

1	2		3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12						13					
14					15						
		16			17			18			
19				20				21			
22				23							24
25	26			27				28		29	
30							31	32			
33			34			35	36				
			37			38					
39					40						

From one down answer in each column, one letter (to be deduced) is to be dropped into the bottom row to form the “Ground bass” (or passacaglia), which goes through three identical cycles (e.g. WXYZWXYZWXYZ). Musical solvers may associate the bass with Themeword A; others may link it with Themewords B (in numerical order). Each Themeword B can be associated with *all* Variations C.

## ACROSS

- 1 Bill has little heart (7)
- 7 Themeword B3 (5)
- 12 Runner's first to pant, slipping back in early heat (6)
- 13 I might sing a lullaby – operatic song's not right (3)
- 14 Guy is a girl, after a switch! (5)
- 15 Graduates at Cambridge breaking down pectins (7)
- 18 Shakespeare's wife has no time (no way!) to laugh (2-2)
- 19 Early English easy? Then you must have Earlier English (4)
- 20 Honourable title enshrines one goddess (4)
- 21 Variation C (4)
- 22 Themeword A (12)
- 25 Edge of bullring's completely round (4)
- 27 It's a collection of pieces, I agree (4)
- 28 Opera-star boundlessly portraying gloomy cleric (4)
- 30 Nearly everybody selected one, having got down (4)
- 33 One providing surety eminence ignored when facing a drug supplier (7)
- 36 Blade decapitated despot who's kept back gold (5)
- 37 What once started or finished, ultimately (3)
- 38 Indefinable appeal causes agony in confines of court (6)
- 39 Fills positions with one standing in for another one (5)
- 40 Looks about the centre? Not half – we do a lot of looking about (7)

## DOWN

- 1 Themeword B2 (6)
- 2 Difficult situation – and the way artist will surmount it (6)
- 3 Immortal helping to spin endless textile (5)
- 4 Variation C (4)
- 5 Possible home for just over half of the Jews? (4)
- 6 Organised one who fires (and one who loots and pillages!) (9)
- 7 Hispanic's deceit cut short by love (7)
- 8 Cabin boy, say, English, put on ship (4)
- 9 'Urrying off after cracking puns without mercy (9)
- 10 Black couple of articles getting wash (5)
- 11 Dance step – it's a country dance (6)
- 16 Commentator – the fool, missing start of match (one's in at the finish) (9)
- 17 Themeword B1 (8)
- 23 These are sleeveless, except when worn by little boys (7)
- 24 Themeword B4 (6)
- 25 Things that symbolise unhappy times one's discarded (6)
- 26 Reversible few feathers on a wing? (5)
- 29 Regarding tailless dog rolling over, I provide food (6)
- 31 Bank – get two hundred withdrawn (4)
- 32 Variation C (4)
- 34 About to swallow duck's egg or eggs (3)
- 35 Variation C (3)