
Stop, Look, and Listen!

Musical Diversions and Commentary — by Rodney Flora

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What is this?

Now that I am retired here in Castine, this is an outlet for the skills and passions that I have developed and honed during my career as a classical music broadcaster, and a way for me to share a wider world of classical music with my readers. In these strange times we all need something to focus on besides dreadful news and the state of the world. Besides, music is itself a healthy preoccupation and a source of enjoyment and fulfillment. I hope this will make a small contribution to that.

A Taste of Spring – in many flavors

I don't know about you, but for me Spring just can't get here soon enough! After two whole years of Covid isolation, not to mention everything else, Spring, with the Sun, the warmth (well, less cold anyway, this is Maine after all), the flowers, the promise of better things, is truly something to lift the spirits.

Over the centuries composers have apparently thought so too. So here are some of their impressions of Springtime. Perhaps these will help to bring Spring a little closer a little sooner.

Let's get the obvious out of the way first: Spring (La Primavera) from the Four Seasons by Antonio Vivaldi

<https://youtu.be/0FP9N2SbWn4>



“If food be the music of love...” eat on!

And here, for a further taste (literally) of Spring, is a delicious sounding recipe for Pasta Primavera. I'm going to make it myself as soon as I can get my hands on some nice fresh asparagus.

https://youtu.be/PekQ6PMX_Lc

Okay, so maybe it is a Victorian musical cliché, but it is unavoidable, and really rather disarmingly charming. Mendelssohn's “Spring Song” from Songs Without Words, Op. 62 No. 6.

<https://youtu.be/xOJWbo3TVKI>



Time to break out the ball gowns and tail coats for the Voices of Spring Waltz by Johann Strauss II.

<https://youtu.be/2gG9YSaf4Mg>



Even if Beethoven wasn't thinking of Spring when he wrote his Spring Sonata, it reminded someone of Spring, and they so named it, after Beethoven was no longer around to object.

<https://youtu.be/kwVXdam7-9g>

In a somewhat similar vein, check out this interview with Aaron Copland:

https://youtu.be/W_LcjNe9fMQ

And here is Copland's suite from his ballet Appalachian Spring. Nice photos in this video too!

<https://youtu.be/Q4Qt0AIRK-0>



"Oh To Be In England Now That April's There!" Also of the 20th century, like Copland, but from "across the pond", comes "On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring" by English/Continental composer Frederick Delius. A quintessential example of the English pastoreale sound.

<https://youtu.be/FyPSbLWNX0c>

I assume that in Finland Winter releases its grip reluctantly and Spring comes on slowly, rather as it does here in Maine, only more so. Here is the slowly unfolding, appropriately majestic, hymn-like “Spring Song” by Finnish composer Jean Sibelius.

<https://youtu.be/zR2GIEAQ0Sw>



Now if you like your Springtime more raw and primal (think mud-season and black flies) this might be just the hearty fare you are looking for: Stravinsky’s riotous Rite of Spring. By the way, there were actual riots at the premiere, but there is some disagreement about how bad they really were.

<https://youtu.be/EkwqPJZe8ms>



“In Spring a Young Man’s Fancy...”

If you prefer your Springtime to be naughty but nice, you can’t have much more fun than the lads and lasses in Thomas Morley’s “Now is the Month of Maying”. Oh, to be young again!

<https://youtu.be/XzRM4gyy6o0>



This Crazy World

<https://youtu.be/xLQwphwP0ys>



and, as I often say; when the world just doesn't make sense, listen to Bach.

https://youtu.be/7MiJOkEvAeQ?list=OLAK5uy_n0Q7TM29dBHyXscDXxLVMUwggwzHbBYvcE

<https://youtu.be/T02D5HqFGzc?list=PLr0MsaDpKsY9SwwERreUN3MBQdQsdsgbe>

We'll always have Paris

In the fall of 2019, just five months before Covid closed down the world, Jill and I made our first trip to Paris together. We stayed on the Isle St. Louis, walked everywhere and had a terrific time. We left hoping to return there soon. We're still hoping.

So if you'll forgive me a bit of self-indulgence, here's a little Springtime love note to Paris, and a hope that we will see her again before too much longer.

April in Paris:

<https://youtu.be/AZxrslGt5w>

La romance de Paris:

https://youtu.be/wYcY0tKkd5Y?list=TLPQMTMwMzIwMjL9__xd6QpV4g

Sous le ciel de Paris:

https://youtu.be/SC06NyI6KKU?list=TLPQMTMwMzIwMjL9__xd6QpV4g

The Last Time I Saw Paris:

https://youtu.be/hMcHdFC_Tc0?list=TLPQMTMwMzIwMjL9__xd6QpV4g

