

TITLE The Orchestra Of Life or

"How To Be Happy At Home"

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PREACHED

Fresno	8/22
Plainville, Conn	5/31/25
Jonesville	7/19/25
Groome	7/19/25
Trinity	8/22/27
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## THE ORCHESTRA OF LIFE

"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all ye lands"  
Psalms 100:1

When we listen to a modern orchestra of a hundred men playing twenty or more kinds of instruments--violins, violas, violincellos, double basses, harps, flutes, clarinets, English and French horns, trumpets, trombones, tubas, snare drums, kettle drums, triangles, and cymbals--our souls can be swayed as by the forces of nature and the elemental human passions themselves. We seldom realize, however, that this monstrous wonderful, mystic, half human, half divine machine is the outcome of a process of evolution lasting thousands of years, during which the crude inventions of savage and ancient civilized nations gradually developed into the nearly perfect orchestral instruments known to us. When we speak of an orchestra we mean a number of performers on different instruments playing different parts ingeniously interwoven and harmonized and specially suited to the emotional character of each instrument. When we speak of an orchestra we mean a number of performers playing these different ingeniously interwoven and harmonized parts in such a way that we feel our noblest impulses surging to the surface, that we feel ourselves brought nearer to the Almighty, that we feel ourselves transported to heaven itself. Did I not sit in the Coliseum at Columbus and with thousands of other people feel myself swept up from the world of autos, street-cars, stocks and bonds, realities, to a higher and better plane? Did I not go from that place along with these thousands of other folks feeling that I wanted to be better? Were not these feelings brought about by the symphony orchestra which played there? It is the task of a poet, not mine to eulogize

such a marvelous combination of pieces and players. Far be it for a mere student preacher to fill your ears with cumbersome and meaningless, shadeless words in an attempt to portray for you his feelings as aroused by beautiful music played by an orchestra of artists. Music and musical instruments have been used in various forms by all peoples. Music has progressed from the dry rattle of pebbles in a gourd, from the deep boom-boom-boom of the savage tom-tom down to our modern orchestra. All peoples have tried to bring into being from their inner selves a something which we today call music. In my mind there is no agent so fit to interpret music as the orchestra, and it is probably for this reason that I like to think of life as a huge symphony orchestra in which all men and women are merely players whose duty is, "To make a joyful noise unto the Lord." Let us consider, then, this morning some of the things that are before us as players in "The Orchestra of Life."

The first thing for us players to realize is that everyone cannot play first violin. In our symphony orchestra not only violins are needed but also violas, violin-cellos, double basses, harps, flutes, trumpets, trombones, tubas, the various kinds of drums and many other instruments too many to mention. It would be a poor orchestra indeed that was composed entirely of first violins. It is the variety that makes it beautiful. This would be a queer place if everyone were doing the same thing, in the same way, for the same purpose, at the same time. As various parts are needed in an orchestra so various occupations are needed in life. We had, therefore, ought not to minimize the importance of our occupation or someone else's occupation, no matter how humble that it may be. One of Beethoven's most famous concertos was suggested to the composer as he heard repeated



knocks in the stillness of the night at the door of a neighbor. The concerto begins with four soft taps of the drum--an instrument which is raised in this work to the rare dignity of a solo instrument. Again and again the four beats are heard throughout the music, making a wonderful effect. God uses even the humblest player in His orchestra for some work. A man who can play only a drum can be made valuable in the music of the world. All of us, modest and obscure as our part may be, can help on the harmonies of heaven. How very miserable some people make themselves in life because they cannot make as much noise in their place as someone else can in his, or because they underestimate the value of their own instrument. Some are unhappy for the reason that they want to play some instrument other than their own. If you are meant to play one thing and you insist on playing something else you cannot be happy. That is one of our first duties--to find out what instrument in life we are best fitted to play. If we are fitted to play a greater part than we are playing we are going to spoil the music as well as we will by playing a greater part than the one for which we are fitted. I plead with you to try to get yourself to realize that YOU are of some importance in this world. It does not follow that because you do not get your name in the papers that you are of no use! Sir Michael Costa was once rehearsing with a vast array of performers and hundreds of voices, when, in the mighty chorus, amid the thunder of the organ, and the roll of drums, and the blare of brass instruments, and the clashing of cymbals he suddenly stopped and exclaimed, "Where is the piccolo?" That little instrument had ceased to play, and the great master of music missed it. Friend o'mine if you cease to play your part in life the Great Master will notice it and it will grieve Him, for each part in life is of vital importance to the finished piece.

The best-planned orchestra is ineffective unless it is in the hands of competent players. The instruments may be of the best make obtainable, the music played may be of the highest type, but unless the players be competent that orchestra is a failure. The first essential of competent players is TRAINING, whether those players be in the Boston Symphony or in our own orchestra of life. If we are to play in this orchestra we must be trained. The demand today is for the trained man. Crude oil is worth ten per barrel, kerosene, gasoline, and the best grade of lubricating oil. It is the same material, only it has been refined, improved, educated. Training will largely determine whether you will be worth or or or per day.

There are all sorts of ways of getting training from private study to a university course, but in some way or other that training must be secured and it must be in the line of your likes and capacities. On the ridge of Leuthen, far up above the plain, Frederick the Great through his glasses watched the gathering of the enemy's hosts in overwhelming numbers. He gazed on the terrible spectacle only five minutes, and then he had thought out the magnificent combinations which arranged his plan of battle. As ruin fell on the foe, a new era in history was inaugurated; but this was only because Frederick had trained himself for years for the crisis. Training counts; training makes leadership, and training also makes followers. Two per cent lead--ninety-eight per cent follow, but the ninety-eight percent must be trained as well as the two per cent if much is to be accomplished. After all, education is not a question alone of preparing great men for great things, but of preparing even little men for greater things than would otherwise be possible. The players in life must be trained players.



Another thing that I notice is that even though a player is playing the right instrument, and even though he is well trained, he cannot play that instrument just when and how he pleases, but he must play the music as it is written keeping the other players and the conductor in mind. There would indeed be a terrific din if each individual played any piece, in any way that he chose without taking ~~that~~ <sup>into</sup> consideration the others. Perhaps there are times when some one artist does not approve of the way a piece is being played. It is very possible that were it played in his way there might be improvement, nevertheless he must do as his conductor says or there will be a discord. So in life we cannot always have our own way. Perhaps we think that we should, but if we want to keep harmony in our orchestra it will be better to play the piece the others are playing PROVIDED THAT IT IS THE PIECE OUR CONDUCTOR WISHES US TO PLAY--but we will talk about the conductor later and his wishes. There are times when it is necessary for some of the instruments to play softer than usual and it would be a sorry state of affairs if the cornet player simply refused to play softer than the piccolo. But, have not you seen just such folks in life; folks who refused to soften their own part to the advantage of others. "Why should I, they say, "put myself in obscurity to please other folks or for the advantage of other folks?" We will never be fit players for the orchestra of life unless we take into consideration the others who are playing with us.

Very closely connected with the subject of consideration for others is the subject SOLOISTS. All good orchestras have expert soloists, for there are certain parts of almost every number that demand the services of an expert. As a matter of fact not many are needed and even then it may be the case that there will be weeks before one man gets

his chance to play. Our orchestra may consist of players, every one of whom is qualified to be a soloist, but only a few are chosen. These few must be as considerate as the ordinary players, if not more so. It would ~~not~~ do to have the cornet soloist jump up in the middle of a number to play a solo of his own choosing, nor would it do for the French horn player to blurt out a note whenever he felt like it. To have a successful orchestra each soloist, each individual player must cooperate with the others to play the piece as the conductor directs. When this is done we have not only a good orchestra, we have a famous orchestra. The identity of the individual is lost in a successful attempt to do credit to the whole. ~~Say folks,~~ Is it possible to imagine a church in which this is the prevailing spirit? What a power for God such a church would be. A group of well trained Christians, each playing the part he is best fitted to play, each forgetting himself for his Master! In this ideal church there would be some soloists. They would be those who were fitted to take the lead, the pastor would be one, but these soloists would not be working with the purpose of giving themselves notoriety but rather to make a success of the enterprise. If a plan was brought up that was for the good of all we would not find a one who would refuse to work that plan in order that he might blow his own horn. Glorious!! Glorious!! We would have a whole church full of people who were not hindering Christ, who would have all the desirable materials that Peter finally had in his fire, each one of whom would be a Galilee and not a Dead Sea, and who would be truly serving the Lord as Nehemiah served Him.

We have not talked as yet about two of the most important parts of the orchestra--the composer, and the conductor. I think



that the composer should be rightly considered a part of the orchestra for without music what would our players do? Like wise the best orchestra in the world will make but a fleeting if not an utterly insignificant impression in the hands of an inefficient conductor. The conductor of an orchestra was originally a mere perfunctory time-beater. His individuality did not enter into the performance at all. A great change has, however, come over this state of affairs, for today a conductor's reading of the works given under his direction has assumed as much importance as the injection of a master's personality into his playing. Every good orchestra recognizes the importance of its conductor. The individual players realize that without a man standing in front of them leading them on they would become a huge unwieldy mass of stringed instruments and horns that would no more interpret music nor give pleasure than a mob of savages. It is very often the case that the composer also conducts his orchestra. Such is the case in the orchestra of life. Our composer is our conductor. God has composed our pieces and acts as the Master of all conductors. It is necessary, then, for us to think about our relation to the conductor. We must first recognize him as the composer and conductor. We must grant that he knows better than we the way his plan should be worked out and that in order to insure the proper harmony and the correct time we must follow very closely every injunction of our Master. We must not stop in the middle of a piece to question whether or not the other players are right but instead we must keep our eyes on the music and the conductor, thinking only of whether or not we are in harmony with the rest. If every single player would do this it would be far from necessary for the conductor to stop the music occasionally to tell us that we were out of harmony, it would never be necessary

for one of the mere players to jump from his seat to tell the orchestra that he alone was doing as the conductor wished. The conductor is not unreasonable. He will not give us pieces that are impossible for us to play although they will at times not be easy. Some of the pieces we shall like and think pretty, but some may be written in a minor key that we shall not like to play. It would not be fair through, would it, to spoil the music just because we did not like one piece or one part of a piece. Then too, it will be worth the effort on the hard pieces, worth the disagreeableness on the ones we do not like to be able to receive the commendation of our conductor when we have successfully, beautifully executed our number.

I grant that half of you in front of me are thinking the same thing. "Why, he has forgotten all about his text!" I wonder if you remember what it was?? I will give it again. "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all ye lands!" No, people, I have not forgotten that I took a text. I have been trying to develop and even obey the words of my text. I said last Sunday evening that it was a glorious thing to say that we were serving the Lord, but it is a far more glorious thing to say that we are making a joyful noise unto the Lord. A good many of us try pretty hard to serve him, but we come far from making a joyful noise unto him. I note that the text does NOT say MAKE A NOISE UNTO THE LORD. It reads make a JOYFUL NOISE. Most anybody can make a noise! Not everybody makes a joyful noise. It is not such a hard thing to make a noise for the Lord but it is not always the best kind of a noise that we make. The savage tribes make a noise, a perfect din. We would not exactly call it music or a joyful noise. I can get together a group of musicians and on the signal they can bow their violins, blow their



horns, beat their drums--it's noise!! We can do the same thing for God. Each individual ~~can~~ make ~~that~~ noise and then when each and every individual does make that noise there will be SOME NOISE--but it will not be a pleasant noise. When, however, we each find the instrument we should play, when we each get the training we need and then take into consideration the other noise makers; when we follow the directions as given us by our great Conductor God and play our instrument, then we will be able to make a joyful noise unto our Maker.

That is your duty, that is my duty, Christian. God will never accept us if we come to him pounding with all our might on a tin pan, for we will not be making a joyful noise for Him. Will it not be dreadful if when you or I come to the judgement throne of God and he asks us what we have been doing if we have to answer, "Well, God, I made a noise down there on earth. I should have been playing a second violin but I wanted to be heard so I got hold of some cymbals and I crashed them all my life and people heard me too." Do you think God will be pleased with such an answer. But rather will it not be glory for us, it will be glory for me, to come before God and in answer to his question say, "Folks hardly knew I was around down there, but I played the part you gave me, I trained myself for it, I followed your directions, and Dear Lord, to my knowledge I never once, willingly, caused a discord while I was playing in The Orchestra Of Life.

"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord."

Your committee has put an exceedingly difficult task upon both you and me. They have asked me to preach to you, and they have asked you to take heed, or at least listen, to my preaching. There would be no difficulty if I were preaching to a group of Leaguers up in Troy Conference or over in the N.E. Conference or any place except in N.H. District of the N.Y. East Conference. Anywhere else I am plain Mr. Griffis. Here I am Hal Griffis, on-time first vice-president of this very District. The person who was described by one of your own pastors as "big jovial Hal.". I delight in this relationship in the District but I think we will agree that it necessarily precludes any possibility of my "preaching" to you. So I am just going to talk to you thus making this not a sermon, nor on the other hand a "model" League meeting but rather a "perverted" League meeting.

Now contrary to any hopes or expectations which you may have I am not going to talk about "world problems" or youth movements, or "new revolutions." Those subjects I leave for your next League meeting. In fact, I should like you to think about a very commonplace subject in a very conventional and perhaps to some of you, a very familiar way. Sometimes it happens that the things that are most obvious and most familiar are laid aside by us and it will be well if we recall some of these things.

As young people, as members of the Epworth League we are not nearly so important as some people would have us believe. It is all very well to say that we have here the hope of tomorrow, the leaders of thought, the directors of the world. You can say it as much as you please but it will never be more substantial than the froth that is served in root-beer mugs. With all due respect to all of us,



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it is highly improbable that we have with us today anyone who will ever be in a position to affect in any large way the destiny of the world.

When we listen to a modern orchestra of a hundred men playing twenty or more kinds of instruments we are bound to be emotionally moved unless we are deaf or are utterly impervious to music. Did I not sit in the Coliseum at Columbus and with thousands of other people feel myself swept up from the world of autos, street-cars, and parking problems, to a higher plane? Did I not go from that place along with these thousands of other folks feeling that I wanted to be better? And were not these feelings brought about by the symphony orchestra which played there? It is the task of a poet, not mine to eulogize such a marvelous combination of pieces and players. Far be it for a mere student to fill your ears with cumbersome and shadeless words in an attempt to portray for you feelings that are aroused by beautiful music played by an orchestra of artists.

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cannot make as much noise in their place as someone else can in his, or because they underestimate the value of their own instrument. That is one of our first duties--to find out what instrument in life we are best fitted to play. If we are fitted to play a greater part than we are playing we are going to spoil the music just as much as we will by playing a greater part than the one for which we are fitted. I plead with you to try to get yourself to realize that YOU are of some importance in this world. Not in the sense, mind you, that implies that you can go out and turn the world upside down, but you are important because your part is needed to complete the harmony of life. It does not follow that because you do not get your name in the papers that you are of no use! Sir Michael Costa was once rehearsing with a vast array of performers and hundreds of voices, when, in the mighty chorus, amid the thunder of the organ, and the roll of drums, and the blare of brass instruments, and the clashing of cymbals he suddenly stopped and exclaimed, "Where is the piccolo?" That little instrument had ceased to play, and the great master of music missed it. Our great Master notices when we cease to play our smallest part.

The best-planned orchestra is ineffective unless it is in the hands of competent players. The instruments may be of the best make obtainable, the music played may be of the highest type, but unless the players be competent that orchestra is a failure. The first essential of competent players aside from talent is training, whether those players be in the Boston Symphony or in our own orchestra of life. On the ridge of Leuthen, far up above the plain, Frederick the Great through his glasses watched the gathering of the enemy in overwhelming numbers. He

gazed on the spectacle only five minutes, and then he had thought out the magnificent combinations which arranged his plan of battle. He won that battle and a new era in history was inaugurated; but this was only because Frederick had trained himself for years for the crisis. Training makes followers as well as leaders. Two per cent lead--ninety-eight per cent follow, but the ninety-eight per cent must be trained as well as the two per cent if much is to be accomplished. After all, education is not a question alone of preparing great men for great things, but of preparing even little men for greater things than would otherwise be possible.

Another thing that I notice is that even though a player is playing the right instrument, and even though he is well trained, he cannot play that instrument just when and how he pleases. He must play the music as it is written keeping in mind ~~the~~ other players and the conductor. There would indeed be a terrific din if each individual played any piece in any way that he chose without following directions. It would not do to have the cornet soloist jump up in the middle of a number to play a solo of his own choosing, nor would it do for the French horn player to blurt out a note whenever he felt like it. Perhaps there are times when some one artist does not approve of the way a piece is being played. It is very possible that were it played in his way there might be improvement, nevertheless he must do as his conductor says or there will be a discord. So in life we cannot always have our own way. If we want to keep harmony in our orchestra it will be better to play the piece the others are playing PROVIDED THAT IT IS THE PIECE OUR CONDUCTOR WISHES US TO PLAY--but we shall talk about the conductor and his wishes later.



We have not talked as yet about two of the most important parts of the orchestra --the composer, and the conductor. I think that the composer should be rightly considered a part of the orchestra for without music what would our players do? Likewise the best orchestra in the world will make but a fleeting if not an utterly insignificant impression in the hands of an inefficient conductor. The conductor of an orchestra was originally a mere perfunctory timebeater. His individuality did not enter into the performance at all. A great change has, however, come over this state of affairs, for today conductor's reading of the works given under his direction has assumed as much importance as the injection of a master's personality into his playing. Every good orchestra recognizes the importance of its conductor. The individual players realize that without a man standing in front of them leading them on they would become a huge unwieldy mass of stringed instruments and horns that would no more interpret music than a mob or savages. It is very often the case that the composer also conducts his orchestra. Such is the case in the orchestra of life. Our composer is our conductor. God has composed our pieces and acts as the Master of all conductors. We must grant that he knows better than we the way his plan should be worked out and that in order to insure the proper harmony and the correct time we must follow very closely every injunction of our Master. We must not stop in the middle of a piece to question whether or not the other players are right but instead we must keep our eyes on the music and the conductor, thinking only of whether or not we are in harmony with the rest. If every single player would do this it would be far from necessary for the conductor to stop the music occasionally to tell us that we were out

of harmony, it would never be necessary for one of the mere players to jump from his seat to tell the orchestra that he alone was doing as the conductor wished. The conductor is not unreasonable. He will not give us pieces that are impossible for us to play although they will at times ~~not~~ be easy. Some of the pieces we shall like and think pretty, but some may be written in a minor key that we shall not like to play. It would not be fair thought, would it, to spoil the music just because we did not like one piece or one part of a piece. Then too, it will be worth the effort on the hard pieces, worth the disagreeableness on the ones we do not like to be able to receive the commendation of our conductor when we have successfully, beautifully executed our number.

One thing remains before our Orchestra can start playing. Each player has chosen the correct instrument, each has trained himself for his part, each has determined to be governed by the conductor and yet if that orchestra should start to play they would do anything but make a joyful noise. I notice that this verse does not read. Make a noise unto the Lord. It says Make a joyful noise. It is not such a very difficult thing to make a noise. It is a little more difficult to make a pleasing, a joyful noise. The savage tribes make a noise, a perfect din. We would not exactly call it music or a joyful noise. I can get together a group of musicians and on a signal they can bow their violins blow their horns, beat their drums---its noise! Each individual can make a noise and then when each individual makes that noise together it is SOME noise. Our orchestra has forgotten to tune up. Far be it for me to describe the agonies of an orchestra that is not in tune.



And likewise those of us in the Orchestra of Life must get in tune. The world is striving very hard to make a joyful noise. It is an age when every player is doing his utmost in a vain attempt to produce harmony. The sad thing about it is that these attempts are vain because no one has taken the trouble to tune up. The orchestra is trying to play without being in tune and we can as a consequence never hope to produce a joyful noise.

Jesus Christ is one person about whom I know who completely succeeded in getting in tune with all other people. His sympathy did not descend to pity. In some way he was able to take all men to himself. Instead of each tuning to a different key would it not be well to tune to that one which is represented in the Master? I leave it for your consideration.

### The Orchestra of Life

"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all ye lands."  
Psalm 100:1

I. One of the perplexing questions of our day is the relation between the individual and society.

II. At the risk of oversimplification I am suggesting that life is like a great symphony orchestra.

A. Everyone cannot play first violin.

We must not minimize the importance of our vocation.

Beethoven concerto - opens with four tops from a drum - against again - the beats are heard - suggested by tops on the door of a neighbor.

2. We must try to find out what our part is.

B. The players must be competent. We must train ourselves for life. Parental training.

C. The players must play the same piece at the same time.

1. The composer

2. The conductor originally just a time - keeper. The first violinist used to need the time to the conductor.

D. The orchestra must be in tune. The need for a commanding loyalty. Illus. - "The late Gen. Appling: Family & tradition kept him balanced."

### III. Conclusion -

"That is your duty, that is my duty, Christian. God will never accept us if we come to him pounding with all our might on a tin pan. Will it not be dreadful if we must say to God - 'I have made a noise here there on earth. I should have been playing a second violin but I wanted to be heard so I got hold of some tinplate and I crashed them all my life and people heard me too!'"

Last point - No orchestra exists solely for the sake of itself. The family is not an end in itself.