

OVERTURES
to Bach

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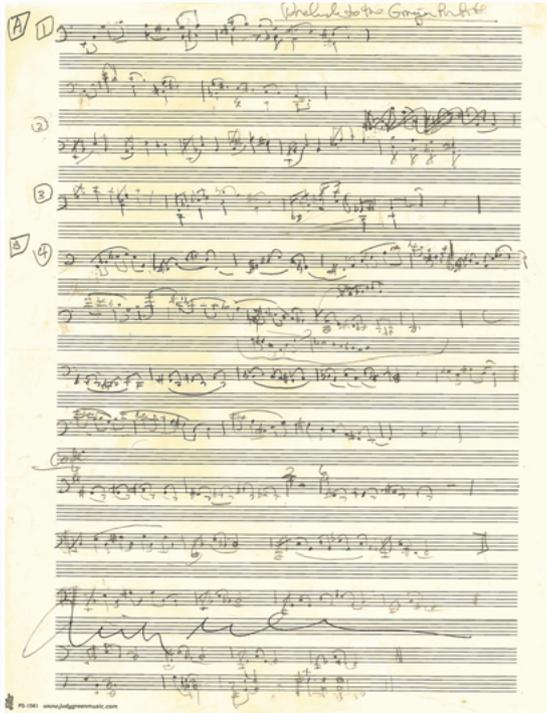
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Matt Haimovitz
cello and cello
piccolo



Philip Glass manuscript
Overture to J.S. Bach Suite I in G major, BWV 1007

OVERTURES to Bach

Matt Haimovitz, cello and cello piccolo

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|----|--|--------|
| 1 | Philip Glass (1937-) – Overture † (2015) | 5. 36 |
| 2 | J.S. Bach (1685-1750) – Prélude from Suite I in G major, BWV 1007 | 2. 15 |
| 3 | Du Yun (1977-) – The Veronica † (2015) | 11. 57 |
| 4 | J. S. Bach – Prélude from Suite II in D minor, BWV 1008 | 3. 56 |
| 5 | Vijay Iyer (1971-) – Run † (2015) | 7. 28 |
| 6 | J. S. Bach – Prélude from Suite III in C major, BWV 1009 | 3. 20 |
| 7 | Roberto Sierra (1953-) – La memoria † (2015) | 9. 09 |
| 8 | J. S. Bach – Prélude from Suite IV in E-flat major, BWV 1010 | 3. 08 |
| 9 | David Sanford (1963-) – Es War † (2016) | 8. 34 |
| 10 | J. S. Bach – Prélude from Suite V in C minor, BWV 1011 | 5. 27 |
| 11 | Luna Pearl Woolf (1973-) – Lili'uokalani for solo cello piccolo † (2015) | 10. 28 |
| 12 | J. S. Bach – Prélude from Suite VI in D major, BWV 1012 | 4. 20 |

† World premiere recording
Commissioned for Matt Haimovitz

Total playing time: 75.48



Years ago, on a visit to the big Island of Hawaii, Luna Pearl Woolf and I attended an outdoor Passover Seder.

Held on a large lanai, under an open sky, with the sound of waves marking the time, the Rabbi remarked at this ancient Jewish tradition being celebrated on a Polynesian island, so new its lava was still cooling in the sea. His sermon brought out similarities between the Hawaiian and Hebrew languages. The word *Pele*, Hawaiian god of the volcano, means “miracle” in Hebrew. *Aloha* is close to *ahava* or “love”; *havera* is Hebrew for friend, *hoaloha* in Hawaiian. Many more linguistic connections were made. The Chomskyan Theory of Universality was alive and well and I wondered at the flow of language and culture that could spread to the most remote locales, long before technology shrank our world.

In his 6 Suites for Solo Cello, J.S. Bach synthesized numerous dance forms, popular and outdated, and vernacular styles from throughout Europe, from France, Italy, Spain, Germany, and beyond. Bach’s appetite for new forms of music was voracious. I like to think that if he had come across Hawaiian chant, or Caribbean salsa, or, for that matter, the Jazz of Charles Mingus or John Coltrane, these influences would have made their way into the Suites.

And the influence goes both ways. It would be difficult for Bach’s 6 Suites not to inform any composer writing music for solo cello today. With these *Overtures to Bach*, contemporary composers reach both forward and backward in time, to bring their own cultural and musical experience into a conversation with the master himself.

Philip Glass will freely acknowledge how deeply inspired he is by Bach’s sense of polyphony on an essentially single-voiced instrument. In the Bach *Prélude* from Suite I in G, the composer clearly lays out three voices in the opening bars – a bass pedal, a stepwise moving middle line, and the three-note lower-neighbor figure in the top voice. In his **Overture**, Philip lets the triad unfold similarly, albeit in the darker key of E minor – suggested in the Bach a few bars after the opening G pedal. However, Philip introduces double-stops right after the linear triad, two voices entangled, breathing as one. To compose his overture, Philip took a break from reworking his opera *Appomattox*, writing the solo piece on the back of an opera score page. As he says, “it was like writing a letter.”

Du Yun was struck by my belief that Suite II in D minor may be an epitaph

for the loss of Bach’s infant child and his first wife Maria Barbara in 1720, the same year he composed the 6 Suites. Building on the *Sarabande* – the slow lascivious Spanish dance at the heart of each of the Suites – Du Yun deconstructs the dance and introduces the *Kontakion*, a prayer for the dead from the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as Serbian chant and central European gypsy fiddle to create a heartbreaking quilt of nostalgic prayer and cries. The polyphonic roots of Bach emerge, even as gossamer shrouds of notes obscure them. The title of the piece is taken from a Catholic legend: the image of Jesus, revealed on the *Veil of Veronica*.

Hearing **The Veronica**, do not be fooled by the spontaneity of the gestures and the emotions they evoke. The majority of the work is meticulously notated – pitch, microtonal coloring, timbral variety detailed in the left and right



hands, voicing priorities, and more. And yet the piece was not fully realized until we worked on it together. As Du Yun sang her vision, phrase by phrase, we sculpted the articulations, rubatos, tempi, and timbres even more closely. At the coda, Du Yun asks that the A-string be tuned up microtonally to create a drone, alienating in its foreignness to the original pitch center. The beats of the final near-unison reveal the memory of an infant's beating heart.

When I first received the score of Vijay Iyer's **Run**, it looked like a challenge, a showpiece of moto-perpetuo bow strokes and string crossings. For three days I worked to realize exactly what was on the page, to no avail. Then I began to add my own articulations, a variety of slurring solutions, as well as more distinctive dynamics. It was a breakthrough, and the piece began to take shape. When I trepidatiously

approached Vijay about what I was doing with his piece, he immediately gave his blessing. He had assumed I would find my own way though. After studying the Anna Magdalena manuscript of the Bach Suites – and observing how sparse the interpretive instructions are – Vijay was inspired by the freedom given to the performer. We spent an intensive afternoon in Vijay's Harlem studio fine-tuning all of these expressive choices. It was enlightening to enter a world of rhythm-as-kinesthesia. As Vijay pointed out, "sometimes if you just think the rhythm or pulse, it is enough." The opening bar of the Bach *Prélude* from Suite III in C major is a perfect musical illumination of gravity, the scale and arpeggio descending from middle C to the low open string like an apple falling from a tree. Vijay amplifies the overtones laid out in Bach's Suite. There is an infectious energy, and electrical current

that runs through it, all rising from and celebrating the lowest note of the instrument, the C.

In **La memoria**, Roberto Sierra juxtaposes "my own childhood memories of Pablo Casals on one side, and the street music of Puerto Rico on the other." *La memoria* plays on our memory of Bach Suite IV, referencing motivic fragments, a kaleidoscopic mirage that transports us through the exotic flavors of a syncopated Caribbean bass lines and salsa rhythms. What fascinates me about *La memoria* is how the collective consciousness of folk rhythms and the Bach is woven together so seamlessly and dramatically that the division between memory and the present is completely blurred. And it is not until the Bach *Prélude* of Suite IV begins that we realize where we have been heading the whole time.

David Sanford and I have collaborated on a number of occasions: his concerto for cello and 20-piece big band, *Scherzo Grosso*, our album *Meeting of the Spirits* with Uccello, treating the cello ensemble as jazz big band, and now the second of two pieces for solo cello. The first, *7th Avenue Kaddish*, a response to 9/11, was recently re-released on the PENTATONE Oxingale Series album, *Orbit*.

I had to unearth an inner Charles Mingus to tackle David's **Es War**. A tour de force of pizzicato, the opening demands a two finger plucking technique more idiomatic to the jazz upright bass than to the cello. Later, *Es War* wrestles with Bach's epic fugue, the wail of the saxophone navigating it's way through palindromes and atonal rows obscuring the emerging reference to a Bach Cantata. Bach, in Suite V, calls for the cello's A-string to



be tuned down to a G. David takes this *scordatura* tuning one step further, also asking for the low C-string to be brought down to a B. The effect allows the stormy waves of chords at the coda, with a low B pedal on the open string, to lead into the Bach *Prélude* with the force of a tsunami.

When I asked Luna Pearl Woolf, my better half, to compose an overture, she was immersed in writing her opera, *Better Gods*, and reluctant to add more to her plate. Then she heard me playing the *Prélude* to Suite VI in D major on my new instrumental love, the cello piccolo, a 5-string cello that Bach likely intended for that suite. She agreed to the commission on the condition that the overture to Suite VI would fall to her. Initially inspired by the connections, both sonically and harmonically, to the Hawaiian chant featured in *Better Gods*, Luna went on to take full

advantage of the virtuosic properties of the instrument, treating it operatically, in various registers from the low bass to the soprano stratosphere. Chant and drumming techniques are developed through the course of the piece, which memorializes the regal Queen ***Lili'uokalani***. Bach embraces the future in Suite VI, with no limit on the human imagination. Luna too explores the new possibilities afforded by the cello piccolo, yet always returning to the song of the human voice.

On this recording, I play both the Woolf and the Bach Suite VI *Prélude* on a beautiful baroque cello piccolo made by Georg Nicol. Köllmer, on generous loan from Rebecca Humphrey. For the remaining works, I play on my Matteo Goffriller cello made in 1710. For the cello piccolo and all the Bach, my bow is a baroque replica crafted by David Hawthorne of Cambridge,

Massachusetts. For the remaining overtures, my modern bow is made by François Malo of Montréal, Quebec.

I am beyond thrilled with each and every one of these new overture commissions. Each composer has engaged his or her suite with a depth and insight that makes me hear the Bach in a new light. Yet each work lives on its own as a standalone piece, and I hope generations of cellists will enjoy the challenges and rewards that each presents. The works are thorny enough to say: "do not try this at home!" However, I truly hope just the opposite. It has been a fascinating experience to commission a wide slate of new works at the same time. With each piece, I was forced to develop new techniques; new approaches to the instrument which would allow me to realize the vision of each composer.

My hope is that you, the listener, will enjoy traveling this musical bridge between the centuries as much as I have. It spans more than time, linking us to far-flung corners of our musical world and offering an entrée into six distinct and diverse compositional voices, each humbly making the overture to Bach.
— Matt Haimovitz





Vijay Iyer



Matt Haimovitz playing Du Yun



Du Yun



Roberto Sierra



Luna Pearl Woolf



David Sanford



Matt Haimovitz playing David Sanford



Table with 2 columns: Track Name, Duration. Includes tracks like 'Overstays', 'The Day After Tomorrow', etc.

ABOUT THE ALBUM
This album is a collection of new music...

ABOUT THE ARTISTS
Vijay Iyer, Matt Haimovitz, Du Yun, Roberto Sierra, Luna Pearl Woolf, David Sanford.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
We would like to thank...



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ARTIST STATEMENTS
Short quotes from the artists.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS (continued)



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Overture an overture to J.S. Bach Suite I in G major, BWV 1007

*"Of all the many blessings in this life.
Music gives up its place only to love.
Yet even love's a melody."
Dedicated to my beloved wife, Nadia
Moretto, from David Sela*

The Overture for the Bach G major Cello Suite is meant to prepare the audience, not by anticipating Bach's music, but through encouraging a frame of mind that will be open and calm – free from the stress and delights of one's ordinary day.

Composing the proper melody, harmony and rhythm for the Overture was not so complicated. My own training with Mme. Boulanger was heavily steeped in analysis and performing the great Master's work and I was already familiar with what was needed.

For me it was really as if I were saying to the audience:
"For now put aside your ordinary thoughts – the struggles and joys of your daily life. The music will soon begin. And, in fact, the Master is already in the concert hall waiting for you. But, not to worry. You're not too late either – for Bach and his music now reside in a Pure Eternity, free from any plans or expectations.

Encounters with his music are meant only to inspire and enlighten ourselves – as if there never was an act of 'special creation,' but as if it has always been there. Even before the Beginning.

A deep breath or two won't hurt. But apart from that there's nothing to do. Just let Bach's music begin.

It's there for the listening."
– Philip Glass

The Veronica an overture to J.S. Bach Suite II in D minor, BWV 1008

*Dedicated by Gordon Getty to the
memory of Zheng Cao, a most
formidable force of nature and dearly
beloved friend.*

"the ones who are gone are gone
but the ones who survived
begin to arrive"
– Rumi

I have known Matt for eight years now. Not only have I written pieces for him, we collaborated on a song together, and played together on his *Figment* tour. When Matt called me for this project, I was thrilled for his ambitious undertaking and honored to be part of a project that is this close to him.

Among the six Bach Cello Suites, I always feel the most connected to Suite II. In preparing for writing the overture for the D-minor, Matt and I talked about how J.S. Bach had been away from home, on tour for a year. When he came back, only then did he learn of his first wife's passing; and a year prior, the two had lost a child. That was the year he wrote the D-minor cello suite.

I often wonder about bereavement. When and how it pauses, recharges, morphs and restarts. When I read the story of *The Veil of Veronica*, it was less of the truth of the legend that intrigued me, but rather the image of a woman wiping sweat and blood away. And I'm also interested in the provenance of cultural intersections. Those pilgrimages throughout history remain a winding path, for immigrants, for émigrants, and for refugees in today's world. *The Veronica* ends with a *ganga* style, a



dissonant form of singing, using two clashing notes to project sound over long distances that is prominent in Serbian Chant.

— *Du Yun*

Run
an overture to J.S. Bach Suite III in C major, BWV 1009

Bach's solo string music sounds oddly futuristic even today. I first heard the cello suites when I was a child, and I remember noticing the mystical hush that this music could bring over listeners — a strange, beautiful reminder of melody's power.

When Matt approached me last year, I was daunted at first: how could I create an "overture" for something already so complete, so familiar? Eventually the C major suite offered some answers of its own. The instrument itself is already

essentially "in C" its open strings ringing out in that tonality, so I decided to follow up on Bach's own use of the instrument's inherent resonances. I was influenced by how he would vault the listener through the music, using vibrant dance impulses to sustain a sometimes majestically slow harmonic rhythm. Studying Bach's original manuscripts, I saw how underspecifying timbre and articulation would allow the performer to find a more personal interpretation.

It dawned on me that this "overture" should herald the whole work without revealing too much of it. In this way, my piece became compact, active, resonant, and continuous -- a brisk, eventful run through the woods. Thank you for listening.

— *Vijay Iyer*

La memoria
an overture to J.S. Bach Suite IV in E-flat major, BWV 1010

The title, *La memoria*, denotes an intertextual play between musical memory and musical text. As the work progresses, the *Prélude* to Suite IV by J.S. Bach is remembered, and eventually recovered when the actual Bach *Prélude* is played after my overture. In this manner Bach's piece becomes the inevitable consequence of *La memoria*. Every measure of this work reflects Bach's *Prélude*, either by excluding the notes contained in the arpeggios of the *Prélude*, or by including the notes in different transformations—some of them metamorphosed into latin rhythms. The title is also a reflection of my own childhood sonic memories. As I was writing the piece, I could not help but remember the binary contrast between Casals playing the Bach Suites

in Puerto Rico and the popular music that resonated everywhere.
— *Roberto Sierra*

Es War
an overture to J.S. Bach Suite V in C minor, BWV 1011

Musicologist Robert Walser writes, "Like Bach, but at the other end of the Enlightenment, heavy metal musicians explore images of horror and madness in order to comprehend and critique the world as they see it". Echoing this reading on at least one level, Matt Haimovitz's more recent interpretation of Bach's Suite V in C minor, likely the darkest of the six, presents a response to contemporary violent conflict offering a reflection of that violence as well as a deploration. The idea of war — in a larger sense, between life and death — is literally stated in Bach's *Cantata No. 4* where the central movement begins with the chorus's fugal



“Es war ein wunderlicher Kreis”. That movement’s B-minor tonality, and its root, minor 3rd and major 7th opening collection are strong influences on the overture, *Es War*, and inspired its title.

Notably, Bach’s fifth suite also features the *scordatura* A-string tuned at G, which can be interpreted as an early forebear of metal’s often-used “Drop-D” tuning and similarly offers not only a somewhat more somber tone but also more resonant support for the cello’s lower two strings. *Es War* utilizes this tuning as well, but avoids the strong emphasis on C in which the suite will be immersed by also lowering the fourth string down to B. This further darkens the timbre of the instrument while, at the same time, laying the foundation for the overture’s slow but deliberate harmonic path leading to the suite’s opening C-minor announcement.
— David Sanford

**Lili'uokalani for solo cello piccolo
an overture to J.S. Bach Suite VI
in D major, BWV 1012**

Dedicated to the memory and legacy of a man of great substance, heart and humor, Robert Commanday, by his friend, Gordon Getty.

Lili'uokalani was the last monarch of Hawaii, and that sovereign nation’s first queen. Worldly, educated, deeply Christian and beloved by her people, Lili'u was forced to abdicate her throne and dissolve the monarchy by descendants of the same missionaries who brought literacy, Western music and Christianity to the islands three generations earlier.

Bach wrote his Suite VI for a five-string cello, resulting in flights far above the traditional range of the conventional cello. Yet the opening of the *Prélude*

seems to belie that extended range by exploiting two strings played in unison, with the bow moving between them to create a texture built on timbre rather than melody. It is in this progression from decorated unison to lofty heights, punctuated with storms of cascading sixteenth notes that I feel a deep connection to Lili'u. As the basis of the music and culture of her history, Hawaiian chant is largely monotone, but modulated by extended vocal techniques of timbral vibrato and glottal trill. Her education in Western thought and music brought her into the company of the world’s royalty. But none of that was enough to save her from the tidal shift of trade and economic development that eventually brought down her government.

Lili'uokalani for solo cello piccolo paints a portrait of the queen at this heart-wrenching moment in her reign. Drawn

from the cello piccolo’s five strings we hear elements of traditional Hawaiian chant, transformed into ever-expanding harmonies; intimations of pre-Western musical implements and the plucked strings of the queen’s own guitar. We also hear lyrical moments that find their origin in *Better Gods*, a one-hour opera on the fall of the Hawaiian monarchy, commissioned by the Washington National Opera, which premiered shortly after this work was written. The solo voice of the cello piccolo, itself now all-but-obsolete, develops all these aspects farther than the human voice can go, and offers a glimpse of the strength and inner turmoil of this remarkable woman.
— Luna Pearl Woolf



About the Artists

Renowned as a musical pioneer, Grammy-nominated cellist **MATT HAIMOVITZ** is acclaimed for his visionary approach, groundbreaking collaborations and innovative recording projects, which he combines with a tireless touring schedule and with mentoring an award-winning studio at McGill University's Schulich School of Music in Montréal. Born in Israel, Haimovitz made his debut in 1984, at the age of 13, as a soloist with Zubin Mehta and the Israel Philharmonic, and at 17 he made his first recording for Deutsche Grammophon with James Levine and the Chicago Symphony. Haimovitz's recording career encompasses more than 20 years of award-winning work on Deutsche Grammophon (Universal) and Oxingale Records, now in collaboration with PENTATONE. His honors include the

Trailblazer Award from the American Music Center, the Avery Fisher Career Grant, the Grand Prix du Disque, and the Premio Internazionale "Accademia Musicale Chigiana." He studied with Leonard Rose at the Juilliard School and graduated with highest honors from Harvard University. Haimovitz plays a Venetian cello, made in 1710 by Matteo Gofriller.

Through his operas, his symphonies, his compositions for his own ensemble, and his wide-ranging collaborations with artists ranging from Twyla Tharp to Allen Ginsberg, Woody Allen to David Bowie, **PHILIP GLASS** has had an extraordinary and unprecedented impact upon the musical and intellectual life of his times. Indeed, Glass is the first composer to win a wide, multi-generational audience in the opera house, the concert hall, the dance world, in film and in popular music -- simultaneously.

DU YUN, born and raised in Shanghai, China, currently based in New York, is a composer, performer and performance artist, and curator, working at the intersection of orchestral, opera, chamber music, theatre, cabaret, pop music, oral tradition, visual arts, electronics and noise. Du Yun is on the composition faculty at SUNY-Purchase. She was a founding member of the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), and currently she serves as the Artistic Director of MATA, a pioneering organization dedicated to commissioning and presenting young composers from around the world.

Grammy nominee **VIJAY IYER** was named DownBeat Magazine's 2015 Artist of the Year, a 2013 MacArthur Fellow, and a 2012 Doris Duke Performing Artist. The New York Times observes, "There's probably no frame wide enough to encompass the creative

output of the pianist Vijay Iyer." In 2017, Iyer, a professor of music at Harvard University, is Artist-In-Residence at SF Jazz and Wigmore Hall in London, as well as Music Director of the Ojai Festival.

For more than three decades the works of American composer **ROBERTO SIERRA** have been part of the repertoire of many of the leading orchestras, ensembles and festivals in the USA and Europe. Many of the major American and European orchestras and international ensembles have commissioned and performed his works. In 2003 he was awarded the Academy Award in Music by the American Academy of Arts and Letters. His music may be heard on CD's by Naxos, EMI, UMG's EMARCY, New World Records, Albany Records, Koch, New Albion, Koss Classics, BMG, Fleur de Son and other labels.



DAVID SANFORD's compositions have been performed by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Speculum Musicae, the Meridian Arts Ensemble and orchestras led by Marin Alsop, Kent Nagano, and Gil Rose among many others. His honors include Radcliffe and Guggenheim fellowships, and the Rome Prize. He is the Elizabeth T. Kennan Professor of Music at Mount Holyoke College and the director of the contemporary big band the Pittsburgh Collective.

The music of composer **LUNA PEARL WOLF** has been praised for its “psychological nuances and emotional depth,” by the New York Times. Her dramatic and lyrical works have been commissioned by Carnegie Hall and the Washington National Opera, among others, collaborating with such artists as Joyce DiDonato, Frederica von Stade, Daniel Taylor, Lisa Delan, Christopher

O’Riley, Academy Award-winner Jeremy Irons and author Cornelia Funke. Woolf has been featured on NPR, BBC, CBC, and in the New York Times, Associated Press, Wall Street Journal, Boston Globe, Opera News, New Music Box, and L’Opéra among others.

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Philip Glass





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committed to revelatory interpretations of the canonic repertoire as to riveting performances of works by recent and living composers. Breeding spontaneity in musical expression, OXINGALE RECORDS captures singular moments of collaboration in its stream of classical, contemporary, crossover, jazz and family releases. The offspring of two musical perspectives — those of world-renowned cellist Matt Haimovitz and acclaimed composer Luna Pearl Woolf — their projects take a refreshing approach to the classical tradition, illuminating and vitalising the listening experience.

Grammy Award-winning OXINGALE RECORDS gradually unfolds an idiosyncratic but influential body of work.

Having shared ideas and projects for some time, there was no doubt for PENTATONE to join forces with OXINGALE RECORDS. This is a union of two innovative and devoted recording companies with a long history of producing reputable records and collaborating with esteemed artists. Both companies are extremely proud of the quality of their works, their artists and their recordings, as well as the

quality of the relationship with their customers.

We would be pleased to have you join us in celebrating this milestone as it gives way to a tremendously intriguing and inquisitive series of co-productions for you, our customers and ourselves. With PENTATONE's warm, dynamic and detailed sound capturing the superb works and performances of OXINGALE's artists, we look forward to bringing you a range of prestigious work only in pristine quality.





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Text page with columns of text.

Text page with columns of text and an image of a person.

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