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:

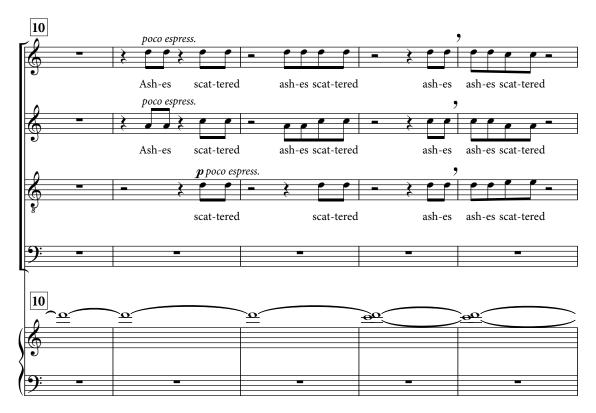
Legato throughout except where specifically indicated. Slurs indicate phrasing and commas indicate articulation. 8 ft. only, except at mm 136-144 and where specifically indicated. The high single note lines should be transparent and ghost-like, as should the chords throughout, except those in mm 136-143,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

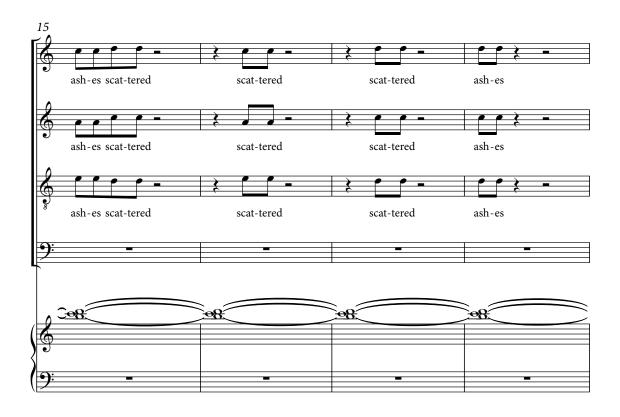
Commissioned by Seraphic Fire, Patrick Dupré Quigley, Artistic Director in partnership with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

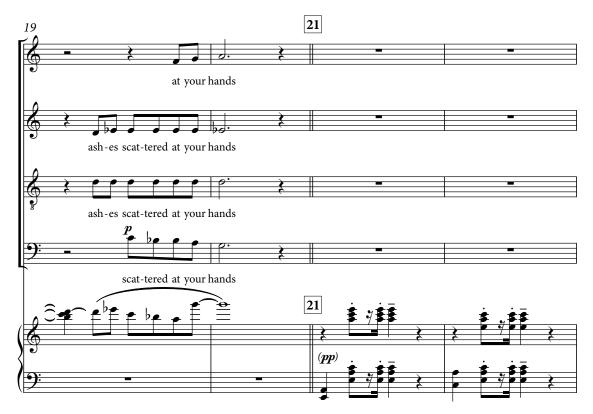
The Fate of His Ashes

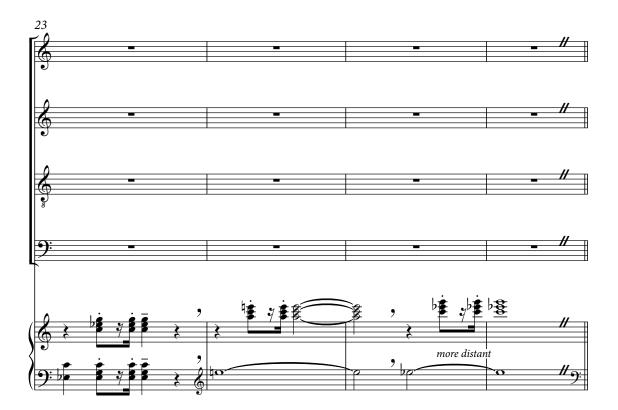
A Requiem for Victims of Power

Douglas J. Cuomo Sir Thomas Browne (1658) Adagio, spaciously etc. Soprano Who knows the fate of his bones? The Alto Tenor pp Bass Bones Adagio, spaciously $\mathbf{\hat{o}}$ 0 è 68 08 **pp** like an echo or memory Organ pp 6 or-a-cle___ of his ash - es? ash es? d Ash es. 10 Ash es_ 20 08 08 ‡£















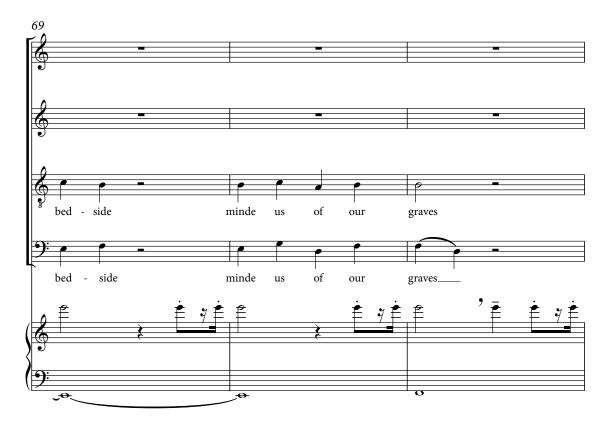


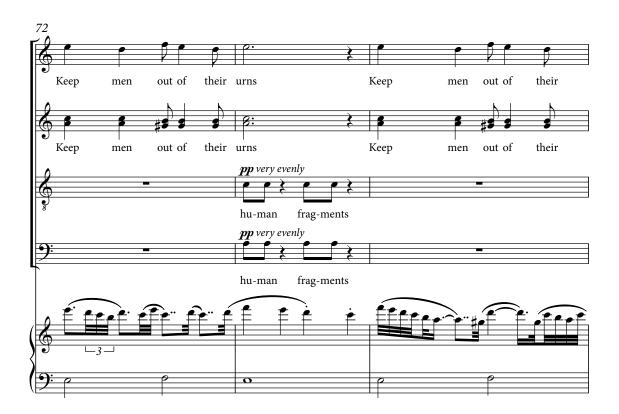


















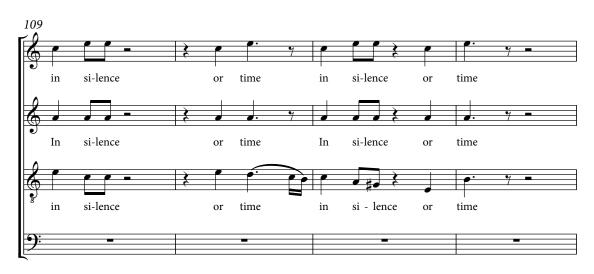


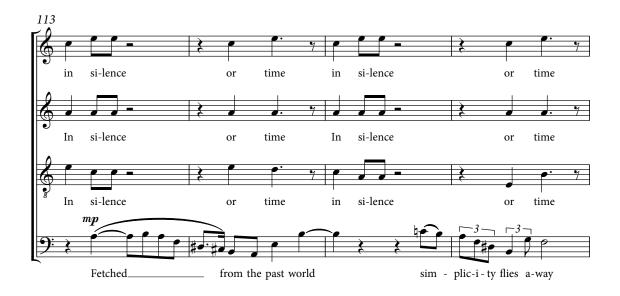


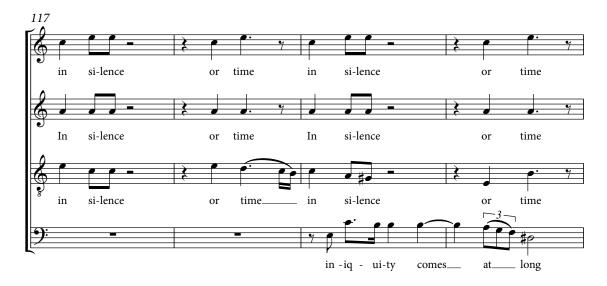








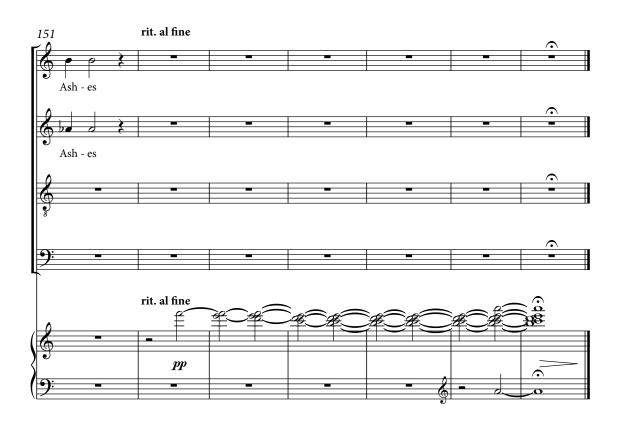














Schott Music Corporation 254 West 31st Street, 15th Floor New York, NY 10001 ny@schott-music.com

