

# **‘Let all the world in every corner sing...’**



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It has been a delight in these past months to listen to a song thrush who perches himself, most evenings, atop a very tall conifer in my garden, before giving the sweetest performance for all to hear. *Wikipedia* tells me an “*individual male may have a repertoire of more than 100 phrases; many copied from its parents and neighbouring birds. Mimicry may include the imitation of man-made items like telephones, and the song thrush will also repeat the calls of captive birds, including exotics such as the white-faced whistling duck.*” I have never seen a white-faced whistling duck in my pond, but apparently, I may have heard one from atop the conifer! Bird song is good for the soul. At the end of the day, I find there is nothing more able to connect me with the natural world around me than the harmony of the *quitquiqit* of the master soloist. I sit and listen until he has finished all thirty verses of his hymn.

Music and spiritual songs have always been the go-to for humanity when struggling to adequately capture the mood in words, particularly so at moments of need. How to make sense of a situation or feeling when everyday words fail? The poetry of the musician and lyrics of the wordsmith blend to release the anguish and ecstasy, helping to make sense of who and where we are in relation to ourselves. I am sad and heartbroken. I am tired and exhausted. I am frightened and know not what to do. I am in love and drunk on romance. Music and song come to my aid, comfort me, and liberate me to find words of my own. Glastonbury celebrates this truth as much as Westminster Abbey.

Singing is good for us. Those who sing in a band or choir benefit directly from using the words and tunes of others to find a rhythm that resonates for themselves. Human tastes know no bounds as we are all drawn to affirm our own identities in different styles and cultures of music. What is common is being able to find a song that '*works*' for you. Why do you like this song and I another? What matters more is that we both find songs that, though different, lift our souls to an inspiring place, cause us to reflect and, in our own words, help us to put life into context.

We are blessed that in our own Churches, both traditional choral music and less formal worship songs and music have a strong place at the heart of our worship. The 17th-century poet, George Herbert, famously called on '*all the world*' to sing. It is today one of the more popular hymns and with good reason, as the song thrush reminds me in my garden.

God Bless.

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