

SUSPENSION:

A SERIES OF MUSICAL REFLECTIONS

No:10

I can't believe we're in double figures already!

I'm feeling quite chirpy this morning as the sun is shining, so I thought I'd reflect that in today's pick. It also seems appropriate to continue with the celebratory theme I started in Monday's *Suspension*, as we continue to revel in the joy and mystery of the Resurrection. So, I hope you'll enjoy William Byrd's *Haec Dies*.

Part of his *Cantiones Sacrae* of 1591, this short setting of the famous words 'This is the day that the Lord has made' (Psalm 118.24), is one of the English composer's most unique, and famous, works. Another example of polyphony (like the Monteverdi we heard previously in this series), this motet (song) stands out from the collection into which it's written, as if features six voice parts, as opposed to the standard five.

This piece it's famed for it's complex rhythmic structure, which is widely regarded as being way ahead of it's time. In fact, some scholars have linked Byrd's technique of setting the text against the barline, to the same technique used by Russian composer and musical revolutionary, Igor Stravinsky, in his *Symphony of Psalms*, almost three centuries later. This technique gives the piece a constant onward impetus. It's almost as if there's a kind of boundless energy being passed around the voices. I'd say that this feeling is also aided by the imitation between lines, a common feature of polyphonic music of this era, whereby the same melodic fragment is heard many times in the different voice parts. I hope that this wonderful, joyful piece will help carry on that brilliant, hopeful feeling shared by us all on Easter Sunday.

Something to listen out for in this piece: the exhilarating passage of Alleluias towards the end of the piece which really finish the whole thing off with a bit of gusto. You'll know it the second you hear it!

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=4Earz7ABf8c>

Enjoy.
Sarah.