

02. Epitaph on Henry Purcell

Mary Hudson
(ca. 1755-1801)
arr. William Melton

Hudson, Mary

(born ca. 1755; died London, March 28, 1801)

Hudson's father was the tenor and organist Robert Hudson (died 1815), who was master of the children at St. Paul's Cathedral from 1773-1793. Once a member of the Musical Graduates' Society, Robert Hudson left because he preferred the company of his own wife and daughter to that of his distinguished colleagues (who included the great Dr. Charles Burney). Mary was schooled in music by her father, and performed as a soprano in the Handel Memorial Concerts at Westminster Abbey and the Pantheon in 1784 and 1794. She also served as organist at two London churches: St. Olave (Hart Street) from 1791-1801, and St. Gregory (Old Fish Street) from about 1793 to 1801. Hudson died in 1801 at St. Peter's Hill, leaving her estate to be administered by her father.

Mary Hudson was known as a composer chiefly for her hymns. Her more ambitious five-voiced part-song *Epitaph on Henry Purcell* appeared as the first piece in *A Tenth Collection of Catches, Canons and Glee's for three, four, five and six Voices Most humbly Inscribed To the Noblemen and Gentlemen of the Catch Club at the Thatch'd House Tavern, St. James's by their much oblig'd and devoted Servant Thos. Warren* (London: Welcker, ca. 1775). The tempo marking of the work, *Andante Pomposo*, well reflects the stately, almost Handelian grandeur which eulogizes the passing of the great English composer Henry Purcell. The text is an English rendering of the Latin on Purcell's gravestone, and Hudson's setting of the final phrase is heightened by a reverberating litany on the motif "sacred Eccho's."

Applaud so great a guest Celestial Powers
Who now resides with you but once was ours
Yet let invidious Earth no more reclaim
Her short-liv'd Fav'rite and her chiefest Fame
Complaining that so prematurely dy'd
Good nature's pleasure and Devotion's Pride.
Dy'd! no he lives while yonder Organs found
And sacred Eccho's to the Choir rebound

Text by William Melton