

Kingfishers

for SATB Voices (divisi) and organ

Christopher Churcher

(2024)



Composed February 2024

First performance: tbc

Kingfishers

for SATB voices (divisi)

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves — goes itself; myself it speaks and spells,
Crying *Whát I dó is me: for that I came.*

I say *móre*: the just man justices;
Keeps grace: *thát* keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is —
Christ — for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces.

Gerard Manley Hopkins

Composer's Note

Kingfishers sets words by the English poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, written in 1877, the year he was ordained as a Jesuit priest. The poem revels in the vivid beauty of the natural world: the brilliance of kingfishers, the flicker of dragonflies as they seem to catch fire in flight, and the way each living thing lives out the fullness of its unmistakable self. Hopkins then draws out a theological vision beneath this splendour, suggesting that all human selves are ultimately animated by Christ, whose presence is revealed in their limbs and eyes. Each person, in their way, an embodiment of Jesus.

My setting follows this unfolding. It begins with a sparkling organ line, while the choir moves with quick, syncopated energy, the voices tumbling forward in a vivid rush. As Hopkins turns toward Christ and the profound centrality of divine presence to human nature, the music gradually expands into a broader, more expansive climax.

Christopher Churcher

Kingfishers

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889)

Christopher Churcher
(b.2004)

Cascading ♩ = 140

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

mp animated
As
mp animated
As

Cascading ♩ = 140
very light, sparkling (8', 4')

Organ

p

4

T.
king - fi - shers catch fire dra - gon - flies draw flame

B.
king - fi - shers catch fire dra - gon - flies draw flame

7

T.
as tum - bled o - ver

B.
as tum - bled o - ver

cresc

10

S. *mp* Stones ring

A. *mp* Stones ring

T. rim in roun - dy wells *mp* Stones ring

B. rim in roun - dy wells *p*

mp *dim.* *p*

13

S. —————

A. —————

T. *mp* stones ring

B. *mp* stones ring

16

S. *p* like *mp* each

A. *p* like *mp* each

T. *p* like *mp* each

B. *p* like *mp* each

20

S. tucked string tells, each hung bell's bow swung finds

A. tucked string tells, each hung bell's bow swung finds

T. *mp* tucked string tells, each hung bell's bow swung finds

B. *mp* tucked string tells, each hung bell's bow swung finds

24 *mf*

S. tongue to fling to fling out to fling out to fling out to

A. *mf* tongue to fling to fling out to fling out to fling out to

T. *mf* tongue to fling to fling out to fling out to fling out to

B. *mf* tongue to fling to fling out to fling out to fling out to

flutes (8', 4')

mf

28 *f*

S. fling out broad its name;

A. *f* fling out broad its name;

T. *f* fling out broad its name;

B. *f* fling out broad its name;

very light, sparkling (8', 4')

mp

32

35

S. *mp animated*
each mor - tal thing does one thing and the

A. *mp animated*
each mor - tal thing does one thing and the

39

S. same; deals out that be-ing in - doors each one

A. same; deals out that be-ing in - doors

42

mf

S. dwells; _____ goes it - self; my - self it _____

p *mf*

A. selves _____ goes it - self; my - self it _____

p *mf*

T. selves _____ goes it - self; my - self it _____

p *mf*

B. selves _____ goes it - self; my - self it _____

47

cresc. *f*

S. speaks and spells, cry-ing what I do is me: I do is

cresc. *f*

A. speaks and spells, cry-ing what I do is me: I do is

cresc. *f*

T. speaks and spells, cry-ing what I do is me: I do is

cresc. *f*

B. speaks and spells, cry-ing what I do is me: I do is

+ mixtures (8', 4')

58

S. more I say more: the just_ man jus - ti - ces; the

A. more I say more: the just_ man jus - ti - ces; the

T. more I say more: the just_ man jus - ti - ces; the

B. more I say more: the just_ man jus - ti - ces; the

p

61

S. just man just-i - ces keeps grace: that keeps all

A. just man just-i - ces keeps grace: that keeps all

T. just man just-i - ces keeps grace: that keeps all

B. just man just-i - ces keeps grace: that keeps all

50

S. *mp*
me for that for that I came.

A. *mp*
me for that for that I came.

T. *mp*
me for that for that I came.

B. *mp*
me for that for that I came.

mp lightly articulated

flutes

54

S. *p quiet but lively*
I say

A. *p quiet but lively*
I say

T. *p quiet but lively*
I say

B. *p quiet but lively*
I say

65

S. *that keeps all his go - ings that keeps his go - ings*

A. *that keeps all his go - ings that keeps his go - ings*

T. *that keeps all his go - ings that keeps his go - ings*

B. *that keeps all his go - ings that keeps his go - ings*



Imposing ♩ = 126

68

S. *f* *gra - ces;*

A. *f* *gra - ces;*

T. *f* *gra - ces;*

B. *f* *gra - ces;*



Imposing ♩ = 126

mp sempre cresc.

gt.

ch.



72

f *maestoso*

S. Acts in God's eye

A. Acts in God's eye

T. Acts in God's eye

B. Acts in God's eye

f

76

S. what in God's eye he is for

A. what in God's eye he is for

T. what in God's eye he is

B. what in God's eye he is

86

S. love - ly in eyes not

A. love - ly in eyes not

T. love - ly in eyes not

B. love - ly in eyes not

88

rit.

S. his, to the Fa - - ther

A. his, to the Fa - - ther

T. his, to the Fa - - ther

B. his, to the Fa - - ther

his, to the Fa - - ther rit.

80 **molto rit.**
cresc.

S. Christ plays in ten— thou - sand pla - ces,

A. Christ plays in ten— thou - sand pla - ces,

T. Christ for Christ plays in ten thou - sand— pla - ces,

B. Christ for Christ plays in ten thou - sand— pla - ces,

molto rit.

84 **Cascading** ♩ = 104

S. Love - ly in limbs, and

A. Love - ly in limbs, and

T. Love - ly in limbs, and

B. Love - ly in limbs, and

Cascading ♩ = 104

ff full

91

S. to the Fa - - - ther *f*

A. to the Fa - - - ther *f*

T. to the Fa - - - ther *f*

B. to the Fa - - - ther *f*

94 A little slower than the opening ♩ = 132 *p*

S. through the fea - tures

A. through the fea - tures

A little slower than the opening ♩ = 132
(quieter than the opening - 4', 2')

ppp a possible

pp

97

S. of men's

A. through the fea - tures of men's *p*

101 *mp*

S. *fa - ces* *fa - ces*

A. *fa - ces* *fa - ces*

T. *fa - ces* *fa - ces*

B. *fa - ces* *fa - ces*

105 *p dim. sempre* *pp* *>*

S. *fa - ces* *fa - ces* *fa - ces.*

A. *fa - ces* *fa - ces* *fa - ces.*

T. *fa - ces* *fa - ces* *fa - ces.*

B. *fa - ces* *fa - ces* *fa - ces.*

8va - 1