

SUSPENSION:

A SERIES OF MUSICAL REFLECTIONS

No:7

Good afternoon everyone.

I'm keeping it simple today, and opting for an all-time favourite hymn, 'The Old Rugged Cross'.

With music and lyrics composed over a century ago by George Bennard, an American musician, composer and preacher, this hymn has been heard around the world. Now something of a cornerstone of the hymn repertory, 'The Old Rugged Cross' has been performed in all sorts of venues by musicians of all varieties. Even a brief search for a recording of this hymn reveals the myriad of styles to which the words and tune for this iconic hymn have lent themselves; from gospel to country, from choral to instrumental, from sentimental and slow to upbeat and uplifting. So far, one of my favourite finds has been a recording of Jonny and June Cash performing a stunningly simple rendition to a stadium of fans.

The ubiquity of this hymns' appeal, for me, lies in the simplicity and beauty of its melody. After just one verse and chorus, I'd suspect, most of us would just about be able to hum along. Leaving us open, thereafter, to sing through the (similarly) beautiful and simple words, Bennard creates space for us to reflect upon the suffering of Jesus, and the most powerful of symbols, the cross on which he died.

I hope that this hymn can provide us all with a little bit of comfort today, when we might be feeling like our own cross might seem a little too difficult to bear, and things aren't quite how we might have hoped on this beautiful Easter weekend.

Something to listen out for in this piece: the pianist in this video opts for a rather striking key-change halfway through. It put a smile on my face and I hope it will put one on yours.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XcOk-GR0x1M>

Enjoy.
Sarah