Elisha and the Two Bears

134244

for treble solo, treble chorus, tenor, two basses, and continuo

attr. to Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

"And he (Elisha) went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head. And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them." *Second Kings 2: 23-25*

This dramatic work, described by the composer as a "Paraphrase," is thought to be a companion piece to Henry Purcell's miniature cantata *In Guilty Night* (Saul and the Witch of Endor). Although Purcell's name never appears on the manuscript, its discovery, stuck to the bottom of a chamber pot in Henry Purcell's house in Dean's Yard, Westminster, and inadvertently found by eminent musicologist Lord Horatio "Wiggles" Biggerstaff when the main loo was occupied, had led to great speculation as to the origins of the work. Was it indeed composed as a companion piece, or might it have been intended for other ends?

Elisha seems to pre-date *In Guilty Night* (1693), but only by a few months. Although there is no actual recorded instance of a performance in Purcell's lifetime, or indeed, in the last 300 years, the discovery of the work (thankfully, in its entirety) confirms its existence, long speculated about by Purcell scholars, since its mention in a letter dated 2nd January, 1694, from H.P. to his friend Rev. John Gosling, the extraordinary basso.

"You will find the duetto a particularly fine piece of writing," Purcell writes. "I can hardly bear it. Ha ha."

For centuries, Purcell's bad pun had been obscured by the fact that the "Duet per due orsi" had yet to be unrolled. Now its meaning becomes clear.

Stylistically, the piece is entirely Purcell. From the opening trio to the final strains, Purcell speaks to us from beyond the chamber pot, as it were. The lament of the slain children "With broken limbs and faces faire," is Purcell at his best, and the final "Mourne all ye muses," once heard, will be remembered until the last beer of the evening is quaffed.

Our thanks to the many scholars who have worked tirelessly on this score to render a modern performing edition, including

Dr Richard Shephard
Dr Robert Wyke
Dr Mark Schweizer

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Awake, Awake!
(duet per due orsi)

57 **Con moto** ♩ = 112

Kybd.

60

B1

A-wake, a - wake! Make rea - dy your bit - ter_

B2

A-wake, a - wake! Make rea - dy your bit - ter_

Kybd.

63

B1

tomb, make rea - dy your bit - ter_ tomb: The Proph - et_ now has sealed your_

B2

tomb, make rea - dy your bit - ter_ tomb: The Proph - et_ now has sealed your_

Kybd.

66

B1

doom, the Proph - et now has_ sealed your_ doom. A-wake, a -

B2

doom, the Proph - et now has sealed your_ doom. A-wake, a-wake!

Kybd.

69

1.

B1

wake! A - wake! A-wake, a - wake! Make rea - dy your bit - ter

B2

A-wake, a-wake! A - wake! A-wake, a - wake! Make rea - dy your bit - ter

Kybd.

72

2.

B1

wake With teeth andclaws and foe - tid

B2

With teeth andclaws and foe - tid breath

Kybd.

75

B1

breath We now con-sign you un - to death Con -

B2

We now con-sign you un - to death

Kybd.

78

B1

sign, We now con - sign you

B2

sign, We now con - sign you

Kybd.

81

B1

un - to death. With teeth and claws and foe - tid breath, We

B2

un - to death. With teeth and claws and foe - tid breath, We

Kybd.

84

B1

now con - sign you un - to death. We now con - sign you un - to death.

B2

now con - sign you un - to death. We now con - sign you un - to death.

Kybd.

88

B1: A-wake, A - wake! Make rea - dy your bit - ter tomb, make rea - dy your bit - ter

B2: A-wake, a - wake! Make rea - dy your bit - ter tomb, make rea - dy your bit - ter

Kybd.

91

B1: tomb, the Proph - et now has sealed your doom, the Proph - et

B2: tomb, the Proph - et now has sealed your doom, the Proph - et

Kybd.

94

B1: now has sealed your doom.

B2: now has sealed your doom.

Kybd.

rit.