

DANIEL ELDER MUSIC

WE WAKE

FOR SSATBB VOICES

Program Notes

John Donne was, in addition to being one of the seventeenth century's most prominent English poets, an ordained Anglican priest. In an age where the fledgling field of medicine still left many questions and fears about mortality, death was a constant, close companion throughout life. Faith often sated these fears, and there Donne's spirituality merged with his creativity to form works such as *Holy Sonnet 10*. His response to the natural fear of death is one of taunting empowerment, not so unlike the biblical adage "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" of 1 Corinthians 15:55 (KJV). The primal power of this courage in the face of fear is celebrated both in Donne's words and in their treatment here in music. In *We Wake*, the text is through-composed once, allowing a sense of near-melodrama to settle into the text through the use of rhetorical devices (take the dramatic, accented leaps on "Death, *be* not proud" or the striking, hymn-like yet venomous "Why swell'st thou then?" for example) and extensive use of chromaticism, both in the harmonic and melodic elements. These musical treatments lie well in line with Donne's original emotional landscape. However, at the end of his sonnet's through-composition something extraordinary happens—we awake in the present frame of mind, calling with brutal honesty upon all we've learned in four hundred years of understanding life, death, and spirituality. The musical thesis is simple yet bold: If we as humans are granted mercy from death as "One short sleep past, we wake eternally," then there is a fundamentally flawed logic in the final line, "Death, thou shalt die." Since Jesus Christ once compelled his followers to "Love your enemies" in Matthew 5:44 (KJV) then it may be intuited that this sense of forgiveness extends even to the ultimate enemy in death itself. Therefore in *We Wake* it is posited that the enemy has disappeared, the fear is gone, and all that is left is a journey together into eternity. This is accomplished textually by picking Donne's own words and reassembling them to form lines of forgiveness (e.g. "thou shalt Die not, poor Death" and "Death, we wake eternally"). As contemporary author J.K. Rowling wrote on the subject, "And then he greeted Death as an old friend, and went with him gladly, and, equals, they departed this life" (*The Deathly Hallows*) we also win by approaching the end of our lives with welcoming. The change in text extends beyond literal word tailoring; it also allows for a shift in the emotional interpretation of Donne's existing lines. As in the middle of the initial melodrama the soprano line accompanies the basses singing "For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow Die not, poor Death" with a simpler "For thou Die not, poor Death," the treatment of "poor Death" is fundamentally altered from one of pity to one of empathy. Lines of scorning such as in "Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so" are, by the end, rethought to be soothing lines of forgiveness. Finally, "we wake" is uttered as a truly inclusive statement, and we enter together into the reward of our final victory.

Text

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

About the Composer

As a prolific writer of vocal and instrumental music, Daniel Elder (b. 1986) ties these genres together to create forms and aesthetics that are at once lyrical and textural, drawing its roots particularly from the impressionist movement. Critics have hailed his works as "deeply affecting" and "without peer," with emotional evocations ranging from lush lyricism to jagged polyphony. Daniel's compositions have earned recent recognition from The American Prize, The Simon Carrington Chamber Singers, Cantus, and many others, including a recording by the Grammy-award-winning Eric Whitacre Singers made at Abbey Road Studios as part of their 80th Anniversary Anthem Competition. The first commercial album of Daniel's choral works, "The Heart's Reflection: Music of Daniel Elder," was released in October 2013 by Westminster Choir College (Princeton, NJ) and Naxos of America, and debuted at #53 on the overall classical Billboard chart. Daniel currently resides in Nashville, TN as a full-time freelance composer. He is published around the world by renowned houses such as Carus Verlag, Edition Peters, GIA Publications, Walton Music, and others, while also self-publishing his newest releases directly through J.W. Pepper. More information may be found at www.danieleldermusic.com.

WE WAKE

JOHN DONNE (1572-1631)

DANIEL ELDER (b. 1986)
(ASCAP)

Con moto moderato (♩ = c. 96)

***f* con brio**

Soprano
Death, Death, be not proud, _____

***f* con brio**

Death, Death, be not proud, _____

Alto
Death, Death, be not proud, though

***f* con brio**

Tenor
Death, Death, be not proud, _____

***f* con brio**

Bass
Death, Death, be not proud, though

***f* con brio**

Bass
Death, Death, be not proud, _____

Con moto moderato (♩ = c. 96)

Piano
(for rehearsal only)

5 *mf* *mp*

some _____ have _____ called _____ thee

mf *mp*

some _____ have _____ called _____ thee

mp

some have _____ called _____ thee

mf *mp*

some _____ have _____ called _____ thee

mp

some have _____ called _____ thee

mf *mp*

some _____ have _____ called _____ thee

5

10 *f* *mf*

Might - y _____ and dread - ful, _____ for thou

f *mf*

Might - y _____ and dread - ful, _____ for thou

f *mf*

Might - y _____ and dread - ful, _____ for thou

f *mf*

Might - y _____ and dread - ful, _____ for thou

f *mf*

Might - y _____ and dread - ful, _____ for thou

10

For Review Only

Meno mosso, pensoso (♩ = c. 84)

14 poco rall. *p* *Meno mosso, pensoso* (♩ = c. 84)

art not so; art not so; art not so; art not so; art not so; art not so;

18

mp

For _____ thou _____ Die

mp

Die

mp

Die

mp cantabile

For those whom thou think'st thou dost o - ver - throw _____ Die

18

22

p intimo

not, poor Death, _____ nor yet

p intimo

not, poor Death, _____ nor yet

p intimo

not, poor Death, _____ nor yet

p intimo

not, poor Death, _____ nor yet

22

26 **molto rall.**

canst thou _____ kill me. _____

canst thou _____ kill me. _____

canst thou _____ kill me. _____

canst thou _____ kill me. _____

26 **molto rall.**

30 **Molto adagio** (♩ = c. 54) (♩ = c. 108)

sotto voce

From rest and sleep, which but thy pic - tures be, _____ Much

sotto voce

From rest and sleep, _____ which but thy pic - tures be, _____ Much

sotto voce

From rest and sleep, _____ which but thy pic - tures be, _____ Much

sotto voce

From _____ which but thy pic - tures be, _____ Much

Molto adagio (♩ = c. 54) (♩ = c. 108)

30

32 *ma dolce*

pleas - ure; then from thee much more must flow

ma dolce

pleas - ure; then from thee much more must flow

ma dolce

pleas - ure; then from thee much more must flow

ma dolce

pleas - ure; then from thee much more must flow

32

35 *poco accel.* **Piú mosso** (♩ = c. 78) *mp*

And soon - est our best men with thee

mp

And soon - est our best men with thee

mp

And soon - est our best men with thee

mp

And soon - est our best men with thee

poco accel. **Piú mosso** (♩ = c. 78)

35

Liberamente

39

do go, Rest of their

do go, Rest of their

do go, Rest of their

do go, Rest of their

Liberamente

39

44 a tempo non troppo

bones, and soul's de - liv - er - y.

bones, and soul's de - liv - er - y.

bones, and soul's de - liv - er - y.

bones, and soul's de - liv - er - y.

a tempo

44

Tempo primo (♩ = c. 96)

49

f *brioso*

Thou art slave to fate, chance,

f *brioso*

Thou art slave to fate, chance,

f *brioso*

Thou art slave to fate, chance,

f *brioso*

Thou art slave to fate, chance,

Tempo primo (♩ = c. 96)

49



51



kings, and des - per-ate men, And dost _ with



kings, and des - per-ate men, And dost _ with



kings, and des - per-ate men, And dost _ with



kings, and des - per-ate men, And dost _ with



55

mf *mp*

poi - son, war, and sick - ness

mf *mp*

poi - son, war, and sick - ness

poi - son, war, and sick - ness

mf *mp*

poi - son, war, and sick - ness

poi - son, war, and sick - ness

mf *mp*

poi - son, war, and sick - ness

55

For Review Only

59

cantabile 3

dwel, _____ And pop-py or charms can make us sleep —

cantabile 3

dwel, _____ And pop-py or charms can make us sleep

mp *cantabile* 3

dwel, _____ And pop-py or charms can make us sleep —

8 *cantabile* 3

dwel, _____ And pop-py or charms can make us sleep —

mp *cantabile* 3

dwel, _____ And pop-py or charms can make us sleep

cantabile 3

dwel, _____ And pop-py or charms can make us sleep —

59

poco allarg.

p

64

as well

as well And bet - ter than thy stroke;

8

as well

as well And bet - ter than thy stroke;

poco allarg.

64

a tempo

f

69

why swell'st thou then? One

f

why swell'st thou then? One

f

8

why swell'st thou then? One

f

why swell'st thou then? One

a tempo

69

74

mf

short sleep past, we wake e - ter - nal -

mf

short sleep past, we wake e - ter - nal -

mf

short sleep past, we wake e - ter - nal -

mf

short sleep past, we wake e - ter - nal -

mf

short sleep past, we wake e - ter - nal -

74

For Review Only

Meno mosso, liberamente

78

p

ly And death ____ shall be no more;

p

ly And death ____ shall be no more;

p

ly And death ____ shall be no more;

p

ly And death ____ shall be no more;

p

ly And death ____ shall be no more;

p

ly And death ____ shall be no more;

Meno mosso, liberamente

78

83 A tempo pensoso (♩ = c. 84)

Death, _____ thou shalt die,

Death, thou die,

Death, thou die,

Death, _____ thou shalt die, _____

Death, thou die,

Death, thou die, _____

A tempo pensoso (♩ = c. 84)

83

rall. poco a poco

a tempo

mf *maestoso*

88 *p*

die

p

die, die, shalt die,

p

die, die, shalt die,

p

die

not, die not, poor

p

die, thou die,

p

die, thou die,

rall. poco a poco

a tempo

88

92

poco rall. **Meno mosso** (♩ = c. 78) *mp* *intimo*

Death, _____ for thou art not so; _____

Death, be not proud, thou art not, _____ From rest and

Death, be not proud, thou art not so; _____

Death, _____ for thou art, _____ From rest and

— be not proud, thou art not so; _____

— be not proud, _____ thou not so; _____

poco rall. **Meno mosso** (♩ = c. 78)

92

96

art not so,

sleep, From rest and sleep,

rest and sleep,

sleep, From rest and sleep,

rest and sleep,

rest and sleep,

96

Liberamente

100

p *secco*

sotto voce

thou ____ art ____ not ____ so; ____ And ____

p *secco*

sotto voce

thou ____ art ____ not ____ so; ____ And ____

p *secco*

sotto voce

thou ____ art ____ not ____ so; ____ And ____

p *secco*

sotto voce

thou ____ art ____ not ____ so; ____ And ____

p *secco*

sotto voce

thou ____ art ____ not ____ so; ____ And ____

p *secco*

sotto voce

thou ____ art ____ not ____ so; ____ And ____

Liberamente

100

thou ____ art ____ not ____ so; ____ And ____

Poco più mosso (♩ = c. 84)

105

sotto voce

Death, _____

p *maestoso*

Death, Death, we wake e -

p *maestoso*

Death, Death, we wake e -

sotto voce

Death, _____

Poco più mosso (♩ = c. 84)

105

109

Die not, poor Death, _____ we

più p

ter - nal - ly, Death, Death, we

più p

ter - nal - ly, Death, Death, we

Die not, poor Death, _____ we

109

113

wake, e - ter - nal, e - ter - nal,

wake, we wake e - ter - nal, e - ter - nal,

wake, we wake e - ter - nal, e - ter - nal,

wake, e - ter - nal, e - ter - nal,

113

118

e - ter - nal... (close) *lunga*

e - ter - nal... (close) *lunga*

e - ter - nal... (close) *lunga*

e - ter - nal... (close) *lunga*

118

For Review Only