

## Hymn to the Earth (1929)

Edward Joseph Collins, music and words

### I. Chorus

Hail! Mother of us all and beautiful!  
Thou paradise of singing birds and perfumed flowers!  
Thou generous provider!  
All love and gratitude to thee!  
Whence we came, and whither we return.  
Who does not love thy white hooded mountains,  
Thy rich green valleys, thy tumbling cataracts?  
Who does not love thy broad, calm rivers  
Sweeping down to meet the sea?  
Or thy lesser streams that unite with shining water inland?  
How beautiful thy limitless stretch of undulating sand and throbbing ocean!  
Thou art fair to behold at dawn when the sun, thy lover, kisses thee,  
But thou art fairer still by night when shadows creep across thy face,  
And thou art bathed in pale, blue light.  
In the cool shade of thy forests  
Are springs of bubbling nectar.  
While high among the leafy vaults are birds with gay plumage, with sweet voices.  
Thou yieldest the precious metals  
And the stored up sunlight  
And nurturest the tiny seeds  
That burst into golden showers of fruit and grain.  
Hail, thou mother of us all and beautiful!  
Thou paradise of singing birds and perfumed flowers!  
Thou generous provider!

### II. Chorus and Bass Solo

Thou changest thy garment with the seasons,  
And it is ever of colorful texture.  
When winter is here thou art clothed in soft white,  
'Tis the silent time when things are asleep.  
How sadly the trees stand naked and waiting,  
'Tis the silent time when things are asleep.  
But at sunset the snow comes to life  
And glows in the shafts of red and yellow  
Thrown up from behind the hills.  
Anon the stars drop down close to thee,  
And across the fields walks the pensive moon,  
Then art thou decked in myriads of diamonds!  
Empty of sound is the hard, clear air  
Except for the snap of a twig close by  
Or the distant bay of a lonely dog.  
When winter is here  
Thou art clothed in soft white,  
'Tis the silent time when things are asleep.

### III. Chorus and Tenor Solo

Then one day the snow disappeared  
And there was a pause of expectancy.  
A poet stood and faced the South,  
(He loves thee most)  
A zephyr passed and brushed his cheek.  
(None other noticed it.)  
From the land of the sun it came  
Whisp'ring along the highway,  
And pausing now and then  
To comfort some dying bushes,  
The poet heard the zephyr murmur words of hope  
As it touched the cold brown grass,  
Heard it promise new life to the trees, as it flowed through their aching twigs  
And caressed their battered bark.  
And there arose a smell of earth,  
Of fermentation underground.  
The sap, congealed within the roots,  
Welled up into the branches  
And buds of timid green were born.

### IV. Waltz (Soprano Solo)

Hour of youth,  
Springtime of life  
The poet's dream of love  
Oh moment of ecstasy!  
Buds are bursting,  
Leaves are unfolding,  
Robins are building  
Ineffable yearning.  
Lilacs are fragrant,  
Breezes are whispering,  
Young girls are laughing,  
Earth is awakening.

## V. Chorus

Now Summer finds thee garbed in yellow,  
'Tis the rich color of harvest time.  
The branches hang with heavy fruit,  
And meadows are carpeted with flowers.  
White butterflies flit here and yon  
Amid the waving riot of color.  
And across the heavy air is borne  
The drowsy humming of insects.  
Man and beast now seek the shade  
And succumb to the languor of noon-day  
While over the ocean of ripening grain  
The sun pours its merciless fire.  
What a sudden stillness  
As though all life had ceased!  
In the distance are black clouds fringed with white,  
Through them shoots a forked tongue of flame  
Followed by a sombre roll of drums,  
Then over the plain strides the wind,  
First a gentle wave and then a mighty roar  
With a shriek it enters the wood,  
The trees rock and groan,  
On rolls the black mass  
now filled with livid flashes  
A crash and the mighty oak is riven.  
With this the heavens are opened  
And a torrent of blessed rain descends,  
Cleansing the air and cooling the parched fields.  
Soon bright swords of sunlight rend the clouds,  
The landscape smiles refreshed and dripping.  
The blessed rain has cleansed the air and cooled the parched fields,  
And the landscape smiles, refreshed and dripping.  
How dramatic and inspiring are thy storms!

## VI. Alto Solo, Quartet and Final Chorus

Comes Autumn  
And thou art dressed in thy brightest and thy somberest hues  
Here are blood-red berries, fiery oak leaves and roses growing wild along the road.  
A beautiful sadness is here  
The meadows are brown,  
The forests are crimson and gold.  
Roses and wither'd grass.  
Comes Autumn  
And thou art dressed in thy brightest and thy somberest hues Mother Earth!  
Thou art dressed in thy brightest thy somberest hues.  
Roses are growing along the road.  
But the season now is late  
And nature's elegy begins with fog and chilling rain,  
The tired leaves let go and fall to earth.  
There they lie  
In shriveled heaps upon thy breast  
Until thou biddest the noiseless snow to cover them.  
And when the last of us returns to thee,  
And life and death have ceased to be,  
Thou wilt still roll on through endless space  
Amid the vast silence of eternity, patiently awaiting  
Who knows? Ah!