

Now summer finds thee garbed in yellow

Section V. Chorus
from
Hymn to the Earth [1929]

Edward Joseph Collins, music and words

Notes by Jon Becker, editor for the Collins project

Composed in Wisconsin's Door County, *Hymn to the Earth* was inspired by that peninsula's landscape and changing seasons. This the fifth section of Collins's secular cantata *Hymn to the Earth* portrays summer's volatile moods, setting the composer's own words:

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!

The other sections of *Hymn* celebrate the other seasons, as well as the beauty of our planet. Collins also uses the phrase "Mother Earth," perhaps for the first time in Western classical music. Toward the end the work, the composer takes a quite modern view of human existence, so small within the vastness of the cosmos.

Collins (10 November 1886 – 1 December 1951) thus holds a very interesting place betwixt two legendary Wisconsin environmental thinkers and writers, John Muir (21 April 1838 – 24 December 1914) and Aldo Leopold (11 January 1887 – 21 April 1948), in a Wisconsin cultural and intellectual history that arcs from the pre-historic Native American Effigy Mound Culture (ca. 700-1100 CE) toward the founding of Earth Day by U.S. Sen. Gaylord Nelson (4 June 1916 – 3 July 2005).

Now summer finds thee garbed in yellow was extracted from Collins's piano-vocal score for *Hymn to the Earth*.