

Music for Queen Mary's funeral

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

Queen Mary, the wife of William of Orange, was one of the many victims of the smallpox epidemic of December 1694. The funeral sentences were composed by Purcell for her funeral in Westminster Abbey early the following year. One of the choristers at the funeral, Thomas Tudway, later recalled the extraordinary effect of Purcell's music; *'I appeal to all that were present whither they ever heard any thing so rapturously fine, & solemn, & so heavenly which drew tears from all; & yet a plain, Naturall Composition; which shows the pow'r of music, when 'tis rightly fitted, & Adapted to devotional purposes.'* The music was used for Purcell's own funeral later the same year.

programme notes by John Bawden

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Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live and is full of misery. He cometh up and is cut down like a flower. He fleeth as it were a shadow, and ne'er continueth in one stay.

In the midst of life we are in death. Of whom may we seek for succour, but of thee, O Lord, who for our sins art justly displeas'd? Yet O Lord most mighty, O holy

and most merciful Saviour, deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death.

Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts. Shut not thy merciful ears unto our prayers; but spare us, Lord most holy, O God most mighty, O holy and most merciful Saviour, thou most worthy Judge eternal. Suffer us not at our last hour for any pains of death to fall away from thee.