

Welcome to the first in a series of regular musical meditations. It is my hope that this column will help us stay connected to the extraordinary power of sacred music while our regular services are suspended. Even as we look forward to the day when we can return to our beloved sanctuary to worship and sing together, we can continue to enjoy and reflect upon transcendent music.

When, in early February, I picked Brahms' *Geistliches Lied* (Spiritual Song) as the anthem for March 22nd, I of course had no idea how profoundly our lives would all be changed by the coronavirus. Yet when I consider the words of this piece, they speak so directly to our current situation. The text is by Paul Flemming (1609-1640), and translated from the original German:

Let nothing ever grieve thee, distress thee, nor fret thee; heed God's good will, my soul, be still, compose thee.

Why brood all day in sorrow? Tomorrow will bring thee God's help benign and grace sublime in mercy.

Be true in all endeavor, and ever do bravely; what God decrees brings joy and peace, He'll stay thee. Amen.

The author implores us to find inner solace in the confidence that God has a greater plan beyond our understanding. Brahms' music reflects a similar reality: the piece employs a sophisticated compositional device known as a double canon (one canon between the sopranos and tenors, and a separate canon between the altos and basses). But this occurs underneath the polished sheen of the music; it is operative whether or not we are aware of it.

Here is a link to a wonderful recording from St. Bride's Church, Fleet Street, London. It is sung in the original German and a score is provided on the video should you wish to follow along. The *Amen* is one of the most glorious in all of choral music.

<https://youtu.be/PHe48dEar2A>

With every good wish,

Tim Pyper
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