

SATB div.
a cappella
Duration: c. 4:45

Choral Music of Douglas Byler

O Perfect Love

Text by Dorothy F. Gurney (1883)

Tune by Joseph Barnby (1889)

Arranged by Douglas Byler

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About “O Perfect Love”

Text:

In 1883, Dorothy Blomfield Gurney's sister was engaged to be married. Her favorite hymn tune was John B. Dyke's STRENGTH AND STAY, but its text, St. Ambrose's “O Strength and Stay,” was a funeral hymn and therefore unsuitable for a wedding. One Sunday evening, she asked Blomfield to write a new text for the tune. Blomfield took a hymnbook into another room and wrote this hymn in about fifteen minutes. She wrote three stanzas on the theme of “the two-fold aspect of a perfect union, love and life” (*Psalter Hymnal Handbook*, p. 756), which were published in the *Supplement to Hymns Ancient and Modern* in 1889 with a reference to Ruth 1:17. A fourth doxological stanza is sometimes added, which is the third stanza of St. Ambrose's hymn, translated by John Ellerton. (Notes from Hymnary.org)

Tune:

Though this hymn was first sung to John B. Dyke's tune STRENGTH AND STAY, it became popular after John Barnby wrote an anthem setting for the text for the wedding of the Duke of Fife and the Princess of Wales in 1889. He reduced the anthem to a hymn tune, which was published with the text in *The Hymnal Companion* in 1890. It is the tune to which this text is sung almost exclusively. It is named O PERFECT LOVE after the text; alternate names for the tune are FIFE and SANDRINGHAM. (Notes from Hymnary.org)

Arrangement:

As was the case with the composition of the text for this piece, the arrangement was also done for a sister's wedding. The expansion of the melody in the opening bars and quarter rest on the downbeat at the beginning of phrases are the only significant liberties taken with the tune, which otherwise appears as Barnby wrote it with new context and harmony. This arrangement includes the fourth verse referenced above in the text notes, with an optional cut to include only the three original verses. Performers may elect to use this cut if the desire is to stick with the original text, or simply to make the piece more accessible to smaller or less experience choirs. If omitting the fourth verse, skip from the end of m. 57 to the optional ending on the last page.

*1. O perfect Love, all human thought transcending,
lowly we kneel in prayer before thy throne,
that theirs may be the love which knows no ending,
whom thou forevermore dost join in one.*

*2. O perfect Life, be thou their full assurance
of tender charity and steadfast faith,
of patient hope and quiet, brave endurance,
with childlike trust that fears nor pain nor death.*

*3. Grant them the joy which brightens earthly sorrow;
grant them the peace which calms all earthly strife,
and to life's day the glorious unknown morrow
that dawns upon eternal love and life.*

*4. Hear us, O Father, gracious and forgiving
Through Jesus Christ, thy coeternal Word,
Who with the Holy Ghost by all things living,
Now and through endless ages art adored.*



Douglas Byler (b. 1988) is a composer and real estate entrepreneur from the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia. He received a Bachelor of Music degree in Composition from James Madison University in Harrisonburg, VA and is currently studying composition at Westminster Choir College in Princeton, NJ. His music has won several awards and has been performed across the United States.

For Katherine and Shandon
O Perfect Love

Dorothy F. Gurney, 1883

Joseph Barnby, 1890
arr. Douglas Byler (b. 1988)

$\text{♩} = 64$

p sempre legato

Soprano
O per-fect Love, all hu-man thought trans -

Alto
p sempre legato
I.O per-fect Love per-fect Love per-fect Love, all hu-man thought trans -

Tenor
p sempre legato
O per-fect love, per-fect love, per-fect love all hu-man thought trans -

Bass
p sempre legato
(falsetto)
O per-fect love, per-fect love, per-fect love all thought trans -

6

mp

S
cend - ing, Low - ly we kneel in prayer be - fore Thy throne, That

mf

A
cend - ing, Low - ly we kneel in prayer be - fore thy throne, That theirs may

mp

T
cend - ing, Low - ly we kneel in prayer be - fore Thy throne, That

mp

B
cend - ing Low - ly we kneel in prayer be - fore Thy throne, That

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O Perfect Love

12

S *f* *mf*
 theirs may be the love which knows no end - ing, Whom Thou for - ev - er dost

A *f* *mf*
 be the love which knows no end - ing, Whom Thou for - ev - er more dost

T *f* *mf*
 8 theirs may be the love which knows no end - ing, Whom Thou for - ev - er dost

B *f* *mf*
 theirs may be the love which knows no end - ing, Whom Thou for - ev - er dost

17

S *p*
 join in one. O per - fect Life per fect Life per fect Life, be

A *p*
 join in one. O per - fect Life, be

T *p*
 8 join in one. O per - fect Life, per - fect Life, per - fect Life, be

B *p*
 join in one. O per - fect Life, per - fect Life, per - fect Life, be

23

S *f* *p*
 Thou their full as - sur - ance, Of ten - der char - i - ty and stead - fast

A *f* *mf*
 Thou their full as - sur - ance, Of ten - der char - i - ty and stead - fast faith,

T *f* *p*
 8 Thou as - sur - ance, Of ten - der char - i - ty and stead - fast

B *f* *p*
 Thou as - sur - ance, Of ten - der char - i - ty and stead - fast

O Perfect Love

29

S *mf* faith, Of pa-tient hope and qui-et, brave en-dur-ance, *p*

A *mf* Of pa-tient hope and qui-et, brave en-dur-ance, *mp* with child-like trust that fears nor

T *mf* faith, Of pa-tient hope and qui-et, brave en-dur-ance, *p*

B *mf* faith, Of pa-tient hope and qui-et, brave en-dur-ance, *p*

35 *rit.* *mf* *piu mosso*

S nor pain nor death. Grant them the joy which

A pain nor death, nor death. Grant them, grant them the joy which

T nor pain, nor death. Grant them the joy which

B nor death. Grant them the joy which

40 *p* *rit.*

S bright-ens earth-ly sor-row; Grant them the peace which calms all earth-ly strife, *p* *rit.*

A bright-ens earth-ly sor-row; Grant them the peace which calms all earth-ly strife, *p* *rit.* And

T bright-ens earth-ly sor-row; Grant them the peace which calms all earth-ly strife, *p* *rit.* And

B bright-ens earth-ly sor-row; Grant them the peace which calms all earth-ly strife, *p* *rit.* And

O Perfect Love

46 *f* broadly *ff* *mp* *rit.*

S And to life's day the glo - rious, un-known mor - row That dawns up - on e - ter - nal

A *f* broadly *ff* *p* *rit.*

A to life's day the glo - rious un-known mor - row That dawns up - on e - ter - nal

T *f* broadly *ff* *p* *rit.*

T to life's day the glo - rious un-known mor - row That dawns up - on e - ter - nal

B *f* broadly *ff* *p* *rit.*

B to, and to life's day the glo - rious un-known mor - row, that dawns up on e - ter - nal

52 $\text{♩} = 64$ *p*

S love and life. e - ter - nal love, *

A *p*

A love and life. love and life, love and life, e - ter - nal love, *

T *p*

T love and life. love and life, love and life, e - ter - nal love, *

B *p*

B love and life. love and life, love and life, e - ter - nal love, *

58 *rit.* $\text{♩} = 72$ *mf*

S e - ter - nal life, Hear us, O Fa - ther,

A *rit.* *mf*

A e - ter - nal life, Hear us, O Fa - ther,

T *rit.* *mf*

T e - ter - nal life, Hear us, O Fath - er, gra - cious and for -

B *rit.* *mf*

B e - ter - nal life, Hear us, O Fath - er, gra - cious and for -

*jump to alternate ending on last page if cutting verse 4.

63

S gra - cious and for giv - ing, Through Je - sus Christ Thy co - e - ter - nal

A gra - cious and for - giv - ing, Through Je - sus Christ Thy co - e - ter - nal

T 8 giv - ing, Through Je - sus Christ Thy co - e - ter - nal Word,

B giv - ing, Through Je - sus Christ, Thy co - e - ter - nal Word,

68

S Word, Who with the Ho - ly Ghost, by all things liv - ing, *mf*

A Word, Who, with the Ho - ly Ghost, by all things liv - ing, *mf*

T 8 Who, with the Ho - ly Ghost, by all things liv - ing, *mf*

B Who, with the Ho - ly Ghost, by all things liv - ing, *mf*

73

S Now and to end - less a - ges art a - dored. *ff* *rit.* *a tempo* *rit.* *p* 0

A Now and to end - less a - ges art a - dored, a - dored. *ff* *rit.* *a tempo* *rit.* *p*

T 8 Now and to end - less a - ges art a - dored. *ff* *rit.* *a tempo* *rit.* *p* 0

B Now and to end - less a - ges art a - dored. *ff* *rit.* *a tempo* *rit.* *p*

O Perfect Love

78 $\text{♩} = 64$

S per - fect Love, — per - fect Life, per - fect Love, A - men. *pp* *(poco)*

A — Love, — per - fect Life, per - fect Love, A - men. *pp* *(poco)*

T per - fect Love, — per - fect Life, per - fect Love, A - men. *pp* *(poco)*

B — Love, — per - fect Life, per - fect Love, A - men. *pp* *(poco)*

*Optional ending if cutting verse 4, from m. 57:

58

S e - ter - nal life, A - men. *rit.* *pp*

A e - ter - nal life, A - men. *rit.* *pp*

T e - ter - nal life, — A - men. *rit.* *pp*

B e - ter - nal life, A - men. *rit.* *pp*