

TREES OF GREEN, RED ROSES TOO

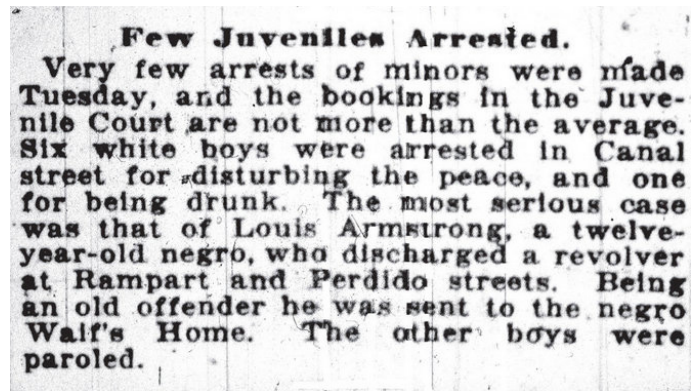
The planet's abundant gifts have inspired many musical works expressing gratitude for those natural riches. Of course, people interested in protecting the environment would say that we cannot take those riches for granted—but they would probably agree that the first step toward taking action is getting people to appreciate what the world has to offer. “What a Wonderful World” (Listening Example 7) is one of the most celebrated songs to cherish Earth's best qualities, but in the United States, it was little known—and thus unappreciated—for many years.

Counting the Blessings

The story of the iconic “What a Wonderful World” should begin with Louis Armstrong (1901–71), its first singer and the person for whom the song was written. Indeed, the fact that he could sing the lyrics with sincerity is a testimony to his resilience, for he came into the world with a lot of disadvantages. By the time he was born, his father had abandoned his mother.¹⁰¹ As a child, Armstrong did what he could to help scrape together some income, but he ran wild on the streets much of the time, and at the age of nine, he was arrested (for the first time) for being a “dangerous and suspicious character”; he was sent to the Colored Waifs Home in New Orleans.¹⁰² He was released to an aunt, but after shooting a gun into the air on New Year's Eve, 1912, he was again sent to the Home in 1913.¹⁰³

A significant change had taken place in the Colored Waifs Home by that time: the proprietors, Joseph and Manuela Jones, had hired Peter Davis to be the institution's band director. Armstrong began studying the cornet with Davis, and eighteenth months later, when he left the Home, he had mastered a skill that would support him for the rest of his life. Although the Joneses and Davis are little known today, it is likely that without them, “there probably would not have been a Louis Armstrong.”¹⁰⁴ Armstrong himself recognized the importance of his time with the Joneses; he wrote to them in 1937 to say, “You both shall be the ‘tops’ in my estimation always.”¹⁰⁵

There were others who helped Armstrong along the way. The cornetist and band leader Joe “King” Oliver (1881–1938) took a paternal interest in the young musician in New Orleans, giving him a cornet of his own and eventually persuading Armstrong to join his group when Oliver had moved to Chicago (where



On January 2, 1913, a New Orleans newspaper announced Louis Armstrong's second trip to the Colored Waif's Home.

Armstrong's playing would be preserved on record for the first time).¹⁰⁶ In 1924, Armstrong married the pianist in Oliver's band, Lillian Hardin (1898–1971), and she is credited with improving Armstrong's understanding of music theory and music notation (despite some initial resistance from Armstrong), accelerating his musical development.¹⁰⁷ “Lil” Hardin is also the person who prodded Armstrong into breaking away from his mentor's band and starting to pursue a career as a soloist—an important step in his progress as an independent, innovative musician.¹⁰⁸ Along the way, he acquired various nicknames, including “Satchmo,” after friends teased him for a mouth they said was “as big as a satchel.”¹⁰⁹ Although Armstrong is best remembered as a cornet (and later trumpet) player, it was not long after the break from Oliver that he was first recorded as a singer as well.¹¹⁰

Many years later, it was another vocal recording by Armstrong that became a huge hit: he sang a version of “[Hello, Dolly!](#)” that climbed to number one in the 1964 *Billboard* charts, despite the overwhelming popularity of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones at the time. He was sixty-three years old, making him the oldest person ever to reach a Number 1 single *Billboard* ranking until this record was broken in 2023.¹¹¹ It certainly validated his expertise as a vocalist, and Joseph F. Laredo claims there were peers who tried to catch colds deliberately in order “to imitate Satchmo's gravelly singing voice.”¹¹²

Louis Armstrong and his music had already been playing a significant role in the world's politics. Armstrong's recordings had been banned by the Nazis during World War II, but still had been secretly distributed, sometimes under fake titles.¹¹³ Armstrong's music continued to be sought during the “Cold War,”

composer groups the notes within the measures, the listener’s sense of pulse can temporarily shift from triple to duple (or vice versa).

Global Warming has received consistently strong reviews. The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* declared, “The juxtaposition of elements is unleashed in an irresistible display of orchestral color.”¹⁶⁷ *The Star*—published in Johannesburg, South Africa—considered it to be “a celebration of global healing,” describing it as “partly a soothing and partly a refreshingly exciting experience.”¹⁶⁸ Still, in the thirty-four years since *Global Warming* debuted, its title has increasingly drawn new attention. Abels says, “At the time of its premiere, global warming was not the politically charged term it is today. The piece was not written as a political statement, but its political message has inevitably deepened as climate change has evolved from theory into reality.”¹⁶⁹

Listening Guide 8: *Global Warming* – 1990 Michael Abels

Timeline	Form	Musical Features
0:00	Intro	Sustained <i>pianissimo</i> dissonance in Violins I & II; percussionist scrapes guiro.
0:02		Solo violin cadenza (beginning with upward climb)
0:04		Solo violin plays series of double-stops, gradually descending.
0:14		Solo cello cadenza (featuring double-stops)
0:24		<i>Sforzando-piano</i> sustained notes added by low strings and woodwinds.
0:27		Solo cello cadenza resumes (upward climb).
0:30		Solo violin cadenza resumes (upward climb).
0:33		Solo violin plays series of double-stops, gradually descending.
0:43		Solo cello cadenza resumes (featuring double-stops).
0:53		New sustained notes begin in low strings and woodwinds; gong is added.
0:55		Solo cello cadenza resumes (upward climb).
0:59		Solo violin cadenza resumes (upward climb, then descent).
1:14		Solo violin plays descending double-stops while cello plays upward climb, then double-stops.
1:30		Solo cello plays a series of three long tones (F), each preceded by a grace note.
1:36	A	Marimba starts to play a syncopated pattern, <i>mezzopiano</i> .
1:42		Flute begins Irish-influenced melody in compound-duple meter and Dorian mode (with numerous grace notes).
1:50		Oboe & flute play the Irish tune; bodhran joins the marimba in an interlocking pattern.
1:56		Oboe & clarinet play the Irish tune; steady chords added in harp.
2:06		Melody moves to flute and oboe.
2:19		Percussion continues while string instruments add a quiet <i>pizzicato</i> background.
2:26		Flute, oboe, & harp resume the Irish melody.
2:36		More woodwinds added to the melody
2:46		Piccolo added to the melody
3:02		More instruments added to melody; horns play sustained tones.
3:13	Lower woodwinds take over the melody; dynamic level drops.	
3:18	Dynamic level starts to <i>crescendo</i> .	

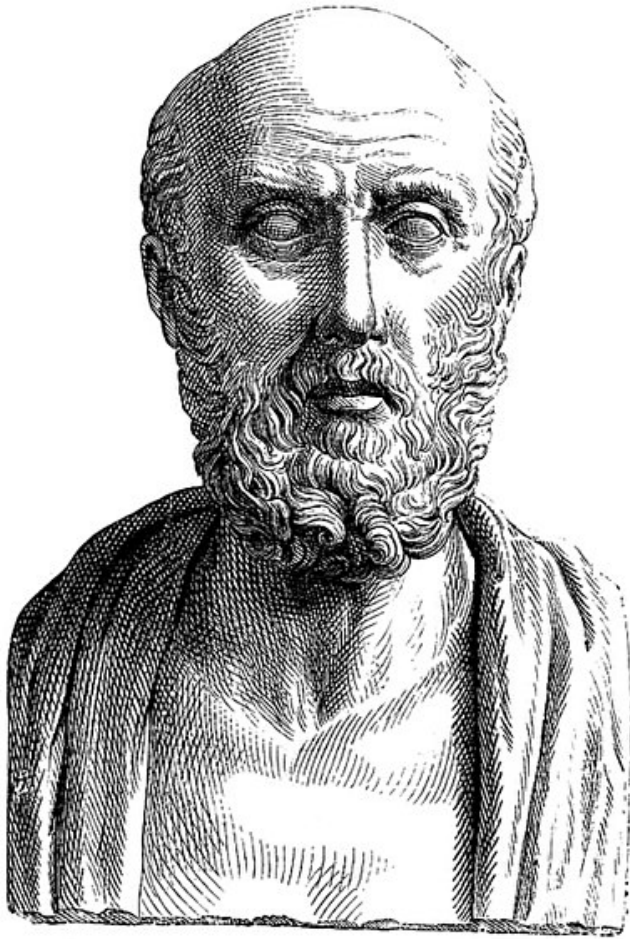
3:25		Strings play the melody (<i>forte</i>); stopped horns and muted trumpets play sustained notes; triangle plays accompaniment.
3:34		English horn & clarinet start a series of call-and-response patterns.
3:46		Violins I & II play the melody (<i>fortissimo</i>); brass, percussion, low strings, and bassoons play short notes as accompaniment.
3:55		High woodwinds and higher strings play the melody; accompanying instruments play faster pulses.
4:13		Full ensemble plays for the first time; a tambourine is prominent.
4:28	B	Oboe plays new Mixolydian-mode pattern in triple meter but with frequent hemiolas.
4:30		Oboe plays Middle-Eastern-influenced melody.
4:49		More high winds are added to melody; strings play <i>pizzicato</i> accompaniment.
5:11		New melody in lower woodwinds
--	B+A	Characteristics of B and A gradually merge.
--	Coda	Opening solo cello and violin cadenzas return, along with sustained dissonance, ending with a harp glissando.

SECTION III SUMMARY

- ◆ Composers have sought to express the feelings of various seasons via music, and depictions of spring and summer often are very joyous.
- ◆ In the **Middle Ages**, starting around the ninth century, the Catholic Church began devising musical notation to standardize the worship rituals. This meant that monks and nuns no longer had to memorize thousands of **sacred chants**. The handwritten **manuscripts** were expensive to produce, so the **medieval** church rarely notated **secular** music, since it would not support church rituals.
- ◆ The earliest notated music was monophonic, but composers gradually experimented with ways to produce counterpoint, usually by “**sampling**” (quoting) older chants and adding new material to them. It is possible that imitative polyphony—in the form of **rounds**—may have been improvised long before that polyphonic music was ever notated.
- ◆ The anonymous *Sumer is icumen in* (Listening Example 6), set in Old English, is a rare example of medieval secular polyphony. It blends two types of counterpoint: a **rota**, which was a term for round or **canon**, as well as a **rondellus**, in which two (or more) voices exchange melodic lines that are designed to harmonize with each other.
- ◆ The *rondellus* melody may have been taken from a Latin chant, *Regina caeli laetare*.
- ◆ *Sumer is icumen in* is nicknamed the “Reading Rota” (after the location of the abbey that preserved the handwritten **manuscript**) and the “Summer Canon” (due to its celebration of summer).
- ◆ It is possible that this joyful secular piece was preserved around the year 1250 because a sacred Latin poem had been devised that would fit the *rota*’s melody.
- ◆ Many features of the planet are cherished in “What a Wonderful World” (Listening Example 7).
- ◆ Louis Armstrong, who premiered the song, had a rough upbringing, but his life began to change when he was taught to play the cornet. He followed a successful band leader, Joe “King” Oliver, to Chicago, where he married Lillian Hardin and started making his first recordings. His wife encouraged him to pursue an independent career apart from Oliver and also coached him in music theory.
- ◆ Besides Armstrong’s mastery of cornet and trumpet, he also was an admired jazz singer. When he recorded “Hello, Dolly!” in 1964, it pushed the Beatles and the Rolling Stones aside to become a Number 1 hit, at the time making Armstrong the oldest performer ever to reach that peak.
- ◆ Because Armstrong’s music was so popular

Section IV

Words of Warning



Hippocrates wrote the first known study of ecology in the fourth century BCE.

It is impossible to know when humans first became aware of the need to protect their natural environment, but evidence for this concern can be found dating back many centuries. In 450 BCE, the ancient Greek philosopher Zeno declared, “The goal of life is living in agreement with nature.”¹⁷⁰ Around the fourth century BCE, Hippocrates, nicknamed the “Father of Medicine,” wrote *De aëre, aquis, et locis* (“Air, Waters, and Places”), which is regarded as the oldest surviving



Air pollution has been a problem for centuries.

European study of human **ecology**.¹⁷¹ Ecology is a field of biology that examines the relationships between organisms and their physical environment.¹⁷²

Different aspects of the natural world have been targeted for protection although the process is often slow. The British monarch King Edward I banned the burning of coal in London in 1306 because of the noxious smoke it produced. Over five hundred years later, air quality was still a concern in England, and a royal commission was launched to investigate “noxious vapors” that various industrial factories were producing, since witnesses were reporting “damage to trees, crops, vegetation and human health.”¹⁷³ However, there was resistance to the commission’s findings because addressing the issues would often come at a financial cost. It was not until 1956 that Britain passed a “Clean Air Act”; the United States followed with its own act in 1963, which was strengthened in 1970.¹⁷⁴

In the English-speaking world, writers began having an environmental impact in the nineteenth century. Ralph Waldo Emerson’s *Nature* (1836) proposed limits on how much humanity should expand into the wilderness. His views influenced Henry David Thoreau to write *Walden; or Life in the Woods* (1854), which detailed his experiences during a two-year