

Music in the Springtime

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Date: 13 May 2018

Preacher: Edward Norman

[0 : 00] Excuse me, will I just do this?

There we are.

There we are. There we are. There we are. There we are. There we are. There we are.

There we are. There we are. There we are. There we are. There we are. There we are.

There we are. There we are. There we are. There we are. There we are. There we are.

[1 : 36] There we are. There we are. There we are. There we are. There we are. There we are.
There we are.

There we are. There we are. There we are. There we are. There we are. There we are.
There we are.

There we are. There we are. There we are. And I think this gentleman, along with several others here, has caught that mood.

I don't know what he's trying to represent here, it's a tenderness of some kind. There's a theobo, a big extended lute playing, a kind of continuo in the background.

The solos are the feature of this. One of the characteristics of this kind of music, it seems to me, in my experience working with it, especially for special occasions like weddings and funerals, some music works for all occasions.

[3 : 18] It seems to me that could be applied. It has the merit of being applicable in many situations where it would simply fit because it's a positive musical idiom.

Of course, there's also the vocal and Mr. Shakespeare had some things to say about spring.

So, Thomas Morley, we've stepped back a century, a century and a half.

Again, the lute is the given accompaniment. So, what I'm going to do is just cover some non-spiritual expressions, often by Christians, of the season of spring, and then move into some more particular pieces for the period.

Each three, the angels of the round, the hay and the ho, and the hay and the ho, and the hay and the ho, and the hay and the ho.

[4 : 41] So, this kind of music would be heard in a merchant's house or a court or anywhere else where they actually had the room and the instruments to make this kind of music.

Susan, my wife, wishes I would sit down and sing these songs to her. So, I can't sing that high.

So, birds singing, things blooming, coming to flower.

Some composers have taken the concept of the seasons into their formal structures.

This next piece by Beethoven is the Spring Sonata, just a segment of it, for violin and piano. And it's an early work, and the title may have been given later, but with good reason.

- [5 : 49] It, too, has this sunny aspect. How has this come about in music? I think the first thing is what it isn't. When music cheers or lifts us up, it is not morbid.
- It is not too introspective. It's interesting that in the Baroque and Classical period, that is, think Vivaldi, Bach, Buxtehude, through to Mozart and Haydn, the fast movement, the fast tempo dominates.
- So, you have allegros all over the place, particularly in the first movement. There's usually a middle movement, although that's sometimes a dance form. And then, in the Classical symphony, and then a rondo, which is always of a fast nature.
- There's a slow movement, often very beautiful, but it's only part of the picture. As classical music moves through the centuries, into the 19th especially, you can just see it in terms of the old LPs.
- You start with two Beethoven symphonies on one LP, number one and number two. Number three requires one LP, both sides. Number four, well, four and five you can squeeze onto one LP.
- [7 : 06] But by the time we start hitting the ninth symphony, you need two LPs just to hold that symphony. Things are getting bigger and expanding. The orchestra's getting bigger and expanding.
- Forms are enlarging. And one of the things that enlarges significantly is the slow tempo, not so much in Beethoven, but to some extent.
- So, by the time you're hitting the late 19th century, there's a tendency for slow movements to rule the roost. Allegro's and moderato's are there, but they don't abound to the same extent.
- People working, I gather, with people who require mental and emotional stabilizing and use music in therapy, favour that idiom of major keys, which is another feature, major keys and upbeat, if you will, tempi.
- I must say, I love Brahms, and I'm not picking on him, but I sometimes get drawn down by it. In a good way, a thoughtful way, but it's fascinating then to see how people have let spring influence their composition.
- [8 : 29] Here's Beethoven's violin. We'll be in a minute. There's a lift to the main melody, rising up. Notice a conversation going on, this dialogue. The accompanist isn't just going, um-pa-pa, um-pa-pa, which does tend to be a 19th century device.
- He's talking, it happens to be a he, and she is replying, oh, she's accompanying at the moment. The roles are reversed. The piano has a go.
- The violinist comes in. It's like a conversation. It comes together. Now he's accompanying on the piano.
- I happen to know it's a he and a she. The violinist, I can't remember to pronounce her name properly, is, I should know it from memory, um...
- [9 : 57] Kyung-wa Chung. He's a soloist. So here again, you can... It's like a chatter going back and forth. But this would be good music to start the day off, while they're having breakfast and burning the toast.
- But you won't...
- It's hard to find this mood in the music that we run into out there, and alas, in most of our churches. It's interesting, I...
- If you want to hear this kind of music before any kind of religious service, you would probably need to go to the Unitarian Church. Which, no, they've long had a long-standing tradition of good music to adorn their liturgy.

Um... I can't remember the name of the pianist. It's anchored around. He's dead now. But it's been going on for decades. They go there expecting something like this.

[11 : 13] Now why? Now part, of course, is resources.

But, um... Back to the music itself, we have this filigree rising pattern all over the place.

Of course it comes down again, but the essential character is up. Beautifully played.

Um... A number of composers, uh... Varying, uh... Degrees of belief, or non-belief, have, uh... Tackled good old spring.

I wish I could have included them all, but there isn't room. Benjamin Britton, for instance, has a remarkable conclusion to his spring symphony. Um... But the texts are not very helpful.

[12 : 17] It's... But hilariously, at the end, he's trying to depict, uh... A Bacchanalian scene, really, in a... In a rural setting. And then he imposes a boys' choir singing, Summer is a coming in, over the top.

It's quite a remarkable effect, as they come in on the left channel. Da-da-da-da-ding, da-da-da-ding, da-da-da-ding, da-da-ding, da-da-ding, da-da-ding, da-da-ding. But people like that have, um... Tackled it.

Um... The only... Oh, there's one of two people here who, um... I think possibly have no particular spiritual axe to grind.

Um... One of them is Aaron Copeland. And this is his Appalachian Spring. And the thing that fascinates me, this American composer, very, very fine musician, um...

But I don't think by any means a believer, and I believe politically, uh, strong... I think he came under, uh, investigation during the McCarthy era.

[13 : 18] Um... But forget that. His beautiful writing and his capturing of a kind of... I don't know how to put it. It's, like, naive painting.

Um... It's clear, and it's modal, but it has folk song elements built into it. But the overall thing that fascinates me, insofar as we all are made in the image of God, and some of the things we do are either inevitable or fascinating.

They all... There's this... They're obviously intrigued by this winter moving into this hopeful phase of growth, restoration, and, um...

A new life. So the music... Not just him, as we'll see, but the music here begins... I'm cutting into the work, because it's long. Um...

Setting... A kind of very thoughtful stage... Before the music takes... This... That's not part of the recording. So if you can imagine a kind of...

[14 : 32] Northeastern American or even Midwestern landscape... Appalachian... Or Appalachian...

Appalachian, as we were told when we lived down there, it should be. Spring. This is Leonard Slatkin conducting the Detroit Symphony. This is music that says slow down.

Think. Listen. Reflect. Think. Think. Listen. Reflect. Spring. Spring. Spring. Spring.

Spring. Spring. Spring. Spring. Spring. Spring. Spring. Spring. Spring. Spring. Listen.

Spring. Spring. Spring. Spring. curtain. Queen. Spring. Spring. Spring. Spring. Spring.

[15 : 27] Spring. Spring. Home.

Spring. Spring. Spring. Spring. Spring. Spring. Dartmouth. Spring. I've got cooks in there.

And of course, dance. It's rhythmically complex for the players.

So it's a kind of lurch to the... So have a barn dance element in there.

And of course, dance.

[17 : 15] So I'd rather have this in my dentist's surgery than what I usually get.

So I'd rather have this in my dentist's surgery than what I usually get.

I love Copeland's music. It's very fresh, no-nonsense music. Okay. But it does...

I think you'd agree it cheers you up. A bit of that pumped into a hospital wouldn't do any harm. Now, it's not all good news. And even when a definitely Christian composer decides that, yes, okay, but there's a dark side to spring as well.

As we look back in over a very long expanse of history, we see that it's also in pagan culture has been a time. It is and has been a time of darker things.

[18 : 37] And way back, and perhaps still in some places, terrible sacrifices and deeds. And that Igor Stravinsky captured with his Rite of Spring, which was produced in 1912 as a ballet in Paris and caused a riot, though not so much because of the music, which is different, was very different for the day.

But because, apparently, the necessary dress of the dancers was quite provocative, especially in this particular dance of the sacrifice, the sacrifice dance.

The whole thing, the whole action is, of course, is obscene, but it's very brilliantly scored by Stravinsky.

It's a huge score, just masses of extra percussion. It's actually called a concerto for percussion, tongue in cheek. All kinds of extra instruments, alto flutes, E-flat clarinets, expanded sections, extra brass players, just a huge complex and a very difficult work to conduct.

It's looked at by musicologists with interest in that you can't, you can now, but it marked the end of launching these huge works with big, big orchestras.

[20 : 03] You could just do it a drop of a hat because you didn't have to pay very much. After the First World War and the economic decline, the picture changes very much. And this is the last of Stravinsky's great big works.

After that, it goes into chamber music mode. So it would be a bit like the VSO closing down and you're left with, if it still existed, the CBC orchestra.

Half the size and therefore you score accordingly. Anyway, it's the last of three of his great ballets, that is the Firebird and Petrushka and then this in 1912.

They're all quite close together. It's brilliant. The man must have had an animal ear to compose this piece. Anyway, here we go. Human Sacrifice about to happen. And at the very end, it's quite clear what's happened to the poor victim.

You can tell the rhythmic pattern is very demanding.

[21 : 32] We've got to count like mad. One, two, three, one, two, one, two, one, two, one. Anto in the Tarry MA The End The End

The End The End Incredible piece and of course it's become a giant in the repertoire of 20th century music that Stravinsky was a Christian his settings of various liturgical texts are backed up with real commitment to the God they're praising worshipping an interesting figure very interesting back to the Copeland

I spoke about this coming out of we want to celebrate let's say Easter but we're not going to go right in to the Easter eggs and the yeah we're going to remind ourselves of how things came to this pass and as with Copeland in an entirely different context saying here is the season things are being closed down somewhat they've been muted somewhat and now it opens up and we're going to have a party Bach in his Christ lay in death's bands cantata does the same thing he paints the text actually goes like this and he paints a mood wherein our Lord is indeed in that dreadful Good Friday context Christ lay enshrouded by death this is the English obviously enshrouded by death enshrouded

I'm just trying to follow it through because it's repeated a lot from mortal sins to save us he is again risen and then the music starts to change just like it did in the Copeland and he's again risen and life he gave us so here is an early cantata of Bach the first movement and there's a symphonia which sets the mood I spoke of and then you'll hear the change of mood ending with an alleluia which goes at top speed this doesn't sound like Easter if you walked in on Easter day you wouldn't expect this would you yet it is designated an Easter cantata so it's a kind of this was a situation but this is the now and when the choir comes in

Bach uses this kind of I just think of it as a crowd technique it's not just one voice saying something it's several voices saying it usually following each other like that dialogue or conversation we noted in the Beethoven violin sonata but over the top of it all the sopranos usually boys singing the chorale or hymn Lutheran hymn for Christ Lane Death's Band here they go so the scene is being set the hymn tune is moving very slowly over the top the altos, tenors and basses are working hard a lot of notes and the violins in the bass line there's already a hint of a dance applause

[28 : 22] Life he gave to us.

That's what they're singing right now. Brachas Leben. Brachas Leben.

Brachas Leben. Brachas Leben. So the chorale on top has worked itself out. So there's a couple of measures of instrumental music, and then the mood changes to...

So let us now be joyful. Brachas Leben. Brachas Leben. Brachas Leben. Brachas Leben. Brachas Leben.

Brachas Leben. Brachas Leben. Brachas Leben. Brachas Leben. It's almost laughter. Back comes the chorale.

[29 : 32] Brachas Leben. Brachas Leben. Brachas Leben. Again, those rising figures that we saw in the spring sonata of Beethoven.

And now the tenors have the chorale diminished. Let's magnify him with thankfulness, all singing hallelujah.

All singing and singing hallelujah, hallelujah. And then...

So now we've got excitement as well.

Enthusiasm and excitement. Celebration. Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!

[31 : 04] Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!

Oh! Oh! Oh. Oh! I don't know about you, I just find that so uplifting.

it's incredible music and the use of various motifs associated because there was a whole language of motifs and idioms associated with scriptural meaning, it wasn't just Bach it was in the culture, Telemann used it, others, but Bach supremely, rising figures for Easter, music can't go up all the time, but the predominant feature is of a motivic upward direction, at Advent and Lent tended to go the other way, coming down depended a bit on the chorale melody itself but then there are these figures of dum dum dum dum bum bum bum bum bum figures of assurance that's a figure used in Der Glavendall, in Einengott I believe in all, all in one God, and it's a walking motif in the bass and yet a feature of the piece in this case, we've got these agitated motifs conveying excitement and and these exchanges between the different voices which just creates a crowd dynamic of ascent and excitement

Bach is my favourite here's Bach again sheep indeed may safely graze under the watchful eye of a good shepherd.

And yet, this is not a specifically Christian work. This is a secular cantata celebrating the hunt.

[33 : 36] It was written for his, I forget which aristocrat, I'll look it up in a minute. But it does double service as so often an embark.

Okay, it wasn't intended as a Christian text, but it works as a Christian setting. Once again, it's a universality of application.

This works well playing for a funeral, or for a wedding, or for a service. Plus, this additional layer of realization that it wasn't originally a Christian, Christianly targeted.

It wasn't unchristianly targeted, but... It's going to feel that we're conflicting now with the...

This is just a little sideline, just light relief. Percy Granger, the eccentric Australian composer, wrote, it's a spoof on that, and which, originally, I was very offended.

[35 : 22] I thought, how dare you do that to a Christian piece? But of course, I've discovered it's not. It's a secular piece, so he's in his rights. It's really very funny, in a way. And this is what it sounds like.

It's called Blythe Bells. All kinds of tinkly things in there.

Celeste and small tallies. Piano, of course. I think it's a harmonium.

He loved the harmonium. It's a very beautiful spoof, but I think it is a send-up bit.

Nothing wrong with it. It's delightful.

[36 : 20] And there was something that was also a love for you. A ■■■■■■■■■■ Someone and Mary Pat monkeys. There's many things, as well as God.

It■ji and a■itier are ecstasy. They were all who stood there still were born. It's vitally from The Maire, Luc. It's very special for our individual people. But also, to the master, you know, there's ample Matsu control.

He's always a good thought. A thing that comes a cerdeir ■ of history, there's another credit or history. How much more can he throw in?

He's got the whole kitchen going now. That's a harp.

So this is a very good illustration of how it ties into evolution. Many of the professors I had at the Royal College of Music taught that music evolved away from the Baroque period through the classical period.

[37 : 39] All given due respect, but it was evolving. And you did things like this to the works of the 17th, 18th centuries because it was better.

Better to do is more interesting. There's more going on. But it kind of misses the point. So you end up as a musician often accompanying Bach arias or Scarlatti pieces.

And you think you're playing a Rachmaninoff piano. The concerto, they're thickened and notes are added and chords are changed. People like the organist Virgil Fox were very good at doing that kind of thing.

You took what the master had written, but you improved it because we moved beyond that. It's a shame, but it's not the end of the world. You just don't talk to them when you see them on the street.

Percy Granger was so eccentric. He was giving a concert in Australia. It was very hot.

[38 : 48] And he had about 20 measures rest or something. And he saw an ice cream van outside because the doors were open. It was so hot. He ran down the hall, got an ice cream, ran back and resumed his position at the piano.

Now, just like you to listen to the sheep time. We've had a bit of sheep.

Now, this is serious. The lamb. I didn't mean to be silly there. The lamb text by William Blake, Little Lamb Who Made Thee.

You know that, I'm sure, right? Time's against us for reading it, I think. I really do think perhaps I should just get on with the music.

Yeah. So it asks all these questions about the lamb that the poet is purportedly engaging with.

[39 : 47] And he asks all these questions about it and working out, of course, to the sacrificial lamb. Here it is, part of it, set by John Taverner, the English recently died contemporary composer who was, I think he converted partway through his life to the Orthodox Church.

He's written many works, choral mostly, for that denomination. But this is his treatment of that Blake text, Little Lamb Who Made Thee.

It's very stark. It's very interesting. Jeremy Begbie often gets his classes when he teaches at Regent to sing this together.

And the lamb is notEEEE.

Oh, he does not many art. But he serves as an example of this work to particularly instruct for the group.

[41 : 07] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. just to see what you think of it it's extremely beautiful I think whether it does justice to the text or sentimentalizes it is for you to decide it's interesting though and certainly music that I wouldn't mind hearing at the dentist's surgery now already he's repeated little, little, little so we're not going to get that clarity that kind of monastic feel to the composition give me life and baby give me life and baby this is sung by an American cantor a coir phoenix so this composer

[44 : 06] I think is remarkable in many ways is exploring close harmony seconds in the intervals which then resolve there's a lot of crunches in there and a lot of young people in it this is a St. Olaf choir from Nidaros Cathedral in Norway and a lot of young people in it there are a lot of young voices here there are a lot of young people in it that animal can hear oh if you Samuel and I feel free to the same

I feel free Ccost water on slowly parallel movement in the harmony which makes it fresh.

Let me look and try and get the text.

He became a little child.

I a child and thou a lamb. We are called by his name. Little lamb, God bless thee.

[47 : 10] Little lamb, God bless thee.

Little lamb. Little lamb.

Little lamb. Little lamb.

Little lamb. Little lamb.

Little lamb. Little lamb. Little lamb. Little lamb. That's remarkably fine singing.

[48 : 18] Oh, goodness. Very moving, I find, anyway. So that last segment is, Little lamb, I'll tell thee. Just I know who made thee.

Little lamb, I'll tell thee. He is called by thy name, or he calls himself a lamb. Now, we know, as part of our good cheer, that we're anchored in the, what happened to the lamb of God.

And I'd like to have played a more obvious element from the Messiah, but there isn't time, and I knew it wouldn't be time for that. So instead, I thought you might like to hear, as part of your cheering repertoire, this.

He's gone up, he has gone up on high. If you care to play. This is a remarkable Japanese countertenor.

So you think it's a woman singing, but it's, it's countertenor. How music performance standards have changed in just a few decades.

[49 : 49] This is incredible. Lots of recordings still around, but this going at almost half the speed, and much more romanticized. I think this is great.

Once again, it catches that Easter cheer. And spring cheer, I meant to say. But Easter, certainly. Here's a tribes12-■■■■.

There is his lower natural voice.

There is his lower natural voice.

There is his lower natural voice.

[52 : 01] There is his lower natural voice.

There is his lower natural voice. There is his lower natural voice. There is his lower natural voice. There is his lower natural voice.

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[53 : 21] There is his lower natural voice. There is his lower natural voice. There is his lower natural voice. There is his lower natural voice.

There is his lower natural voice. There is his lower natural voice. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[55 : 21] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. A nice original setting, arrangement of that hymn tune.

So I've tried to introduce a menu of cheer for the spring, rooted in what we see with our eyes and senses through God's creation and general grace.

But also for us, the hope anchored in eternal life, the salvation that's being gained for us by the Lamb, and the song that should be on our lips.

Let me let Mr. Bach have the last word from the East Oratorio. In so many ways, this sums it all up. There aren't any words.

[56 : 56] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[58 : 21] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. . Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you very much.