

SUSPENSION:

A SERIES OF MUSICAL REFLECTIONS

No:11

It's starting to feel like an awfully long time since we all met, isn't it? I'm really missing playing for you all. I'm missing really rather a lot of people, in all honesty. Namely, my extended family. That, in part, explains why I've chosen this particular rendition of the beautiful and poignant hymn, 'Abide With Me'. Incredibly appropriate for the times at hand when we, more than ever, may find ourselves feeling alone and a little bit at sea, this hymn reminds us we aren't alone, really.

Now, I've found myself prone to the waterworks recently every time (which feels like a lot), I've heard the Liverpool FC Anthem, 'You'll Never Walk Alone'. Recently becoming somewhat of a theme-tune to Captain Tom Moore's incredible contribution to the health and morale of our nation, what with Michael Ball going straight to the top of the charts in a cover of the Rodgers and Hammerstein number with the now-legend himself, this song has particular sentimental resonances for me, for my family, and for many others.

I'd already decided I wanted to go with this particular hymn for today's SUSPENSION when I stumbled upon this recording of the London Gospel Community Choir. I'd found myself humming this hymn in quiet moments and realised that the words (by Henry Francis Lyte, based on Luke 24:29), and the tune (Eventide) to which they tend to be sung, by William Henry Monk, may as well have been dedicated to this particular, and unprecedented, global crisis. If you have a few spare moments, there are some interesting theories readily searchable online regarding the origins of the words, one of which involves Lyte penning the now-famous text while visiting an ailing friend.

So, when I found this video and discovered that this hymn had become the tune of the FA cup, all sorts of questions sprung up in my mind. Something like #YNWA seems to make sense as the rousing anthem for a club like Liverpool whose history, as is well-documented, is complex. As stated by Mike McGuinness, in his article 'Friday night and the gates are low, popular music and its relationship(s)

to sport', 'The themes of the song [...] of struggle, pride, and community and 'hope in your heart' seemed ideal for the 'trials and emotions' of football fans.'ⁱ The question remains, however, how does a hymn achieve the same feat? How does a hymn become the theme tune to one of the world's oldest sporting institutions? How do its words and tune become known by Christians of all denominations, players and fans of all faiths, agnostic and atheists alike?

For me, the answer is self-evident. I think it will be for you, too.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mh4tOPnHY78>

Enjoy,
Sarah

ⁱ McGuinness, Mike, 'Friday night and the gates are low, popular music and its relationship(s) to sport', in *Sporting Sounds: Relationships Between Sport and Music*, edited by Athony Bateman and John Bale [Oxford: Routledge, 2009], p.185