

Sing to Us, Mother Nature

*By Dennis Payton Knight*

Playlists around the world are filled with songs about peace and love, desire and despair. But humans will never play the music of life as well as nature herself. Neither horns, nor strings, nor woodwinds, bells or drums, nor all of them together can give a concert as moving as the rhythms of our natural surroundings.

Sing to us, Mother Nature.

Around the world oceans roar in waves and lap with splashing sounds on the sands of beaches. Rivers whisper around rocks, through hanging brush and beaver dams, and cascade in a roar over well-polished cliffs. Marsh ponds sleep through the night, peaceful stages for frogs to croak, ducks to quack, geese to honk, and warblers to warble in the willows.

Children and puppies sleep to the cooing of a mourning dove perched on a telephone line, a human invasion that nature has hijacked for her own beautiful purposes. On the ground a cricket chirps, a fox barks and in the tree a mockingbird mimics them all.

Nature has drama in its music, too. Tchaikovsky could do no better than the roar of a cougar in Colorado, a grizzly in Alaska, a tiger in Bengal or a lion on the Serengeti. Hear the cry of a golden eagle's quarry snapped from a colony of prairie dogs. Hear the sound and rage of a Nor'easter in Maine, a tornado in Oklahoma, a volcano in Hawaii.

Nature sings to Windsor Gardens, too. Sit in the cooling breeze of your lanai and soak in the melody of robins singing, squirrels chattering in the branches and geese prattling on the lake. Magpies chime in with bars of sweet harmony, and in the next stanza squawk like banshees in a rock band. You may want to throw a boot at the percussion of a flicker rat-a-tat-tatting by your window but instead you distinguish in nature's opera the baritone of owls and the aria of a coyote.

Nature's music lulls you into serene contemplation when you sense the wafting of a breeze and a clap of thunder breaks your reverie. Hailstones bang on the ledge and you retreat to safety behind the sliding glass door. Lightning flashes in the darkened skies unleash the fury of a late evening thunderstorm. The hail turns to rain, intensifying and driving rhythmically against your window. You marvel in the rumble of thunder near and far, and revel in the crackling choreography of lightning. After a dozen minutes the wind and rains give way to naught but the sound of water in the rain pipe, a distant thunderclap bids adieu, the moon returns, a cricket gives the cue and nature's philharmonic strikes up again.

Does a tree falling in the forest make a sound? You bet it does, in a crash that shakes the woods and the fauna, as great as the crescendo of cymbals in a Sousa band, yet as peaceful as a kitten's purr.

Sing to us again, Mother Nature.