

# Kyrie

“Premier couplet du Kyrie” from *Messe pour les convents*

François Couperin  
1668-1733

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Arranged and edited by Paul Cienniwa

Soprano *mp* *mf*  
Ky - ri - - - e e - lei - son. Ky - ri - e,

Alto *mp*  
Ky - - - - ri - e e - lei - son.

Tenor *mp* *mp* *mf*  
Ky - ri - e e - lei - son. Ky - ri - e,

Bass *mp*  
Ky - - - - - - - ri - e,

Organ\*

6 *mp*  
Ky - ri - e e - - - - lei - son.

*mp*  
Ky - ri - e e - lei - - - -

*mp* *mf*  
Ky - - - ri - - - e e - lei - - - -

*mp* *mf*  
Ky - ri - e e - lei - son.

\*See notes on THIS EDITION, page 4.

**FRANÇOIS COUPERIN** (1668-1733) was born in Paris to a musical family, and his familial connections helped greatly to establish himself in the hierarchy of musical life at the court of Louis XIV. Known today primarily for his harpsichord works, he began his career as organist at the Saint-Gervais church in Paris, a post that was held by the Couperin family for over two centuries. He was appointed organiste du Roi by Louis XIV and, later, court organist and composer: “ordinaire de la musique de la chambre du Roi.” His more than 200 solo harpsichord works span four volumes along with a treatise on harpsichord playing, *L’art de toucher le clavecin*. By the time of his death in Paris, he was referred to as Couperin le Grand, distinguishing him within his family dynasty.

**THE MASS FOR THE CONVENTS** originally appeared in a manuscript titled *Pièces d’orgue consistantes en deux messes* (“Pieces for Organ Consisting of Two Masses”). Dated between 1689 and 1690, each mass is for a different purpose. One, the *Messe à l’usage ordinaire des paroisses*, was written for parish churches; the other, the *Messe propre pour les couvents de religieux et religieuses*, was for convents or abbey churches. These works follow the tradition of the French Organ Mass, in which the organist alternates with the choir in sung portions of the Mass. While some Organ Masses were based on plainchant, the *Mass for the Convents* contains only newly composed music.

**THIS EDITION** is based on the “Premier couplet du Kyrie,” the first movement of Couperin’s *Mass for the Convents*. As an Organ Mass, the original contains no text, but the editor has added the words of the *Kyrie* to Couperin’s contrapuntal organ writing. The counterpoint is mostly four-part with an occasional five-part texture characteristic of the dense richness found in French Classical organ literature. All of Couperin’s original notes are maintained in the choral parts, although the editor has assigned some *divisi*. The keyboard reduction in this edition is Couperin’s original, unedited organ composition. Because the manuscript does not contain any dynamics, the editor has added suggested dynamics for modern choirs. This edition may be performed several different ways, including:

1. As an *a cappella* choral piece;
2. As an accompanied choral piece;
3. Preceded by the original organ piece (the keyboard reduction is the original organ piece); or
4. By playing the organ piece as a service prelude with the choral version sung later in the same service.

**THE TEXT** is taken from the first part of the Mass Ordinary. (The Ordinary refers to texts which do not change and are sung or spoken at each celebration of the Mass. These also include the *Gloria*, *Credo*, *Sanctus*, *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei*. Those texts which are assigned to specific days are called Propers.) As the only Greek text in the otherwise Latin Mass, the opening phrase (“Lord have mercy”) predates Christianity. The second phrase (“Christ have mercy”) appeared in Roman liturgies starting around the fifth century A.D.

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