

I thought that since we are all isolated from each other and not able to practice our music together, we could still enjoy a weekly, Thursday song. Every Thursday (our normal practice time) I'll send out a link to a piece of music, with a little back-story about the piece, that you can enjoy from the safety of your homes. Feel free to Reply All with any thoughts, memories it triggers, or inspiration you may have, so that we can have a virtual conversation about handbell music—something that in normal times unites us in person but that we can still enjoy even now.

My first selection is a little bit happily reliving our most recent playing, and looking forward to when we can share this with the greater Trinity community. It is *Vincent (Starry, Starry Night)*, by Don McLean, arranged for handbells by Ron Mallory.

As you [LISTEN](#) (and air-bell to your part with spoons, lol), have a look at the lyrics below. Here also, is a little bit about Vincent (van Gogh) and the music.

About Vincent:

Vincent is a song by Don McLean, written as a tribute to Vincent van Gogh, and is also known by its opening line, *Starry, Starry Night*, a reference to van Gogh's 1889 painting, *The Starry Night*.

McLean wrote the lyrics in 1971 after reading a book about the life of van Gogh, and was released on McLean's 1971 *American Pie* album. McLean says, "I was sitting on the veranda one morning, reading a biography of van Gogh, and suddenly I knew I had to write a song arguing that he wasn't crazy. He had an illness and so did his brother Theo."

Vincent van Gogh painted *Starry Night* in 1889 during his stay at the asylum of Saint-Paul-de-Mausole near Saint-Rémy-de-Provence. [Read More about the story of the painting, *Starry Night*.](#)

About the Song:

"The lyrics, 'Paint your palette blue and gray' reflect the prominent colors of the painting, and are probably a reference to Vincent's habit of sucking on or biting his paintbrushes while he worked. The 'ragged men in ragged clothes' and 'how you tried to set them free' refer to van Gogh's humanitarian activities and love of the socially outcast as also reflected in his paintings and drawings. 'They would not listen/They did not know how' refers to van Gogh's family and some associates who were critical of his kindness to 'the wretched.' 'How you suffered for your sanity' refers to the schizophrenic disorder from which van Gogh suffered." [Read More about the song.](#)

The Lyrics:

Starry, starry night
Paint your palette blue and grey
Look out on a summer's day
With eyes that know the darkness in my soul
Shadows on the hills
Sketch the trees and the daffodils
Catch the breeze and the winter chills
In colors on the snowy linen land

Now I understand
What you tried to say to me
And how you suffered for your sanity

And how you tried to set them free
They would not listen, they did not know how
Perhaps they'll listen now

Starry, starry night
Flaming flowers that brightly blaze
Swirling clouds in violet haze
Reflect in Vincent's eyes of china blue
Colors changing hue
Morning fields of amber grain
Weathered faces lined in pain
Are soothed beneath the artist's loving hand

Now I understand
What you tried to say to me
And how you suffered for your sanity
And how you tried to set them free
They would not listen, they did not know how
Perhaps they'll listen now

For they could not love you
But still your love was true
And when no hope was left in sight
On that starry, starry night
You took your life, as lovers often do (Kim's note: pause at bar 48)
But I could have told you, Vincent
This world was never meant for one
As beautiful as you

(Kim's note – lyrics "But I could have told you, Vincent, This world was never meant for one as beautiful as you" is Mei's solo G, and lovely *rit* bars 49 to 52)

Starry, starry night
Portraits hung in empty halls
Frameless heads on nameless walls
With eyes that watch the world and can't forget
Like the strangers that you've met
The ragged men in the ragged clothes
The silver thorn, a bloody rose
Lie crushed and broken on the virgin snow

Now I think I know
What you tried to say to me
And how you suffered for your sanity
And how you tried to set them free
They would not listen, they're not listening still
Perhaps they never will