



THE CROSSING

DONALD NALLY — CONDUCTOR



Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the seminarians at Finkenwalde

THOMAS LLOYD'S BONHOEFFER

A CHORAL-THEATER PIECE
TEXTS ADAPTED FROM THE WRITINGS OF
DIETRICH BONHOEFFER AND MARIA VON WEDEMEYER

*"I often wonder who I really am: the one always cringing in disgust,
going to pieces at these hideous experiences here,
or the one who whips himself into shape, who on the outside
(and even to himself) appears calm, cheerful, serene, superior,
and lets himself be applauded for this charade – or is it real?"*

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer
from letter to Eberhard Bethge, December 15, 1943

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DONALD NALLY, CONDUCTOR

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2015 @ 8:00PM
UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, NEW YORK

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13 @ 2:00PM AND 5:00PM
PHILADELPHIA EPISCOPAL CATHEDRAL

Mika Godbole, percussion
John Grecia, keyboards
Rebecca Harris, violin
Thoma Mesa, cello

BONHOEFFER

- I. Meditation – I discovered later
- II. Scene – Flossenbürg
- III. Meditation – Life, what have you done to me?
- IV. Scene – Letters
- V. Meditation – In this particular case
- VI. Scene – Church capitulation
- VII. Meditation – Sometimes we are reminded
- VIII. Scene – Finkenwalde
- IX. Meditation – Night voices (Tegel)
- X. Scene – Letters after a prison visit
- XI. Meditation – The Past
- XII. Scene – Shall I kill?
- XIII. Meditation – I have made a mistake
- XIV. Scene – Searching
- XV. Meditation – Who am I?

Bonhoeffer was first performed by The Crossing at Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral on March 10, 2013.

This performance is being recorded for release on Albany Records.

THE CROSSING

Kelly Ann Bixby
Steven Bradshaw
Colin Dill
Micah Dinger
Robert Eisentrout
Ryan Fleming
Dmitri German
Rebecca Hoke
Steven Hyder
Michael Jones
Jeffrey Manns
Frank Mitchell
Daniel O'Dea
James Reese
Kyle Sackett
Daniel Schwartz
Daniel Spratlan
Elisa Sutherland
Daniel Taylor

John Grecia, accompanist
Donald Nally, conductor
Ian Goodrich, stage manager

THE COMPOSER

Thomas Lloyd's compositions have been performed by The Crossing, Lyric Fest, the Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia, the Bucks County Choral Society, the Philadelphia Singers, and numerous collegiate and high school ensembles. He is a Professor of Music at Haverford College, where he has directed the combined choral program for Haverford and Bryn Mawr Colleges since 1996. He has also served as Artistic Director of the Bucks County Choral Society since 2000. As Director of Music at the Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral since 2010 he has established new liturgical and community choirs. He has conducted choirs on ten international tours to Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe, all involving shared performances with local choirs. A complete listing of his compositions, articles, and collaborations can be found at www.thomaslloydmusic.com

PROGRAM NOTES

INTRODUCTION

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) was one of the most influential Christian theologians of the 20th Century. He abandoned what would have been a secure academic position at Union Theological Seminary in New York to return to Germany as an active leader of the Confessing Church, which actively resisted the capitulation of the establishment Lutheran and Catholic churches to the fascist leadership of Adolf Hitler.

Bonhoeffer also became a double agent for the *Abwehr* military intelligence agency through family connections, and was ultimately involved in the unsuccessful “July 20 Plot” (also known as the “Stauffenberg Plot”) to assassinate Hitler. This involvement led to his being imprisoned and subsequently hanged at Flossenbürg Concentration Camp a few weeks before the surrender of Germany. In the midst of all this underground political and religious activity, he fell in love with Maria von Wedemeyer, the granddaughter of an important supporter of the Confessing Church, and subsequently became engaged shortly before being arrested and interned in Tegel Prison for a period of 18 months leading up to his death.

Bonhoeffer is conceived as a concert work in a theatrical context. The movements alternate between eight reflective meditations, several of which are based on Bonhoeffer’s poetry, and seven dramatic scenes highlighting emblematic incidents in the theologian’s life. The casting of singers and instrumentalists is mostly symbolic rather than literal. Bonhoeffer himself is not represented by a particular singer, but by various combinations of solos, duets, trios, or the whole men’s contingent. They also represent Bonhoeffer’s community of underground seminarians.

In contrast to the male-dominated culture in which Bonhoeffer primarily lived and struggled, three female soloists represent the centrality of several important women in the development of his spiritual life. They sing primarily the words of his fiancé Maria von Wedemeyer, but they also represent the probable feminine influence on his spiritual life of Bonhoeffer’s mother (his only connection to Christian tradition as a child), his twin sister Sabine (who married a Jewish lawyer), his grandmother Julie (who proudly defied the Nazi boycott of Jewish businesses), and his fiancé’s mother Ruth-Alice von Bismark (an important supporter of the Finkenwald seminary).

MUSIC IN THE LIFE OF BONHOEFFER

Music was a constant part of Bonhoeffer’s life and imagination. He was a highly skilled pianist who could have considered a career as a musician. Beginning in his youth, Bonhoeffer played piano trios with brothers and cousins, including late in his life with his brother Klaus and cousin Rüdiger Schleicher, both of whom were also martyred co-conspirators by the end of the war. For this reason, the core accompanying ensemble in *Bonhoeffer* is a piano trio. The occasional sound of the organ represents the established church and its traditions, the drums the relentless pressures of the war, and the vibraphone the spiritual and domestic ideals that Bonhoeffer longed for but rarely experienced as an adult.

Bonhoeffer’s letters are filled with references to specific songs, hymns, and piano repertoire. *Bonhoeffer* incorporates many of these individual works and composers through a combination direct quotation, variation, and formal modeling. In addition to being steeped in the music of the Austro-German Baroque, Classical, and Romantic era composers, Bonhoeffer was also deeply influenced by the Negro Spirituals he encountered in Harlem during his first visit to America for post-graduate study at Union Seminary in 1930. He found a direct correlation between the suffering of the Africans under slavery in the United States with the suffering of the Jews under Nazism in Germany. Bonhoeffer frequently played recordings of the spirituals as part of the daily rituals of the underground seminary at Finkenwalde. He had brought these recordings back with him from Harlem during his year studying at Union Seminary in 1930. The central scene of this work (*VIII. Scene - Finkenwalde*) incorporates short excerpts from recordings of Paul Robeson and Hall Johnson’s choir that could have been among Bonhoeffer’s collection.

“CHORAL-THEATER”

The idea of imagining a “choral-theater” piece was inspired by a concert I attended that left a profound impression on me - a performance of the Russian composer Rodion Shchedrin’s *The Sealed Angel*. Performed in open space with steps at one end and the audience surrounding on three sides, four solo dancers and a flutist interweaved themselves among the 80 members of the Berlin Philharmonic Choir. As listeners, there was no option for passivity - we were fully engaged by the physical presence of the singers and dancers, not just by the sounds they made.

The movement didn’t obscure the music with busy-ness, but served to *embody* the music and brake through the fabled “fourth wall” to allow listeners to become more fully engaged with the physicality of singing and sound as movement. Thanks to the collaboration with dancers Tim Early and Carrie Ellmore-Tallitsch in our first performance in 2013, the singers became comfortable moving throughout the piece, with the result that the current performances do not involve dancers.

I believe that chamber choirs, especially those performing at as high a level as The Crossing, are in a unique position to employ the flexibility needed to push the boundaries of the concert experience. And such a theatrical context can create a space for both abstraction and connectivity in a way that allows the expression of strong emotion without sentimentality.

WHY BONHOEFFER?

I first became aware of Bonhoeffer when I read *The Cost of Discipleship* during a time in college when I was considering leaving my intensive focus on music to explore a calling to the priesthood, first within the Catholic church I grew up in, and then in the local Episcopal church in Oberlin. I think Bonhoeffer's combination of fervent devotion to Christ alongside iconoclastic defiance of the institutional church and state authority, even to the point of giving up his life and a promising future, seemed like the most courageous, principled life one could live.

My youthful idealism was also stoked by his iconic, short essay *Life Together*, where his description of the life of his underground seminary seemed like a moral utopia to me, combining elements of Catholic monasticism with the radical faith commitment of Protestantism. I also discovered people across the theological spectrum of Christianity saw Bonhoeffer as a confirmation of *their* particular model for Christian faith and action.

With time, my obsession with Bonhoeffer changed from "How could he attain faith of such strength that it led him to take such courageous actions?" to "How could he act so resolutely when he questioned his own faith and motivation so profoundly?" Years later, when religious martyrdom took on a very different caste after the events of 9/11, I started asking "Were the choices he made the best choices, not only for himself but for others?" and, "Do his faith and actions still speak to us in today's world of intense polarization between religious fundamentalism and materialist secularism?"

WHAT HAPPENED TO MARIA?

Maria von Wedemeyer did not learn of her fiancé's execution for two months. She remained close to the Bonhoeffer family. She attended university at Göttingen, where she became engaged to a fellow student, Paul Schniewind, son of a prominent theologian. Maria came to Bryn Mawr College in 1948 to earn a masters degree in mathematics. After their marriage in Germany, Schniewind came back with her to Bryn Mawr. They became members of the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer in Bryn Mawr, where Maria was baptized. They had their first child, Christopher, shortly after Maria's graduation from Bryn Mawr in 1950.

Not one to stay at home, Maria balanced family life with a position in data processing at Remington Rand. By the time of the birth of their second child, Paul, in 1954, they had settled into "an unpretentious, old house" in Haverford, but shortly afterward, strains in their relationship led to Schniewind returning to Germany and subsequent divorce. In 1959 she married Barton Weller, a successful businessman, and moved to Connecticut, where she suspended her career and devoted herself to her children, Weller's two children from an earlier marriage, and the life of a socially prominent family. However, this marriage also ended in divorce, in 1965.

Maria moved to Boston with her two sons and one of Weller's children, and returned to her career, this time with the Honeywell Corporation. She was the first woman to attain the level of senior management there, but also belonged to the Boston Industrial Mission, a forum for Christian ethical debate that led her to question Honeywell's involvement in the Vietnam war. As the life, death, and writings of Bonhoeffer received growing international attention, she was at first reluctant to participate, saying "It always surprises me how incredibly sensitive I am in regard to Dietrich and my relationship with him."

Towards the end of her life, she asked her secretary to transcribe their letters and send copies to her sister, Ruth-Alice von Bismarck. The year before her death in 1977 (in Boston), she attended a meeting of the Bonhoeffer Society for the first time in Geneva on the anniversary of Bonhoeffer's 70th birthday. There she was greeted warmly by a number of the surviving Finkenwalde seminarians. Her correspondence with Bonhoeffer was published in 1995 (*Love Letters from Cell 92 – The Correspondence between Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Maria von Wedemeyer*, edited by von Bismarck and Kabitz (Nashville: Abingdon Press 1995)).

BONHOEFFER

I. MEDITATION – I DISCOVERED LATER

I discovered later, and I'm still discovering right up to this moment, that it is only by living completely in this world that one learns to have faith. One must completely abandon any attempt to make something of oneself, whether it be a saint, or a ... sinner, ...a righteous man or an unrighteous one, a sick man or a healthy one.... In so doing we throw ourselves completely into the arms of God, taking seriously, not our own sufferings, but those of God in the world – watching with Christ in Gethsemane. That, I think, is *metanoia*;... - *Letter to Bethge from Tegel – July 21, 1944 (day after failure of Stauffenberg plot (LPP p 369-70/486))*.

musical reference: Franz Schubert, "Gute Ruh" (final lied of Die Schöne Müllerin - Bonhoeffer wrote a piano trio arrangement of this song as a teenager, and often performed piano trios with his brother Klaus and cousin Rüdiger Schleicher among others)

II. SCENE - FLOSSENBÜRG

(final worship service before execution)

[texts for the day used in an unplanned worship service at the prison, as reported in several biographies]:

Bonhoeffer leading the congregation in worship:

“He was wounded for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
he bore the punishment that made us whole,
and by his stripes we are healed. [Isaiah 53:5]

Nun ruhen alle Wälder,	[Now rest all the woods,
Vieh, Menschen, Städt und Felder,	Cattle, people, city, and field,
Es schläft die ganze Welt;	The whole world slumbers;
Ihr aber, meine Sinnen,	But you, my senses,
Auf, auf, ihr sollt beginnen,	Up! Up! You shall begin
Was eurem Schöpfer wohlgefällt.	What your Creator has set before you.]
- Gerhardt; (Isaac/Bach)	

“Through God’s mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”
[1 Peter 1:3]

Two prison guards: “Prisoner Bonhoeffer, get ready and come with us!” [EB 927]

Through the half-open door in one room of the huts I saw Pastor Bonhoeffer, before taking off his prison garb, kneeling on the floor praying fervently to his God. I was most deeply moved by the way this unusually lovable man prayed, so devout and so certain that God heard his prayer.In the almost fifty years that I worked as a doctor I have hardly ever seen a man die so entirely submissive to the will of God.” [H. Fischer-Hüllstrung, “A Report from Flossenbürg,” IKDB, 232 (EB 927)]

III. MEDITATION – LIFE, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO ME?

Life, what have you done to me?
Why did you come? Why did you go?
Past, when you flee from me,
Are you not still my past, my own?
(from the poem, “The Past” – LPP 321/419)

IV. SCENE – LETTERS

Maria: His frequent visits at the hospital with my Grandmother surprised me, and I was impressed by his devotion. We often had long talks together at this time... Being still deeply affected by my father’s death, I needed his help. [EM 411 (*Conspiracy and Imprisonment*, 331)]

Bonhoeffer:only from a heart that is tranquil, unconstrained and healed can something good and right emerge; and I consequently pray – forgive me for putting it like this – that God will bring us together again soon, very soon. Can you understand that? Do you feel just as I do? I hope so – indeed, I can’t conceive of any other possibility... [*Letters from Cell Block 92*, 334-5]

Maria: The innermost reality still stands, even though I don’t love him... I know that I will love him....Mother says he’s an idealist and hasn’t given it careful thought. I don’t believe that... [*Letters from Cell Block 92*, 337 - 12/19/42]

Bonhoeffer: Don’t say anything about the “false picture” I may have of you. I don’t want a “picture,” I want you; just as I beg you with all my heart to want me, not a picture of me. [*Letters from Cell Block 92*, [1/17/43] 340] [*Drum motive and organ return*]

Maria: I can’t go on like this. I have to know – are you really in danger? What am I doing? Forgive my weakness. I must call you. I must hear from your own lips what is going on. Why don’t you keep me posted? I don’t understand you. [*Letters from Cell Block 92*, [3/8/43] 343]

musical references:

- Schütz, “*O süsßer, O freundlicher*,” SWV285
- Beethoven, *Piano Sonata, Op. 111, 2nd movement*

V. MEDITATION – IN THIS PARTICULAR CASE

In this particular case it really is now or never. “Too late” means “never.” if there are none who are “violent in order to take the kingdom of heaven by force”* then [we] are no longer the church, but a useless association in which fine speeches are made.”

[letter to Henry Louis Henriad (Swiss theologian and ecumenical World Alliance leader) (original in English) – vol 12, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, 219]

* a reference to Matthew 11:12 as interpreted by Bonhoeffer.

VI. SCENE – CHURCH CAPITULATION

[confrontation with Reich Bishop Ludwig Müller EM190]

organ begins scene with the organ playing music interweaving Bach's "Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme" (Awake, cries out the voice), and the Nazi anthem "Deutschland Erwaken" (Germany, Awake!).

*[Deutschland erwache aus deinem bösen Traum!
Gib fremden Juden in deinem Reich nicht Raum!
Wir wollen kämpfen für dein Auferstehn
Arisches Blut soll nicht untergehen!*

*Germany awake from your nightmare!
Give foreign Jews no place in your Empire!
We will fight for your resurgence!
Aryan blood shall never perish!*

The Confessing Church pastors begin to sing Nicolai and Gerhardt's hymn:

*Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern
Voll Gnad' und Wahrheit von dem Herrn,
Die süsse Wurzel Jesse.*

*[How beautifully shines the morning star
full of the grace and truth of the Lord,
the sweet stem of Jesse.]*

(spoken firmly, but without bluster) "...We have unanimously adopted laws declaring that Citizens are those born of pure blood only.... this includes all pastors and members of the church, who must be Citizens."

the pastors with Bonhoeffer:

*Du Sohn Davids aus Jakobs Stamm,
Mein König und mein Bräutigam,
Hast mir mein Herz besessen.*

*[Thou David's Son from Jacob's lineage
My king and my bridegroom,
Thou hast my heart possessed.]*

Müller:

(coming closer, now in a more measured tone of voice, but with some personal urgency): "You must renounce this act of betrayal or no longer speak for the Church." [EM 190/EB 322 – invented summary]

Bonhoeffer and pastors break in with quotation of Article VII of the Augsburg Confession (1530) in Latin:

[Art. VII. De Ecclesia.]

Item docent, quod una sancta ecclesia perpetuo mansura sit.

[Also they teach that one holy Church is to continue forever.]

Müller:

What are you saying? Can you not speak our language?

the pastors:

The Church must speak for those who cannot speak.

Jesus Christ, the man for others.

Only those who cry out for the Jews can sing Gregorian chant.

musical reference: Pange lingua (plainchant)

VII. MEDITATION – SOMETIMES WE ARE REMINDED

Sometimes we are reminded how closely our own lives are bound up with other[s] how the centre of our own lives is outside ourselves.....I have often felt this after hearing that one of my [seminarians] had been killed...a mother probably feels this most strongly. - LPP 105/149-150.

musical reference: *Ebeling (Gerhardt) - hymn "Die Güldne Sonne"*

VIII. SCENE - FINKENWALDE

(seminary of the Confessing Church)

[with old style record player center stage, the first 12 bars of Lawrence Brown's arrangement of "Sometimes I feel like a motherless child" (either pre-recorded by a member of the choir or using the recording of Paul Robeson (from Paul Robeson - The Complete EMI Sessions). Overlapping with this, seminarians begin singing a setting of the Beatitudes, central to Bonhoeffer's "The Cost of Discipleship]

³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

⁵ Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst to do what is right,
for they will be filled.

⁷ Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted for doing what is right,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

¹² Rejoice and be glad.....'

¹⁴ *[soloist]:*.....But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you..... He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good...We must open our hearts to each other...

[singers separate into pairs, singing:]

I have done wrong....you are forgiven....

[a recording of the Hall Johnson Choir singing Johnson's arrangement of "Walk together children"]

IX. MEDITATION – NIGHT VOICES IN TEGEL

Night and silence.

I listen.

Only the steps and cries of the guards,
The distant, hidden laughter of two lovers.
Do you hear nothing else, lazy sleeper?

I hear my own soul tremble and heave.
Nothing else?.....

But my ear is open wide:

'We the old, the young,
The sons of all tongues,
We the strong, the weak,
The sleepers, the wakeful,
We the poor, the rich,
Alike in misfortune,
The good, the bad,

Whatever we have been,

We men of many scars,
We the witnesses of those who died,
We the defiant, we the despondent,
The innocent, and the much accused,
Deeply tormented by long isolation,
Brother, we are searching, we are calling you!
Brother, do you hear me?'

[LPP: pp 349-351/462-463.]

X. SCENE – LETTERS AFTER A PRISON VISIT

From accounts of July 30, 1943 visit (Cell 92 pp 55-56, 292ff):

- Maria: [*Schumann: "Süsser freund, du blickest mich verwundert an"*] - "you caught hold of me Although I was inwardly so calm, I was shivering. It felt so good, your warm hand, that I wished you would leave it there..... it transmitted a current that filled me up and left no room for thoughts. But you took it away. Don't you like being romantic? Your eyes were with me."

- B: [*Schubert: "Tränenregen"*] - "It was so inexpressibly wonderful to be with you..... and think how it will be when we're together with no one else around! I know I'm bad [with words to] console you but you know all that....I'm not cheerful and unselfish enough in this frightful prison [but you know that]. I'm never without you: the last few months have made me far more aware of that than I already was."

- Maria: [*Schubert: "Gretchen am Spinnrade"*] [*original letter lost; recreation based on descriptions and B's letter (following)*] I feel I may be starting to go mad. I stop and faint for no reason I almost feel as if I don't really know you at all, as if I don't really know myself any more, or even know what love feels like or truly means...the people who see me are becoming increasingly *worried* and *they* tell me my hope is in vain..... I feel I need to ask for some time to myself so as to no longer torment you with my anguish...

- B: [*Schubert: "Erstarrung"*] So it sometimes torments you to think of me? Isn't it enough that I love you as you are, and that I want nothing from you – no sacrifice, nothing at all; just you yourself? So tell me, *can* you go on without me? And, if you feel you can, can you still do so if you know that *I* can't go on without *you*? [27 June 1944]

XI. MEDITATION – THE PAST

O happiness beloved, and pain beloved in heaviness,
You went from me.
What shall I call you? Anguish, life, blessedness,
Part of myself, my heart – the past?

The door was slammed;
I hear your steps depart and slowly die away.
What now remains for me – torment, delight, desire?
This only do I know: that with you, all has gone.

But do you feel how I now grasp at you
And so clutch hold of you
That it must hurt you?
[How I so rend you
that your blood gushes out,]
simply to be sure that you are near me,
a life in earthly form, complete?

Do you divine my terrible desire
For my own suffering,
My eager wish to see my own blood flow,
Only that all may not go under,
Lost in the past?

*text from poem to Maria "The Past" verse 1 (LPP p. 320)
form and melodic outline freely adapted from Schubert's "Wasserflut" from Winterreise.*

XII. SCENE – DIALOGUE WITH A SOLDIER

von Haefden: Shall I kill? Teacher, help me! I know I'll be so close to him with my revolver.

seminarians: These words frightened us all. They had such an explosive effect that at first each of us endeavored to calm the others down. The discussion lasted for many hours.

Bonhoeffer: The shooting by itself means nothing: something must be gained by it: a change of the situation, a change of the government. Killing the man would be of no use; things might become even worse.

von Haefden: But I need more than theoretical answers. I may actually have my chance to kill the man. Should I take it? I might be one of the only ones who can do it. My own life is of no great importance. But what does it mean when Jesus says "those who live by the sword shall die by the sword?"

Bonhoeffer: This is a judgment Christians must accept in times such as these.

von Haefden: But, shall I...? May I kill him?

Bonhoeffer: I cannot decide this for you – the risk must be taken by you alone.

von Haeften: But what if my courage falters and I realize how I have failed those who would then continue to suffer?

Bonhoeffer: There is no way to make a choice that will not leave you with a burden. But burden is borne in suffering, the suffering of the cross.

The text is a conflated scene paraphrasing the account recorded by Wolf-Dieter Zimmermann, a student of Bonhoeffer's, of an encounter with the soldier Werner von Haeften, whose brother had taken Bonhoeffer's confirmation class as a youth and was now part of the resistance; von Haeften had recently learned that he would be staff lieutenant for von Stauffenberg, with whom he ultimately carried out the final, unsuccessful assassination plot against Hitler (EM425-6); questions from a separate encounter of Bonhoeffer's with von Dohnanyi are also included in this scene. MB 205]

The form and harmonic basis of the music in this movement is based on Heinrich Schütz' monody "Eile, mich, Gott, zu erretten"[referred to by Bonhoeffer in a letter to Bethge on December 18, 1943 as one of the pieces he would like sung at his funeral, and again to Bethge in a letter on May 21, 1944 LPP 306]

XIII. MEDITATION – I HAVE MADE A MISTAKE COMING TO AMERICA

I have made a mistake in coming to America.... I shall have no right to take part in the reconstructionif I do not share the trials of this time with my people now.....Such a decision each man must make for himself....but I cannot make that choice in the safety of exile." [letter to Niebuhr July 1939 on need to return to Germany – in "A Testament to Freedom: The Essential Writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer" – pp 479-80]

XIV. SCENE – SEARCHING

Maria: why did you have to risk your life? You had so much to offer the world.....we had so much to start together....

Bonhoeffer: "One must completely abandon any attempt to make something of oneself." (EM 484)

M: But we had our whole lives ahead of us! Maybe our children's lives....In the end what did it matter? The madman lived on to unleash his full vengeance on the Jews and on the world....

B: "The figure of the Crucified invalidates all thought which takes success as its standard."
(EM 363)

M: But how can you be so sure of yourself...so sure that you've chosen rightly?

B: It is not a matter of the "choice of right or wrong but obedience to God's will." (EM 470)

M: But what does that mean? How can you say that you know God's will?

B: "Jesus is the man for others....faith is being part of this being of Jesus." (MB 255)

M: But what if everyone decided to kill if they believed God was speaking to them?

B: "Man's religiosity makes him look in his [own] distress to the power of God in the world – The Bible only speaks of God as being powerless and suffering; only the suffering God can help."
(LPP 360-2)

M: If God only suffers as we do, what hope is there then for the world?

This is an imagined conversation with various quotations from Bonhoeffer's writings and invented words for Maria, suggesting an account of her Maria's desperate visits to numerous prisons and concentration camps in a last futile attempt to find Bonhoeffer after he had been removed from Tegel Prison for execution.

musical reference: Schubert, "Der Müller und der Bach" from Die Schöne Müllerin.

XV. MEDITATION – WHO AM I?

*Ist Gott für mich,
so trete Gleich alles wider mich.
So oft ich ruf' und bête,
Weicht alles hinter sich.
Hab' ich das Haupt zum Freunde
und bin geliebt bei Gott
Was kann mir tun der Feinde
und Widersacher Rott'?*

[If God is for me,
I can withstand all enemies
As often as I call and pray
They all flee away.
If I have [Christ] the head as friend
and am beloved by God
what can the enemy and
adversary do to me?]

Who am I? A hypocrite before others,
And before myself a contemptibly sad weakling?
Or is something within me still like a beaten army,
Fleeing in disorder from victory already achieved?

Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine.
Whoever I am, thou knowest, O God, I am thine. (LPP 348)

*musical references: "Ist Gott für mich" (text, Gerhardt; tune "Augsburg")
Schubert, "Gute Ruh" from Die Schöne Müllerin
"Swing low, sweet chariot" (traditional)*

REFERENCES

Text adapted from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, The Enlarged Edition, SCM Press 1971 © SCM Press Ltd 1971 Used by permission.

LPP = Dietrich Bonhoeffer – *Letters and Papers from Prison*; when two page number citations are given, the text is conflated from the first (1970) translation and the more recent (2009) translation found in *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Volume 8* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress 2009); where only one page citation is given, the composer was referring to his well-worn copy of the 1970 translation alone.

Love Letters from Cell 92 – The Correspondence between Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Maria von Wedemeyer, edited by von Bismarck and Kabitz (Nashville: Abingdon Press 1995).

EB = Eberhard Bethge – *Dietrich Bonhoeffer – A Biography* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress 2000).

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