

Elisha and the Two Bears

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

Elisha and the Two Bears

Prologue

Attribued (loosely) to Henry Purcell

(1659-1695)

Larghetto ♩ = 60

Elisha (T. Solo)
E - li - sha proph - et, man of

Bass 1 (Solo)
E - li - sha proph - et, man of God, man of God

Bass 2 (Solo)
E - li - sha proph - et, man of

Keyboard

E.
God, the Fert - ile hills of Ju - dah of Ju - dah trod, God's judge - ment

B1
The Fert - ile hills of Ju - dah - trod, God's

B2
God, the Fert - ile hills the hills of Ju - dah trod,

Kybd.

E.
to these hills did tell, un - til vile youths up - on him fell.

B1
judge - ment to these hills did tell, un - til vile youths up - on him fell.

B2
God's judge - ment did tell, un - til vile youths up - on him fell.

Kybd.

The Taunting Song

Allegro ♩ = 138

11

Kybd.

16

Tr. *Treble Choir (Youths)*

Kybd.

Go up, thou Bald-head
Go up, thou Bald-head,

21

Tr.

Kybd.

yea go up. Take thy man-tle, take thy
grant us ease. Prat-ing proph-et take thy

26

Tr.

Kybd.

cup. ease. And to the birds now proph-es-y. We
These stones we throw to fire thy shame. And

31

Tr.

Kybd.

find send your preach-ing to ve-ry dry.
send thee back to whence thou came.


Elisha's Revenge


35 **Recit.** ♩ = 84

E.  O wretch - ed youth. I shall now hie to yon - der cave, where sleep - ing Ur -

Kybd. 

39 **In tempo** ♩ = 132

E.  - sine breth - ren - lie.


Kybd. 


43 **Recit.** ♩ = 84

E.  A - wake, a - wake, shake off dull sleep. A - wake from slum - ber dark - and


Kybd. 


47 **In tempo**

E.  deep. Ye dread - ful bears, to me draw nigh, and hear a Proph - et's aw - ful cry - These

Kybd. 

52

E.  viper - ous youths, their mock - ing scorn shall come to naught this curs - ed morn.

Kybd. 

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.

The Munching Dance

alla Saraband

Con moto ♩ = 126

98

Kybd.

105

Kybd.

111

Kybd.

117

Kybd.

123

Kybd.

130

Kybd.

The Farewell Song

138

Andante ♩ = 116

Kybd.

145

Solo - Vs. 1
All - Vs. 2

Tr.

Fare-well Mo - ther, weep not for me, For bles - sed Pa - ra -
With bro-ken limbs and fac - es faire, Now sup - per for the

Kybd.

152

Tr.

dise I see. To taunt E - li - sha wrong were we, And
an - cient bear, We moan the curse that sealed our fate, The

Kybd.

158

Tr.

death our pun - ish - ment must be. Fare-well Mo - ther,
mock - ing of his bald - ing pate. With bro - ken limbs and

Kybd.

164

Tr.

weep not for me, For bles - sed Pa - ra - dise I see.
fac - es faire, Now sup - per for the an - cient bear.

Kybd.

Mourn, All Ye Muses (Epilogue and Moral)

170 **Largo** ♩ = 50 *All*

Tr. *Mourn, all ye*

E. *Mourn, all ye mus-es, makesad la - ment, makesad la-ment, make*

B1 *Mourn, all ye mus-es, makesad la - ment, makesad la - ment, makesad la-ment.*

B2

Kybd.

173

Tr. *mus - es, make sad la - ment, make sad la - ment, sad la -*

E. *sad la - ment, mourn all ye mus - es, make sad la - ment, sad la -*

B1

B2 *Mourn, all ye*

Kybd.

175

Tr. ment, la - ment, make sad la-ment.

E. ment, la - ment, make sad la - ment.

B1 Mourn, all ye mus - es, makesad la - ment, la - ment.

B2 mus - es, makesad la - ment, make sad la - ment.

Kybd.

177

Tr. These youth - ful lives were fool - ish spent. God's ho - ly pro-phet man

E. These youth - ful lives were fool - ish spent.

B1 These youth - ful lives were fool - ish spent. God's ho - ly

B2 These youth - ful lives were fool - ish spent. God's

Kybd.

180

Tr. *— must nev - - er scorn, Or else such Ur- sine fate, or else such*

E. *God's ho - ly pro-phet nev-er scorn, Or else such Ur- sine fate, or else such*

B1 *pro-phet man must nev - er scorn, Or else such Ur- sine fate, or else such*

B2 *pro - phet nev - er scorn, Or else such Ur- sine fate, such*

Kybd.

184 *poco rit.*

Tr. *Ur - sine_ fate must be by man - kind borne, must be by man - kind borne.*

E. *Ur - sine fate must be by man - kind, by man - kind borne.*

B1 *Ur - sine fate must be by man - kind borne, by man - kind borne.*

B2 *Ur - sine fate must be by man - kind borne, by man - kind borne.*

poco rit.

Kybd.