
Sarah Rimkus

"My heart is like a
singing bird"



a modern English madrigal
for six-part consort

Sarah Rimkus – ‘My heart is like a singing bird’ (2016)
for six-part consort (AATTBarB), c. 5’ 45”

‘A birthday’

My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a water’d shoot;
My heart is like an apple-tree
Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles in a halcyon sea;
My heart is gladder than all these
Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a dais of silk and down;
Hang it with vair and purple dyes;
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
Work it in gold and silver grapes,
In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;
Because the birthday of my life
Is come, my love is come to me.

–Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)

Programme note:

There are many beautiful and lush images in this classic Romantic-era poem, which presents itself on the surface as a passionate tribute to some love or lover. However, what struck me about it most was its lack of humanization or any sort of acknowledgement or detail about who or what this ‘love’ is: how in love can Rossetti be if she can’t or won’t name what she is speaking about? This emotional disconnect leaves me wondering if she is using her romanticism and as a cover for not being as certain about something as perhaps she’d like to be – a much more poignant and inspiring basis for a creative work than a simple love song, if you ask me.

I’ve set the poem with lilting melodies that recall an English romantic or pastoral tradition, but with conflicting rhythmic subdivisions (such as triplets versus dotted quavers and semiquavers) that naturally never sound quite certain of their placement. In the long tradition of madrigalisms, the accompanimental figures which recur throughout the work are shaped like hearts on the page.



My heart is like a singing bird

Christina Rosetti (1830-1894)

Sarah Rimkus (b. 1990)

Delicately, ♩ = 60

Alto 1 *p* My heart is like a sing-ing bird _____ whose nest is in a wat-er'd shoot; ____

Alto 2 *p* My heart is like a sing-ing bird _____ whose

Tenor 1 *pp* Oo _____

Tenor 2 *pp* My love, _____

Baritone

Bass

Piano

10

A 1

whose nest is in a wat - er'd shoot; My heart is like an ap - ple tree

A 2

sing - ing bird whose nest is in a wat - er'd shoot; My heart is like an

T 1

p my heart, *sim.* My heart, my heart,

T 2

p heart, *sim.* My heart,

Bar

sim. My heart,

10

13

A 1

whose boughs are bent with thick set fruit;

A 2

ap - ple tree whose boughs are bent with thick set fruit;

T 1

My heart, my heart, My heart,

T 2

My heart, My

Bar

My heart, My heart,

B

My heart, My

13

A 1 *16* my heart is like a rain - bow shell _____ that

A 2 my heart is like a rain - bow shell _____

T 1 my heart, My heart, my heart,

T 2 heart, My heart,

Bar My heart,

B heart, My heart,

16

A 1 *19* pad - dles in a hal - cyon sea; _____ *p* My heart is glad - der than all these

A 2 that pad - dles in a hal - cyon sea; _____ *p* My heart is glad - der than all

T 1 My heart, my heart, My heart is glad - der

T 2 My heart, my heart, *pp*

Bar My heart, my heart, my

B My heart,

19

22

A 1 Be - cause my love, be - cause my love,

A 2 these be - cause my love, be - cause my love,

T 1 than ³ all these be - cause my love, be - cause my love-

T 2 my heart my heart, my heart-

Bar heart, my heart, my heart-

B *mp* My love, *f* my

22

22

Slightly faster, more expressive ♩ = c. 66 *poco rit.* -----

25

A 1 *f* Be - cause my love, Be - cause my love, Be - cause my love is come to

A 2 *f* Be - cause my love, Be - cause my love, Be - cause my love is come

T 1 *f* My love is come, is

T 2 *f* is

Bar *f* is

B love love is come, my love is

25

25

29

A 1 me. Come to me, _____ *pp* *pp*

A 2 to me. To me, _____ *pp* *pp*

T 1 come to me. To me, _____ *pp* *pp*

T 2 come to me. _____

Bar come to me. My heart is like a sing - ing bird _____ *p*

B come to me. My _____ *p*

29

29

33

A 1 sim. come to me, _____ come to me, _____

A 2 sim. to me, _____ to _____

T 1 sim. to me, _____ to me, _____

T 2 _____

Bar _____ whose nest is in a wat - er'd shoot; _____ My

B heart is like a sing - ing bird _____ whose nest is in a wat - er'd shoot; _____

33

33

36

A 1

come to me, _____

A 2

me, _____ to me, _____

T 1

to me, _____

Bar

heart is like an ap - ple tree _____ Whose boughs are bent _____ with thick set

B

My heart is like an ap - ple tree _____ Whose boughs are bent _____ with thick set

36

36

39

poco a poco cresc.

A 1

come to me, _____ my heart, _____

A 2

poco a poco cresc.

to me, _____ my heart, _____ my

T 1

poco a poco cresc.

to me, _____ my heart, _____

T 2

p poco a poco cresc.

My heart, _____ my heart, _____

Bar

poco a poco cresc.

fruit; My heart is glad - der than all these _____ Be - cause my love is come to me. _____

B

poco a poco cresc.

fruit; My heart is glad - der than all these _____ Be - cause my love is come to me. _____

39

39

43

A 1 my heart, my heart, my love-

A 2 heart, my heart, my heart, my love-

T 1 my heart, my heart, my love-

T 2 my heart, my love-

Bar my love is come to me. My love-

B my love is come to me. My love is come to

43

With energy, ♩ = c. 72

47

ff 3 Raise me a dais of silk and down, hang it with vair and pur - ple dyes,

ff 3 Raise me a dais of silk and down, hang it with vair and pur - ple dyes,

ff 3 Raise me a dais of silk and down, hang it with vair and pur - ple dyes,

ff 3 Raise me a dais of silk and down, hang it with vair and pur - ple dyes,

ff 3 Raise me a dais of silk and down, hang it with vair and pur - ple dyes,

ff me. My love is come, my love is

47

50

A 1

carve it in doves and po - me - gra - nates and pea - cocks with a hun - dred eyes; Work it in gold and sil - ver grapes,

A 2

carve it in doves and po - me - gra - nates and pea - cocks with a hun - dred eyes; Work it in gold and sil - ver grapes,

T 1

carve³ it in doves and po - me - gra - nates and pea - cocks with a hun - dred eyes; Work it in gold and

T 2

carve³ it in doves and po - me - gra - nates and pea - cocks with a hun - dred eyes; Work it in gold and

Bar

carve³ it in doves and po - me - gra - nates and pea - cocks with a hun - dred eyes; Work³ it in gold and sil - ver grapes,

B

come - Work it in gold and sil - ver grapes,

50

53

A 1

in leaves and sil - ver fleurs - de - lys; My heart is glad - der than all these -

A 2

in leaves and sil - ver fleurs - de - lys; My heart is glad - der than all these -

T 1

sil - ver grapes, in leaves and sil - ver fleurs - de - lys; My

T 2

sil - ver grapes, in leaves and sil - ver fleurs - de - lys; My

Bar

in leaves and sil - ver fleurs - de - lys; My heart is glad - der than all these -

B

in leaves and sil - ver fleurs - de - lys; My heart is glad - der than all these -

53

A 1

Be - cause the birth - day of my life, be - cause the

A 2

Be - cause the birth-day of my life,

T 1

heart is glad - der than all these - come to me

T 2

heart is glad - der than all these - to me,

Bar

be - cause my - to me

B

be - cause my love, my

A 1

birth day of my life, Be - cause the birth day of my life is come to me.

A 2

Be - cause my love, Be - cause my love is come to me.

T 1

come to me - is come to

T 2

my life is come to

Bar

my love, the birth - day of my life is come to

B

life, my life is come to

Tempo I (♩ = 60)

63

p

A 1 my life³ has come _____ to me.

A 2 *p* My love, _____ my love,

T 1 *p* me. _____ My love, _____

T 2 *p* me. _____ My love, _____

Bar *p* me. _____ My _____ love,

B *p* me. _____

63

63

67

A 1 my life³ has come _____ to me. my life³ has come

A 2 my love, _____ my love, my love, my love,

T 1 my love, _____ my love, _____

T 2 my love, _____ My heart, _____

Bar my _____ love, my _____ love.

B *p* My heart is like a sing - ing bird _____

67

67

71 *poco a poco rit. al fine* *pp*

A 1 to me. oo

A 2 *pp*
my love, my love, my love,

T 1 *pp*
my love, My love,

T 2 *pp*
my love, my love,

B *pp*
My heart is like an apple tree...

71

75

A 1

T 1 *pp*
my love, my love.

T 2 *pp*
my love, my love.

75