

BE LIKE A BIRD

Origin: The words to this song come from the last stanza of a much longer poem by Victor Hugo titled *Dans l'église de...* (In the Church of...). The poem was first published in 1835 as part of the volume *Les Chants du Crépuscule* (Twilight Songs), and later in *Hugo's Works: Poems* as a fragment titled *A Simile*. Though the poem can be found in many different translations on the web, the only published English translation is in *Hugo's Works: Poems*. It reads,

*Thou art like the bird
That alights and sings
Though the frail spray bends –
For he knows he has wings.*

In 1992, SUNY music professor Arthur Frackenpohl adapted the words of the poem and added music for choir. Global music group Libana then recorded their own haunting arrangement, which Frackenpohl later approved. Libana's version can be heard at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eVLs9nSG4Gw>. Frackenpohl's title was "Be Like the Bird," as opposed to "Be Like a Bird," and presumably the first line of his lyrics: follows his title. With the exception of that minor difference, the simple vocal version below is true to Frackenpohl's Lyrics. The melody is similar but simplified for easier singing.

Interesting Side Note: Strangely, in *Hugo's Works: Poems*, the poem fragment (*A Simile*) is followed by the words "Fanny Kemble (Butler)," which is the name of a popular 19th century British actress and writer. This would seem to indicate either that the poem was written about Kemble or that it was written by her, but web searches uncovered no connection between either Hugo and Kemble or Kemble and the poem.

BE LIKE A BIRD

*Be like a bird who
Halting in her flight
On a limb too slight
Feels it giving way beneath her
Yet sings, sings
Knowing she has wings
Sings, sings
Knowing she has wings*

