

**The Best is Yet to Come**  
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April 20, 2025 – Easter Sunday

If you ask a young person who their favorite musical artist is, you are likely to hear a reply with a name like “Ariana Grande”, or “Bad Bunny”, or “Lady Gaga”. If you ask someone from my generation (the official first year of Gen X) most everyone will say some combination of Madonna, Michael Jackson and Whitney Houston...with a side of Celine Dion. Generations prior to mine will include names like Grateful Dead, Carpenters, The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Sly and the Family Stone, James Brown. A few more generations back will invoke names like Bill Haley and the Comets, Elvis, Little Richard, and yes, Doris Day.

I don't think we've got any Andrews Sisters folks out there...though I could be wrong.

My point is that we tend to identify “our” music with the formative years of our lives. The times when we not only listened to music but would spontaneously dance to it as well. “Our” music was a celebration of our youth and a celebration of looking forward to everything we wanted our lives to be.

While I am a fan of Whitney, Michael and Celine (I'll take Patti Labelle and Tina Turner over Madonna thank you very much), my favorite musical artist will always be Broadway composer Cy Coleman. Coleman is my favorite musical artist because he, along with his writing partner Dorothy Fields wrote my favorite musical, *Sweet Charity* (1966).

In 1959, Mr. Coleman and his earlier writing partner Carolyn Leigh penned the song “The Best is Yet to Come”. There's a fabulous, if wildly dated YouTube recording of Cy Coleman performing this song for the first time on Hugh Hefner's Playboy Penthouse television program. The whole premise of a television show built around the Playboy Club is at the very least questionable, but if you can get past the women in impossibly tight dresses and the fact that everyone is smoking, including the drummer, who is only using one stick, because he's that cool...it's a delicious mid-century moment of kitsch.

What does any of this have to do with Easter? After all Cy Coleman was literally a nice Jewish boy from the Bronx. Well, Easter and Passover do go hand in hand. The last supper was a seder. More than that however, both Easter and Passover are commemorations of tremendous anticipation...Easter the coming of Christ and Passover the coming Exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt. Here's where Coleman comes in. Cy Coleman's musical trademark was all about anticipation. He used what we call chromatic melodic and harmonic devices. Simply put, his melodies and harmonies are always on a journey. Sometimes they are moving up the scale, other times they are moving down. You find yourself anticipating where the song will go and then it surprises you and explodes into something you could never have expected, but that is utterly beautiful. He gives you the music that you didn't know you wanted or needed. Coleman sets up a sense of anticipation from the very first intonation of a song.

When we think of Easter, most of us in a UU setting may first get nostalgic thinking about a childhood spent at Easter services wearing uncomfortable clothes and getting bored, or big Easter dinners...and many will quickly default to Easter Egg hunts. But if you think about it,

even the Easter Egg hunt is about anticipation. Looking for something that you know is there, or that you believe can be there. A treat that rewards your search and your patience. *Ah the Cadbury Egg!*

For Christians, Easter is indeed the ultimate Cadbury Egg.

*Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."*

*27 Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 This is my blood of the<sup>[a]</sup> covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. - Matthew 26:26-28*

This is the Eucharistic blessing that accompanies every Christian communion. But the most important part is what follows:

*29 I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."*

Here is where Jesus is saying, quite literally... "y'all gotta wait. The best is yet to come"

What are Christians waiting for? They are waiting for fulfillment and completion...they are waiting for wholeness through their world view and belief in an afterlife. Christians are waiting for comfort...the reassurance that though they believe they are sinful, they will be welcomed into the Kingdom of Heaven through the grace of God and the sacrifice of Christ. All of this is for the Christian, the reminder of their shared humanity with Jesus and how if he can anticipate his death on the cross, and wait dwelling in faith for the fulfillment of the prophesy, then they should be able to wait as well.

"The best is yet to come..."

I'm sure that one reason the Easter story and holiday endure for so many people is not just for the hats and the flowers. I'm sure it is about the message that something good can come of the most horrific of scenes. In a time like ours where we are currently watching politics contort and destroy lives, we need something. Certainly, we can't just sit and wait. But we also can't just do for doing sake. In moments of horror, we have a choice. We can thrash about doing everything with little consciousness of what impact we are having. Sure. We can wait in a posture of high anxiety and stomach-churning paralysis. We also have the choice to listen to the melody carefully and understand that it is leading us toward something. We can trust the 'great composer', or fate, or God that there will be resolution to the most dissonant of harmonies.

Underneath whatever posture of anticipation we choose, we can also place the natural, human desire for good. Granted, "good" may look very different from person to person, but the impulse to move toward some kind of way in which we individually perceive "good" is hardwired into us. While as a scholar I actively fight against "universals", I do believe that no human being seeks pain. Our bodies tell us what good feels like...physically and emotionally. The challenge for us is to be able to tap into that basic human impulse across political, religious and social divides and

recognize ourselves as beings designed around good, even though we may do some very, very bad things.

The other reason I think the Easter celebration endures is because it is a moment of a promise kept. “This is the blood of my covenant”. Many religious and spiritual communities, including this one, are built around the idea of covenants. These promises can include many things: promises to respect one another; promises to care for one another; promises to teach one another; promises not to judge one another; promises to guide one another; promises to remain in relationship with one another. And though we are not always able to live into or keep these promises, we try. It is only when we find we are unable to try to keep these promises that the covenants are broken.

What is heartbreaking when a covenant is broken, is not just the loss of relationship, but the loss of how that relationship was always saying to us “the best is yet to come”. It is the loss of an anticipated and hoped for good in ourselves and in those we care about. When I look at the ways in which covenants are publicly being broken these days, that is what is most upsetting to me. If you shoot and kill people at random, if you “disappear” people against their will, if you erase people’s histories, if you fabricate crime where there is no crime, lies where there was truth, violence where there was peace, each of these is a tragic physical pain unto itself. But the most egregious pain is that these actions block the possibility of the good that is possible; a good that lives within us as creatures.

“Out of the tree of life, I just picked me a plum” is the first line from the song “The Best is Yet to Come.” All of the biblical allusion in that image is no accident. Carolyn Leigh was a smart woman with an incredible wit as was Cy Coleman. The song goes on to talk about how this new love the singer has found brings anticipation of all the good things that a true love can bring. But the singer never speaks of the good stuff in the present or the past tense. There’s a beauty to recognizing that in being alive in this moment, being in community in the place, being in our bodies as we know them...is the exquisite, ripe plum we’ve picked. It’s up to us to be filled with appreciation as we anticipate every time we take that next juicy, delicious bite.

May it be so.