

Let's Sing "Edelweiss"

Dad wore his heart on his sleeve sometimes. A born-again Christian and father of 12, he had size 13½ feet that were good for booting his eight sons into line. Dad was a hard disciplinarian, so seeing him cry surprised me, but he could get misty hearing a sermon at church or watching *The Sound of Music*.

Once half-buried memories of long-departed Dad have recently resurfaced thanks to an old gal friend reminding me of the song "Edelweiss."

Christopher Plummer's "Edelweiss" performance always captured Dad's attention. Dad would remind us he'd served with the Army in Germany and Austria during the Korean War. "They're really beautiful little flowers and grow on the side of the mountains," he'd say with a faraway look.

Dad, Mum, and some of the rest of us would invariably sing along with the song. Corny? Maybe. But in this angry era, maybe we *should* "corn up" this country.

The hills rang with music in the film, and our home in Pittsburgh was rowdy with harmonies. Some of my sisters played the baby grand piano in the entryway, and most of us kids [played an instrument](#). Many of us sang in the choir, and all of us would sing in harmony with these old songs while doing chores.

Without knowing it, my old friend and that flower reminded me that hopefulness, tenderness, and joy can be cultivated in people. We can plant seeds of emotion, like another friend of mine who uses some lines from *Oklahoma!* as his alarm bell: "Oh, what a beautiful mornin'! Oh, what a beautiful day!"

It's not Pollyanna to guard every word and send the right messages in simple ways. As kids, we got that instruction

through our Christian upbringing and through popular culture from more innocent times. Songs from *The Sound of Music*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *My Fair Lady*, and *Camelot* informed and bemused us: “What do the simple folk do...? They sing? I surmise.”

The Alpine flower Edelweiss (meaning *noble* + *white*) has long been a symbol of love. For hundreds of years, it’s been treasured by European nations, including Switzerland, Germany, Austria, and Poland. Being a gardener, I see the flower as beautiful, resilient, and innocent without seeming to work at being so. Qualities worth emulating. The idea of this flower also could stand for a more traditional America many of us remember well.

Penned by the songwriting duo of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, “Edelweiss” is about the Austrian love of that flower but also about the lead character Georg von Trapp’s feelings of patriotism and sadness for his homeland Austria during the Nazi seizure of power. (It’s also the last song Hammerstein wrote.)

Despite its Austrian setting, the song—like many of these good old show tunes—is quintessentially American in its themes and sung from the perspective of an America that believes in its own goodness. It’s an America that knew where it was from and where it was going and who it was. Sure, it was a wholesome rather candy-coated America but one with healthier and more affirming entertainment than drag queen shows for kids.

It was a nation where [boys would be boys](#), not where girls should be boys through genitalia-erasing, irreversible surgeries. It was a country that believed itself visionary and good, not fundamentally evil. White stood for purity, not racism, and black wasn’t a grudge but was *soul*. Ours was (and still is in many places) a handsome land of people of strength, courage, and self-confidence.

“Edelweiss” could be a secular hymn to America, refuting insults against our ancestors. Along with the pure joy of singing it, there’s another reason to sing the tune: It’ll drive leftists nuts, and they’ll call you a Nazi over a song penned by 1½ Jewish guys (Rodgers was Jewish, and Hammerstein was Jewish/English and raised Unitarian).

Nowadays, when some demand more infanticide, and the government is trashing works of art because they depict whites, let’s make America more beautiful with small stuff like singing reaffirming tunes. We need to steady ourselves with harmonious songs while muffling the leftist curses. Singing beautifully hopeful songs is calming to the singer and is something leftists can’t match because they haven’t the soul for it.

We can model notions of innocence, courage, tenderness, devoted love, patriotism, selflessness, and regard for truth in both our homes and in the larger culture partly by sharing these good old reaffirming movies and by singing, “Bless my homeland forever.”

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Image credit: Pinterest-Leslie Davidson

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