

Timothy Rogers The Word Made Flesh

for organ
Duration: about 4:30 minutes

Notes for performance

Articulation should be alert and full of life, always following the character of the phrases. Registration is mainly left to the player, although a range of colours is encouraged.

About the work

During Advent and Christmas, many people celebrate the good news that God came down to earth in human form as Jesus. This piece for organ explores seasonal themes, offering a reflection on the Christian mysteries through its music.

The Word Made Flesh is in rondo form, comprising an initial theme and three episodes built into the following plan: ABACADACAB & coda. At the beginning, musical ideas draw from a verse in the Bible, St John 1.14:

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten Father,) full of grace and truth.

In particular, the initial theme on the pedals is based on a musically notated version of 'Word'. Similarly, during the opening, there are chords in the manuals that are notated from the names of 'God' and 'Jesus'.



Collectively, the intention is to emphasise the proclamation of John, the apostle, that the Word of God is Jesus, and Jesus is God. At different points, there are also brief melodic quotations from 'Piae Cantiones, Theoderici Petri Nylandensis', 1582, which is associated to the words, 'Of the Father's heart begotten'. Overall, the music gives a sense of co-existence between Jesus and the glory of the Father.

The six-bar introduction acts as a recurring theme or refrain. It provides a unifying musical block and a structural reference point binding the entire work. In fact, the block occurs five times, like the number of candles in an Advent wreath or similar to the prayers at the lightening of an Advent crown.

In its differing tonalities, the recurring refrain prepares for the sequence of episodes or broader sections in the piece, which are freely composed in a fantasia-like style. In the first three episodes, certain Biblical themes inspired the compositional process. If bars 7-22 represent the figure of John the Baptist, given some of the declamatory elements in the character of the music (which are suggestive of preaching in the wilderness and delivering his uncomfortable message), then the connected, but developed bars 29-46 represent the light of the world, not least at the climax point, which has a brighter mood. At bar 22, the tonality ends in C major, which links back to the idea of the notes of 'Jesus' being notated around a chord of C (1st inversion at the end of bar 4) and also deepening the intended association to John as the great forerunner, as well as the message of his preaching.

The contrasting episodes in this piece are intended as a reminder to our own varied life experiences. Some of the music is more challenging in its soundworld than other parts, just as life is full of contrasts and conflicts when the call of God comes.

The main central episode (D) in bars 53-82 is suggestive of another Advent theme and the concept of darkness and light. Overall, there is a musical journey of transformation and hope. From the darkest moments of the work, the musical ideas move to more joyful expressions, as 'the light shineth in the darkness'. There is a return too to the 'Jesus' tonality of C major, as if to emphasise a strong presence of Jesus. Furthermore, like the third candle in an Advent wreath, which is pink (not purple like the rest), the music has a sense of gladness, symbolising delight for the coming of the Lord.

The work ends in C major and in full glory, completing a musical encounter with God, who makes himself known to us in the form of Jesus.

The Word Made Flesh

Timothy Rogers (b. 1961)

Tempo I ♩ = 88 (♩ = ♩ throughout)

MANUAL

16, 8'

PEDAL

7 Tempo II, più mosso

14

20 poco rit.

23 **Tempo I** ♩ = 88

Musical score for measures 23-28. The piece is in **Tempo I** with a tempo marking of ♩ = 88. The score is written for piano in three staves: Treble, Bass, and a lower Bass staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature changes from 2/4 to 7/8, then back to 2/4, and finally to 3/4. The dynamic marking is *mf*.

29 **Tempo II, più mosso**

Musical score for measures 29-34. The piece is in **Tempo II, più mosso**. The score is written for piano in three staves: Treble, Bass, and a lower Bass staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature changes from 3/4 to 2/4, then back to 3/4, and finally to 2/4. The dynamic marking is *mp*.

35

Musical score for measures 35-39. The piece is in **Tempo II, più mosso**. The score is written for piano in three staves: Treble, Bass, and a lower Bass staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature changes from 2/4 to 5/8, then back to 2/4, and finally to 4/4. The dynamic markings are *mf* and *cresc.* leading to *f*.

40

Musical score for measures 40-43. The piece is in **Tempo II, più mosso**. The score is written for piano in three staves: Treble, Bass, and a lower Bass staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature changes from 5/8 to 2/4, then back to 5/8, and finally to 4/4. The dynamic marking is *dim.*

44 *mf* **poco rit.**

47 **Tempo I** ♩ = 88 *mp* **poco rit.**

Tempo III, meno mosso
solo oboe (or clarinet), 8'

53 *mp* add mixtures *p*

57 add mixtures *p* solo bassoon, 16' *mp*

61

mf

64

f

poco accel.

32'

Tempo I ♩ = 88

67

ff

f

poco rit.

16, 8'

Tempo III, meno mosso

72

mf