

SUSPENSION:

A SERIES OF MUSICAL REFLECTIONS

No:12

It's been a little while since the last *SUSPENSION*. I hope you have been keeping well since then.

The last time I wrote to you all, the sky was blue and there was a definite spring-time feeling in the air. As I'm writing now, the cloud is filled with grey skies and, at least where I am, we've endured a couple of days of rain. I've decided, therefore, to try and bring back a bit of sunshine with Delius' 'On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring'.

Composed in 1912, this is an example of what we would call a 'tone poem', which sort of does what it says on the tin. Tone poems are continuous pieces of symphonic music which form a kind of musical poem, often evoking some kind of sentiment, mimicking a landscape or scene, or telling a story. That hopefully helps to explain the title.

Now, despite being relatively short there's a whole lot to listen out for in this piece. At the very beginning, Delius uses the woodwind section of the orchestra to evoke bird calls, before the violins play a simple melody, directly imitating the call of the cuckoo. This swiftly builds into a beautiful and complex tapestry of nature sounds, woven across the entire orchestra. Hiding in the midst of all of this, is the Norwegian folk song 'In Ola Valley' which had been shown to him by his friend and colleague, Percy Grainger. Together, the pair formed a major part of what we know would call 'The British Folk Revival'.

In the news recently we've seen a lot about the implications of this period of lockdown on the environment, and the extent to which natural habitats have been able to recuperate and repair themselves. I don't want to keep you too much longer, so I'll let you mull on that yourselves, but I hope that as you listen to this, you'll be transported to somewhere green and beautiful. Maybe you'll be able to imagine a time, when this is all over, where we'll be out and about again, and

reconnecting with the beautiful scenery and nature which has inspired us Brits for hundreds of years.

<https://youtu.be/q-BftTJIJil>

Enjoy,
Sarah