SUSPENSION:

A SERIES OF MUSICAL REFLECTIONS

**No:17**

For today’s SUSPENSION, I have chosen Gregorio Allegri’s ‘Miserere’. This piece is an all-time staple of the choral canon and has been performed by choirs across the world, particularly during Lent. Though the theory has been widely debunked, legend has it that a young Mozart heard this piece performed in the Sistine Chapel and was so moved by its beauty that he rushed home to transcribe the work onto manuscript. False as the story may be, I can’t say I’d have blamed him.

Taking as its basis the words of Psalm 51, this beautiful 9-part motet explores notions of penitence, humility and devotion. It is therefore, a useful lens through which to read and reflect upon the events of Maundy Thursday, particularly the quiet moments in the Garden of Gethsemane. In this piece, Allegri’s exquisite part-writing delicately balances moments of monophony (one voice) with carefully curated polyphony (multiple voices).

I have linked an article below with further information about the piece which also includes a transcript of the words in both the original Latin and English.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Something to listen out for in this piece:** The moments when the Soprano voices float upwards, towards the outer limits of the vocal range – a ‘C’ 3 octaves above middle C. These sublime moments are famous (or infamous, depending on who you talk to) and I think you will be able to hear why.

Enjoy,

Sarah

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GP9wesrK6\_Y

1. https://www.classicfm.com/composers/allegri/music/gregorio-allegri-miserere/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)