

SUSPENSION:

A SERIES OF MUSICAL REFLECTIONS

No:13

Today marks seventy-five years since Victory in Europe Day. Though I'm sure we will all still enjoy our fair share of bunting and festivities, I wonder if our current situation has given a platform for a different kind of commemoration of this extraordinary historic event.

Perhaps we've been provided with an opportunity to reflect more quietly on what this day meant for those who came before us. How might we call to mind, and hold in our hearts, all those who lost their lives in this terrible war? How must their families have felt when they eventually knew that it was all over, that it was all done, and that other families would eventually be able to be reunited with their fathers, brothers, sons, husbands?

To me at least, VE day has a particular significance in our current times. As we prepare to unwind from our lockdown, and reintegrate as a society, many of us will no doubt be eager to return to our daily lives and routines. Many of us will be excited by the prospect of resuming work, or school, and of seeing our friends and families again. Many of us, however, will find that life isn't really the same as it used to be. Indeed, for many, the freedom that we are now able to enjoy will inevitably be marked by the loss that we are all feeling.

Gabriel Fauré's *In Paradisum*, from his Requiem in D minor, Op. 48 seemed to me to be an appropriate musical means through which we might create space for reflection and remembrance. The text, taken from the traditional Latin mass, reads 'May the angels lead you into paradise' (further text linked below). In my humble opinion, it really is just about as beautiful as it gets. I hope that we'll all find a quiet moment of comfort and reflection in the simplicity of this setting, and the ever poignant words it elaborates.

Something to listen out for in this piece: The initial phrase marks out a D *major* chord in its first inversion, that is to say, it starts on the second note (F#), rather than its root position (starting on D). This phrase works its way

upwards syllable-by-syllable, as if to heaven, depicting the words being sung. In musical terms, we call this 'word-painting'. In the wider context of the Requiem in D *minor*, a clear D major chord really helps to establish an almost melancholic sense of peace and calm.

Enjoy,
Sarah

Music: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYQe_by2PL8

Words: <https://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk/song/4377#composer>