

Douglas J. Cuomo

The Fate of His Ashes

A Requiem for Victims of Power

ED 31297

for SATB Chorus and Organ

Before starting to write *The Fate of His Ashes: A Requiem for Victims of Power*, I had a discussion with Patrick Quigley, the director of Seraphic Fire and the commissioner of the piece. He pointed out that, completely by chance, the premiere was scheduled on the exact one year anniversary of the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks, and that the rest of the program, also by chance, consisted of two major French requiems, by Fauré and Duruflé. With that daunting bit of information in mind, I began to look for a text and eventually came upon Sir Thomas Browne's *Hydriotaphia*. Written in 1658 and subtitled *Urn Burial*, it's a reflection on the discovery of a Roman urn burial site in Norfolk, England and the practice of disinterment. My text is derived from the *Epistle to the Reader* of Browne's essay.

To create this text, I eliminated great swaths of the original epistle; the words that remained became a tone poem, a meditation on the uses a body can be put to after death. Through this process, something that was hidden is revealed. Likewise, death is an elimination, but also can reveal.

The urns and their remains that Browne describes were put on display in British museums, and he writes, "Who knows the fate of his bones, or how often he is to be buried? Who hath the Oracle of his ashes, or whether they are to be scattered?" The containers holding our bodies might not, these days, end up on the shelves of a museum exhibit; yet now, with cameras and video recorders in every pocket, the body can still become a messenger and a metaphor, a dispatch to the world that has much to say about power, politics, race, humanity and inhumanity. Now the image of a life extinguished by the powerful can actually extend and amplify that life. The corporeal person has vanished, and what remains are (literally) the remains, standing as a parable of larger forces in the world. Subject to conditions outside our control, in death — even as in life — our bodies are not our own.

Douglas J. Cuomo
New York City, 2016

Notes for organist:

Legato throughout except where specifically indicated. Slurs indicate phrasing and commas indicate articulation. 8 ft. only, except at mm 136-144 and where specifically indicated. The high single note lines should be transparent and ghost-like, as should the chords throughout, except those in mm 136-143, which can have more a complex and harmonically charged sonority.

Commissioned by Seraphic Fire, Patrick Dupré Quigley, Artistic Director
in partnership with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

The Fate of His Ashes

A Requiem for Victims of Power

Sir Thomas Browne
(1658)

Douglas J. Cuomo

Adagio, spaciouly

Soprano *p* *etc.*
Who knows the fate of his bones? The

Alto

Tenor

Bass *pp*
Bones _____

Organ *pp* like an echo or memory *pp*

6

or-a-cle of his ash - es?

ash - es?

Ash - - - es

Ash - - - es

10

poco espress.

Ash-es scat-tered ash-es scat-tered ash-es ash-es scat-tered

poco espress.

Ash-es scat-tered ash-es scat-tered ash-es ash-es scat-tered

p poco espress.

scat-tered scat-tered ash-es ash-es scat-tered

10

15

ash-es scat-tered scat-tered scat-tered ash-es

ash-es scat-tered scat-tered scat-tered ash-es

ash-es scat-tered scat-tered scat-tered ash-es

19

21

at your hands

ash-es scat-tered at your hands

ash-es scat-tered at your hands

scat-tered at your hands

21

p

(pp)

23

more distant

27 *mp*

The-se-us may have wan-dered far hit of faith___ be-yond pre-dic -

p Oh_____ oh hit of faith___ be-yond pre-dic -

p Oh_____ oh hit of faith___ be-yond pre-dic -

p Oh_____ oh hit of faith___ be-yond pre-dic -

27

31 *p poco cresc.*

tion but see-ing_ they a - rose___ as they lay_____ in

tion

tion

tion

tion

(pp) with an improvisational feel

34

mf si-lence *p* si - lence We were un - will - ing

mp *pp* *p* We were un - will - ing

mp *pp* *p* We were un - will - ing

mp *pp* *p* We were un - will - ing

mp *pp* *p* We were un - will - ing

pp

38

— they should die a - gain and be bur-ied twice a - mong us

— they should die a - gain and be bur-ied twice a - mong us bur-ied

— they should die a - gain and be bur-ied twice a - mong us bur-ied

— they should die a - gain and be bur-ied twice a - mong us bur-ied

pp

42

45

(p)

Tru-est earth it - self an

(p)

twice a - mong us earth it - self an

(p)

twice a - mong us earth it - self an

(p)

twice a - mong us earth it - self an

45

(pp)

46

in - fant makes but a small noise

in - fant makes but a small noise

in - fant makes but a small noise

in - fant makes but a small noise

Ped. 16 ft.

pp

51 Poco più mosso

pp very evenly

hu-man dai-ly hu-man dai-ly

hu-man dai-ly hu-man dai-ly

p non espress.
Hu-man dai-ly frag-ments

p non espress.
Hu-man dai-ly frag-ments

51 Poco più mosso

(*pp*)

56

hu-man frag-ments hu-man frag-ments

hu-man frag-ments hu-man frag-ments

Cof-fins by our bed-side minde us of our

Cof-fins by our bed-side minde us of our

Ped. 8 ft.

pp

61

graves Cof - fins by our bed - side minde us of our graves

graves_ Cof - fins by our bed - side minde us of our graves_

61

66

p pre-serve_ the liv - ing, make the dead to live_

p pre-serve_ the liv - ing, make the dead to live_

espress.

Cof - fins by our *espress.*

Cof - fins by our

66

(pp) with an improvisational feel

6

69

bed - side minde us of our graves

bed - side minde us of our graves

72

Keep men out of their urns hu-man frag-ments

Keep men out of their urns hu-man frag-ments

Keep men out of their urns hu-man frag-ments

hu-man frag-ments

hu-man frag-ments

75

urns
urns
hu - man frag - ments frag - ments hu - man frag - ments
hu - man frag - ments frag - ments hu - man frag - ments

77
pre-serve the liv - ing
Let noth-ing re-mark-a-ble es - cape us
pre-serve the liv - ing
hu - man frag - ments hu - man frag - ments hu - man frag - ments
hu - man frag - ments hu - man frag - ments

77
Ped.
pp

80

pp *sim. throughout*

pre-serve the liv - ing — pre-serve the liv - ing —

pre-serve the liv - ing — pre-serve the liv - ing —

hu - man frag - ments frag - ments hu - man frag - ments

mp make the dead — to

82

pp *sim. throughout*

pre-serve the liv - ing — pre-serve the liv - ing —

pre-serve the liv - ing — pre-serve the liv - ing —

hu - man hu - man frag - ments Con - tem - plate — your

live — frag - ments hu - man

84

pre-serve the liv - ing — pre-serve the liv - ing —
 pre-serve the liv - ing — pre-serve the liv - ing —
 fore - fa - thers — fore - fa - thers —
 frag - ments hu - man frag - ments hu - man

86

pre-serve the liv - ing — pre-serve the liv - ing —
 pre-serve the liv - ing — pre-serve the liv - ing —
 fore - fa - thers —
pp frag - ments hu - man hu - man frag - ments
mp

88

pre-serve the liv - ing pre-serve the liv - ing

pre-serve the liv - ing pre-serve the liv - ing

hu - man frag - ments hu - man frag - ments

Sim - plic - i - ty flies a - way sim - plic - i - ty

90

pre-serve the liv - ing pre-serve the liv - ing

pre-serve the liv - ing pre-serve the liv - ing

hu - man frag - ments hu - man frag - ments

sim - plic - i - ty flies a - way

92

pre-serve the liv - ing — pre-serve the liv - ing —
 pre-serve the liv - ing — pre-serve the liv - ing —
 hu - man frag - ments hu - man frag - ments
 flies a - way

94

pre-serve the liv - ing —
 pre-serve the liv - ing —
 hu - man frag - ments hu - man frag - ments hu - man frag - ments

97

pp freely
very distant

101

105

pp very evenly

In si-lence or time in si-lence or time

pp very evenly

In si-lence or time In si-lence or time

pp very evenly

In si-lence or time in si-lence or time

105

109

in si-lence or time in si-lence or time

In si-lence or time In si-lence or time

in si-lence or time in si - lence or time

113

in si-lence or time in si-lence or time

In si-lence or time In si-lence or time

In si-lence or time in si-lence or time

mp

Fetched from the past world sim - plic-i - ty flies a-way

117

in si-lence or time in si-lence or time

In si-lence or time In si-lence or time

in si-lence or time in si-lence or time

in - iq - ui - ty comes at long

121

in si-lence or time in si-lence or time

In si-lence or time In si-lence or time

In si-lence or time in si-lence or time

strides up-on us All ag-es all beau-ties be-hold

125

in si-lence or time in si-lence or time

In si-lence or time In si-lence or time

in si-lence or time in si-lence or time

those who af-ter long ob-scu-ri-ty now lye at their mer-cies

129

in si-lence or time in si-lence or time

In si-lence or time in si-lence or time

in si-lence or time in si-lence or time

136

ff con vib.

Re - mem-ber-ing for - get - ting — ash-es —

ff con vib.

Re - mem-ber-ing for - get - ting — ash-es —

ff con vib.

Re - mem-ber-ing for - get - ting — ash-es —

ff con vib.

Re - mem-ber-ing for - get - ting — ash-es —

136

fff

Ped.

141

worth hon-or vir - tues! We mer-ci-f'lly pre-serve — their bones

worth hon-or vir - tues! We mer-ci-f'lly pre-serve — their bones

worth hon-or vir - tues! We mer-ci-f'lly pre-serve — their bones

worth hon-or vir - tues! We mer-ci-f'lly pre-serve — their bones

144

144

146 *p*

Full of free - dom I look up-on you_ and must pro-fess my self_ to Urn and

Full of free - dom look up-on you_ must pro-fess my self_ to Urn and

151 *rit. al fine*

Ash - es

Ash - es

pp

rit. al fine



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