a 6 – Tenor part

5

Alto ... Soprano ...

Bass ...

10

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

50

55

55

60

65

70

75

80

85

90

95

100

Ricercare a 6 – Bass part

5

Alto ... Soprano ...

10

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

50

55

60

65

70

75

80

85

90

95

100

Ricercare a 6 – Great Bass (C) part

5

Alto ... Soprano ...

10

15

Bass ... Tenor ...

20

Sopranino ...

25

30

35

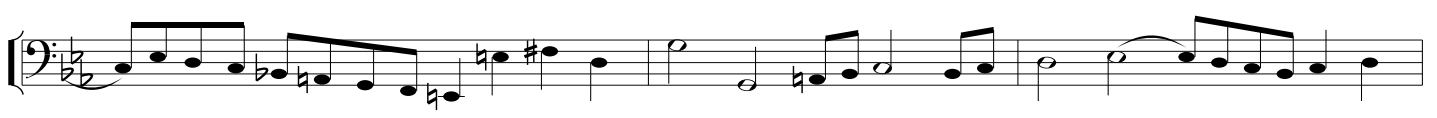
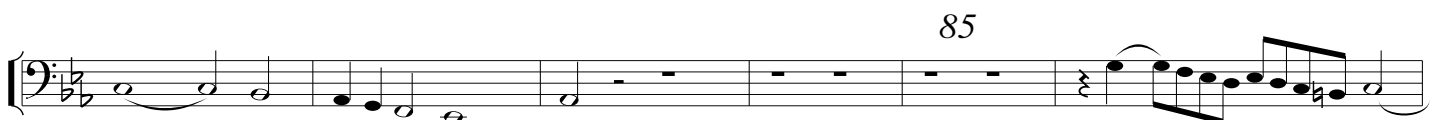
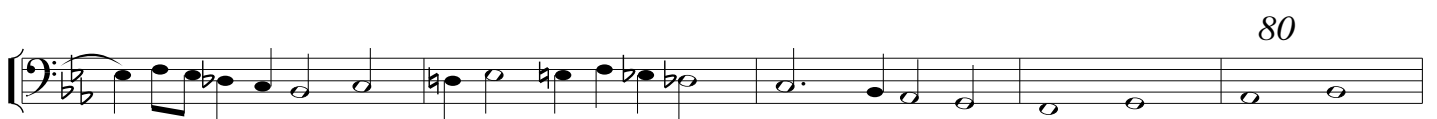
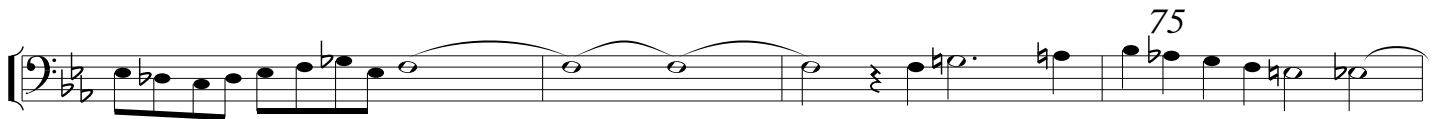
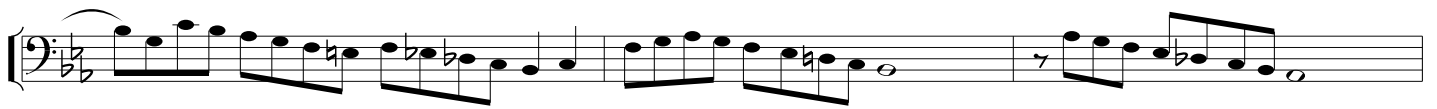
40

45

50

55

60



Peter Billam was born in London in 1948, studied piano, and lived in Switzerland from 1973 to 1983, where he studied composition, classical guitar, flute and voice, worked as Musical Director of the *Théâtre Populaire Romand*, and as recording engineer, record producer and computer programmer. He moved to Tasmania in 1983, and lectured in composition at the Conservatorium. He founded www.pjb.com.au, becoming the first composer to sell scores on-line, taking scores from Composer to Performer in one immediate step. *Wwww.pjb.com.au* offers a new approach to music publishing. These pieces are **written to be read, made to be played !**

Compositions at www.pjb.com.au include: *Five Short Pieces*, guitar, 1979; *Divisions on an Italian Ground*, flute and guitar, 1980; *De Profundis* and *Nacht*, on poems by Lama Anagarika Govinda, voice and piano, 1980; *Fünf Bagatellen*, piano, 1980; *Five Rounds*, choir, 1986; *Go Forth and Multiply*, choir, 1986; *Three Violin Duets*, 1987; *Fable*, for piano, 1987; *To Erich Jantsch*, SAATTB recorders, 1988; *A Suite of Curves*, trombone (or horn) and piano, 1990; *Two Recorder Duets*, alto recorders, or other melody instruments, 1991; *Trombone Quintet*, trombone, flute, piano, bass, and percussion, 1994; *Three Songs*, on poems by Jack Kerouac, Vikram Seth and Dylan Thomas, voice and piano (only the first and third of these are available), 1994; *Piano Study*, piano, 1994; *Four Dances*, various ensembles including recorder quartet, string quartet, 1995; *The Poet in the Clouds*, on a poem by S. T. Coleridge, SATB choir, 1995; *Tres Casidas del Diván del Tamarit*, on poems by Federico García Lorca, voice and piano, 1997; *Three Suites*, for the solo line, piano, and piano and a solo line, 2000; *Die Zeiten*, on poems by Kästner, Bachman and Jünger, choir (only the second and third of these are available), 2000; *Three Duets* for flutes, 2001; *For Four Hands* for piano four hands, 2002; *Three Preludes* for piano, 2003; *Second Solo Suite* for flute, violin, viola or cello, 2003; *Guitar Duet* for two guitars, 2006; *We Who Mourn* for choir, 2007; *Trio With Guitar* for guitar and two clarinets or two recorders or two violas, 2008; *Canons* for two- and four-hand piano, 2009; *Flute Trio*, 2012; *Twenty Studies* for piano, 2013-14; *Music for Strings* and *Two Encores for Strings* for 2vln, 2vla, 2vlc, 2015; *Album for Choir*, 2015; *Eight Pieces for Guitar*, 2017.

Arrangements include: By J. S. Bach: *Trio BWV 655*, piano and flute; *Vor deinen Thron BWV 668*, piano; *Fugue in F minor BWV 689*, SATB recorders; *Four Duets BWV 802-5*, keyboard; *Six Preludes and Fugues* from Book I, keyboard; *Flute Sonata BWV 1031* in G major for alto recorder and keyboard; *Flute Sonata BWV 1032* completed by Peter Billam for flute and keyboard, also in C major for alto recorder, and in G major for descant; *Ricercare a 3 of the Musikalisches Opfer* for keyboard; *Ricercare a 6*, for sSATBG recorders, or strings, or two keyboards; and *Fuga Canonica*; from the *Art of Fugue: Contrapuncti 1, 4 and 9* for keyboard, and *Contrapunctus 14* as completed by D. F. Tovey, for keyboard, or for SATB recorders, or for strings; *Passacaglia and Fugue in c* for piano four hands; *Chorales with Descant* for melody instrument and piano; *Cello Suites I, II and III* for flute or alto recorder, *Forty Chorales* for piano, *Der Geist hilft* for SATB-SATB recorders. By Brahms: *Fugue in Ab minor for organ*, for SATB recorders and gamba, in A minor; *Choralvorspiele for organ* plus settings by Isaac, Bach, Praetorius, recorders. *John Carr*; *Divisions on an Italian Ground*, flute or recorder and guitar. Franz Liszt, *Late piano pieces*, G.F. Händel: *Concerto Grosso in A minor* op 6 no 4, harpsichord and recorders; *Recorder Sonata in Bb* no 5, in G for tenor recorder and keyboard. Claudio Monteverdi, *Ecco Mormorar l'Onde*, SSATB recorders. Arnold Schoenberg: *Verklärte Nacht* for piano. Franz Schubert: *Four Songs*, voice and guitar; *Dances*, recorders and guitar, *Dances*, piano 4 hands. Scriabin, *Two Preludes op.67*; *Five Preludes op.74*, piano. Telemann, *Twelve Flute Fantasias*, recorder. Wilbye, *Draw on sweet Night*, SSATTB recorders, and for flute choir. *Twelve Italian Songs* and *Seven English Songs*, voice and guitar; *Folk Guitar Solos*; *Fourteen Folk Dance Tunes*, recorder and guitar; *Bushband Dances*, violin, accordeon and banjo; *Easy Classical Pieces*, Bb trumpet and piano; *Famous Beginnings*, for piano.

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