

The Kraken (2008)

SSSSSAAAAAATTBB

Difficulty rating: 4

Duration: 5'00"

Premiere: C4, conducted by David Rentz, NYC 02/26/09

I had long wanted to set *The Kraken* by Alfred Tennyson, my third setting of the Romantic poet after *Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal* and *The Time Draws Near*. C4's "Water Music" program afforded me the perfect opportunity.

I love Tennyson, the vividness of the imagery, internal rhymes, the sheer density. But frankly much of it is rather overripe for modern tastes. The influence of heavy metal, my favorite overripe contemporary music genre, should be apparent in my setting here. The foreboding, thick men's voices tell of the long-sleeping sea monster whom we really don't want to wake (think "Fluffy" in the first *Harry Potter* film). The undulating waters and myriad spongy, throbbing creatures therein are suggested by the 12-part women's chorus. The women don't sing actual words until the Day of Judgment (the "latter fire") arrives. The whole chorus then finally sings in concert for the first time as the now boiling waters send the Kraken "roaring" to the surface to die.—*Jonathan David*

Below the thunders of the upper deep;
Far, far beneath in the abysmal sea,
His ancient, dreamless, uninvaded sleep
The Kraken sleepeth: faintest sunlights flee
About his shadowy sides: above him swell
Huge sponges of millennial growth and height;
And far away into the sickly light,
From many a wondrous grot and secret cell
Unnumbered and enormous polypi
Winnow with giant fins the slumbering green.
There hath he lain for ages and will lie
Battening upon huge seaworms in his sleep,
Until the latter fire shall heat the deep;
Then once by men and angels to be seen,
In roaring he shall rise and on the surface die.

--*Alfred Tennyson*