

SUSPENSION:

A SERIES OF MUSICAL REFLECTIONS

No:4

I hope you are all keeping well.

Today's 'Suspension' has been inspired by a number of factors. Firstly, I have been lucky throughout my life to try my hand at several instruments, and to own a fair few. Over the past couple of weeks, I've been able to pass the time by turning back to some of those which I have played over the years, and dust up a few old tunes I used to play and love. Unsurprisingly, however, I have never quite pulled off encouraging my parents or my current flatmates to install a full-scale pipe organ in either of the houses in which I've lived. So, as the weeks wear on I'm finding myself increasingly missing sitting behind the console and itching to get back to the organ.

Secondly, I have been greatly enjoying the many videos springing up across my social media of musicians I know and admire turning to a composer you may well be familiar with; J S Bach. At the end of my time at University, I was invited by Anna Lapwood, an exceptional organist (google her) to join in an all-female Bach-a-thon – a 24-hour marathon of all of Bach's organ works played by wonderful female organists of all ages from across the world. This year, musicians are taking the Bach-a-thon online, and it's been incredibly moving to hear their contributions and to see how many musicians find his work inspirational. If you have a few spare moments, take to YouTube or Spotify or whichever streaming platform you use, and see what you find.

With that in mind, I thought I'd turn to one of the foundational collections of any organist's arsenal; Bach's *Orgelbüchlein* (*Little Organ Book*). Each piece in this collection takes as its basis a chorale – sort of an old version of a hymn. The pieces track the life of Jesus and so organists turn to these pieces throughout the liturgical year to provide voluntaries (pieces before or after services) or recital pieces.

The first of the lentern chorale preludes is called *BWV 618* (this refers to its categorisation amongst Bach's opus) - *O Lamm Gottes, unschuldig* (this is the title of the chorale on which it is based). In the video link below, you will see that Bach places the tune for this chorale in the pedal part, on the bottom line (or stave, to use the musical term) of the music.

In my opinion, the words of the chorale are apt not just for lent, but the situation at hand. I hope that you, as I have, will be inspired by the third line in particular. O Lamb of God, most stainless!

Who on the Cross didst languish,
Patient through all Thy sorrows.
Though mocked amid Thine anguish;
Our sins Thou bearest for us,
Else had despair reigned o'er us:
Have mercy upon us, O Jesu!

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Grant us Thy peace today, O Jesu!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opXUluXSdYM>

Sarah