

full score

music by Jeffrey Ryan  
poem by Lady Catherine Dyer

# Epitaph

for SSAA women's choir  
and string orchestra

Perusal Copy

### ***Performance Notes:***

Total performance time ca. 5'30"

↑ give note a slight rhythmic and dynamic stress

Strings: Written for an ensemble of 33221. All glissandi should begin immediately after the first pitch is sounded.

Choir: In some cases where the text is "shattered", a sung word (or syllable) ends in a consonant and is followed by a syllable that begins with the same consonant — in these cases, the two words/syllables must be elided. See, for example, Soprano 2, mm. 26-28, where the word "dust" must be elided with "-sty" (which completes the word "hasty"; the "st" is sounded only once).

### ***Programme Note:***

I have long imagined the *Epitaph* by Lady Catherine Dyer sung by a women's choir. The poem speaks simply and eloquently of someone whose life has been shattered by the loss of a partner, now day by day going through the motions, physically alive but emotionally suspended, until death rejoins them.

This setting for women's choir and small string orchestra opens with an instrumental introduction that acts as a memory of their life together, until the solo violin is left alone. When the choir enters, we hear that the melody, and even the text itself, are "shattered", where the notes overlap into small clusters and a word may be sung by one part but finished by another. At other times, the reverberation of complete lines suggests the blurring of one day into the next, with the cumulative effect expressing this experience of loss as both uniquely personal and universally shared.

***Epitaph*** was commissioned by, and is dedicated to, the Elektra Women's Choir (Morna Edmundson and Diane Loomer, co-directors), with thanks to the British Columbia Arts Council.

*Lady Catherine Dyer*

*Epitaph on the monument of Sir William Dyer at Colmworth, 1641*

My dearest dust, could not thy hasty day  
Afford thy drowsy patience leave to stay  
One hour longer: so that we might either  
Sit up, or gone to bed together?  
But since thy finished labour hath possessed  
Thy weary limbs with early rest,  
Enjoy it sweetly: and thy widow bride  
Shall soon repose her by thy slumbering side.  
Whose business, now, is only to prepare  
My nightly dress, and call to prayer:  
Mine eyes wax heavy and the day grows old,  
The dew falls thick, my blood grows cold.  
Draw, draw the closed curtains: and make room:  
My dear, my dearest dust; I come, I come.

# Epitaph

A tempo ♩ = 48 (♩ = 96)  
As though from a memory  
giocoso (duet with contrabass)

1 solo ca. 5"

gli altri div. con sord. ca. 5"

mf

div. a3 con sord. ca. 5"

f p

div. con sord. ca. 5"

f p

div. con sord. ca. 5"

f p

ca. 5"

p

giocoso (duet with violm)

mf

5

non-harm.

p

pp

pp

pp

pp

pp

tr non-tr. tr non-tr. tr non-tr.

p

8

*mf*

*unis.*

*mf*

11

*f*

*mf*

*n.*

*ppp*

*f*

*n.*

14

A  $\bullet = 72$  sub. rit. to  $\bullet = 48$

SI  
S2  
A1  
A2

vn I  
vn II  
va  
vc  
cb

mf

18

♩ = 72 *sub. rit. to* ----- ♩ = 48

*p*  
S1 dear - est

*p*  
S2 dear My dear

*p*  
A1 My

*p*  
A2 rest My rest

*mf*  
vn I *8va-1*

*pp*  
vn II *pp*

*pp*  
va *pp*

*pp*  
vc *pp*

*mf*  
cb *(pizz.)*

*mf*

*mf* *p* *n.* *pp*

*mf* *p* *n.* *pp*

*mf* *p* *n.* *pp*

*mf* *p* *n.* *pp*

24

$\bullet = 72$  sub. rit. to  $\bullet = 48$

**B**

The musical score consists of several staves. The vocal parts (S1, S2, A1, A2) are in 3/4 time and feature lyrics: "dear - est - dust," and "My dear dust,". Dynamics range from *mf* to *pp*. The instrumental parts include Violin I and II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabasso. Dynamics range from *mf* to *pp*. The score includes performance instructions such as *rit. to*, *stagger breathe*, *mf*, *p*, *pp*, *n.*, and *.sul tasto*. A large watermark "PERUSAL COPY" is overlaid on the score.

28

*p* *pp*

*pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

*p* *p*

SI could not thy thy drow-sy to stay one hour

S2 -sty day Af-ford thy pa- leave to one hour

A1 thy ha- Af-ford drow- -tience stay one

A2 could day -sy pa - tience leave one

vn I

vn II

va

vc

cb



32

*poco rit.*

*pp*  
 S1 long - er: so that might ei- sit up or gone to bed to - ge - ther?  
*pp*  
 S2 — that we ei - ther sit up or gone to bed to - ge - ther?  
*pp*  
 A1 — so that might ei- sit up or gone to bed to - ge - ther?  
*pp*  
 A2 — that we ei - ther sit up or gone to *p* bed to - ge - ther? *pp*

*ord.*  
 vn I  
*ord.*  
 vn II *non-vib.*  
*ord.*  
 va  
*pp*  
 vc *arco non-vib.*  
 cb

*pp* <

**C**

36 *A tempo* ♩ = 48 *p* *mf* *p* *p* *mf* *p*

S1  
But since thy la - bour hath pos - sessed thy limbs

S2  
But since thy fi - nished la - bour hath thy wea - ry limbs

A1  
But since thy la - bour hath pos - sessed thy limbs

A2  
But since thy fi - nished la - bour hath thy wea - ry limbs

vn I

vn II *p*

va *p*  
*non-vib.*

vc *p*

cb *p*

3/4

38

*pp* *mf* *mf*

*pp* *mf* *mf* *pp*

*pp* *mf* *mf* *pp*

*pp* *mf* *mf* *pp*

with ear - ly— rest, En - joy it sweet - ly:

with ear - ly— rest, En - joy it sweet - ly:

with ear - ly— rest, En - joy it sweet - ly:

with ear - ly— rest, En - joy it sweet - ly:

*non-vib.*

*p*

vn I

vn II

va

vc

cb

42 *poco rit.* **D**  
*p* *ten.*

S1 ly:—

S2 *n. ten.*

A1 *n. ten.* *p* and thy wi-dow— shall soon—

A2 *n. ten.* *p* and thy— bride shall soon—

vn I *ten.* (non-vib.) *change bow as necessary*

vn II *ten.*

va *ten.* *div. espr.*

vc *ten.* *div. espr.* *p*

cb *ten.* *p*

47

*accel. to -----*

The musical score is arranged in a system with seven staves. The vocal parts are at the top, and the orchestra is below. The vocal staves are labeled S1, S2, A1, and A2. The instrumental staves are labeled vn I, vn II, va, vc, and cb. The lyrics for the vocal parts are: "re- pose her by thy slum - b'ring side." The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *p*. A large watermark "Perusal Copy" is overlaid diagonally across the page.

52

$\text{♩} = 72$  Broadly, *con rubato*

*molto allarg.*

**E** *A tempo*  $\text{♩} = 72$

The musical score consists of several staves. The vocal parts (S1, S2, A1, A2) are at the top, with lyrics: "Whose bus-iness now," "Whose bus - iness", and "Whose". The instrumental parts include Violin I (vn I), Violin II (vn II), Viola (va), Violoncello (vc), and Contrabasso (cb). The score includes dynamic markings such as *f*, *mf*, *p*, and *pp*, and performance instructions like *molto espr.*, *gl.*, and *unis.*. A large "Perusal Copy" watermark is overlaid on the score.

57

Score for vocal and instrumental parts, including lyrics and dynamic markings.

**Vocal Parts:**

- S1:** is on - ly to pre - pare — my night - ly dress, —
- S2:** now, is on - ly to pre - pare my night - ly dress,
- A1:** bus - iness now, is on - ly to pre - pare my night - ly dress,
- A2:** Whose bus - iness now, — is on - ly to pre - pare — my night - ly dress, —

**Instrumental Parts:**

- vn I:** *p* > *pp*
- vn II:** *gl.* *p* > *pp*
- va:** *p* > *pp*
- vc:** *p* > *pp*
- cb:** (Cello/Bass line)





65

*allarg.*-----

Musical score for page 65, measures 11-14. The score includes staves for Soprano I (SI), Soprano II (S2), Alto I (A1), Alto II (A2), Violin I (vn I), Violin II (vn II), Viola (va), Violoncello (vc), and Contrabasso (cb). The tempo is marked *allarg.* and the time signature is 4/4. A large 'Perusal Copy' watermark is overlaid on the page.

70 **F** *A tempo* ♩ = 72  
*pp*

S1 *pp* Mine eyes wax hea-vy and the day grows old,

S2 *pp* Mine eyes wax hea-vy and the day grows old,

A1 *pp* Mine eyes wax hea-vy and the day grows old,

A2 *pp* Mine eyes wax hea-vy and the day grows old,

vn I *pp* (sul tasto) gl.

vn II *ppp* (sul tasto) gl.

va *ppp* (sul tasto) gl.

vc *ppp* (sul tasto) gl.

cb *ppp* (sul tasto)

71

The musical score consists of several staves. The vocal staves (S1, S2, A1, A2) feature lyrics: "The dew falls— thick, my blood grows— cold." and "Draw,". The instrumental staves (vn I, vn II, va, vc, cb) include performance markings such as *pizz.* and *ppp*. The score is divided into three measures, with a key signature change and time signature change occurring at the beginning of the third measure.

74

S1  
draw the clo - sèd cur - tains:— and make room:— My dear,

S2  
draw the clo - sèd cur - tains:— and make room:— My

A1  
draw the clo - sèd cur - tains:— and make room:— My dear,

A2  
draw the clo - sèd cur - tains:— and make room:— My

vn I

vn II

va

vc

cb

80

*pp* *pp* *ppp*

S1 my dear - est — dust; I come, I come. —

S2 my dear - est — I come, I come. —

A1 my — I come, I come. —

A2 my — rest — dust; I come, I come. —

*pp* *pp* *ppp*

*pp* *pp* *ppp*

*pp* *pp* *ppp*

*pp* *pp* *ppp*

vn I

vn II

va

vc

cb

87 **G**

SI

S2

A1

A2

vn I

vn II

va

vc

cb

arco

*pp*

*gl.*

8<sup>va</sup>

front stand only

solo

div. pizz.

*pp*

unis. arco

*pp*

*pp*

*pp*

*pp*