

LIAM FRAGER

Prelude to
The Black Sheep Song

SSA

(2023)

Program Note



Growing up, I loved spending my summers at camp! I have many fond memories of swimming, rock climbing, and playing capture the flag — but perhaps my favorite activity was singing camp songs. Recently, I was looking back on these childhood tunes with my wife, and we realized that many feature depressing or adult themes that completely go over the heads of children. *The Little Green Frog*, depicts the poor fate of a frog getting run over by a truck and eaten by a dog; *Honey You Can't Love One*, is about cheating on your partner with ten other people; and *The Cannibal King* tells the story of a cannibal who “a-rum-pum-pums” with a “dusty maid” before blowing themselves up.

This piece is written as a prelude to another camp song with a milder, yet still depressing text — *The Black Sheep Song*:

*I had a sheep, and it was black
And all the wool, was on it's back.
And now he's dead, and gone to rest,
And all the wool, is on my vest.*

Serious themes in children's literature is not isolated to camp songs. Many nursery rhymes that we grew up with are actually quite bleak. This piece alludes to some of the tamer rhymes — *Ba Ba Black Sheep*, *Do You Know the Muffin Man?*, and *London Bridge is Falling Down* — but they have all been twisted by the psychopathy of the eponymous muttonchop. While you may be tempted to feel sorry for it, know that the prelude features several crimes ranging from a general disdain for humanity to murder and vandalism.

Performance note*

In score notation		Preferred performance		If tempo is too fast
	=		=	
Ba-ha - ha-ha!		Ba-a-a-ha - ha-ha!		Ba-a-ha - ha-ha!

The tremolo should sound like a sheep laughing and bleating.