
winds slow-ly o'er the lea. The plough - man home-ward plods his wea-ry


Now fades the glimm' - ring land - scape on the sight,



William Hayes (26 January 1708-27 July 1777) was born in Gloucester, but worked for most of his life in Oxford, where he directed many performances of Handel's compositions, in particular his oratorios. In 1749 he was responsible for the first known performance of Messiah in Oxford. He was also a composer of oratorios and church music, the Elegy being based on his psalm tune entitled 'Southport'.

The only known publication of 'Southport' appeared nearly 40 years after the death of William Hayes, in Samuel Webbe's 'Collection of Psalm Tunes', 3rd ed., pub. 1816. Attributed there to 'Dr Hayes' (both William and his composer son Philip were DMus), it has been assumed 'Southport' was the work of Philip Hayes, (baptised 17 April 1738-19 March 1797). However, Webbe's 'Collection' contains two other works known to be by William Hayes, 'Tranmere' and Eastham', printed on two of the preceding four pages to 'Southport'. It is, perhaps, more sensible to assume 'Southport' is by the same hand, but unlike the other two tunes, had not been published during William Hayes's lifetime. HTI No. 15583.

The original tune, with a metre of 10.10.10.10., has been skilfully adapted to fit Thomas Gray's words, the music itself being very well suited to Gray's own feelings when originally composed. Thomas Gray (26 December 1716-30 July 1771) was an English poet, letter-writer, classical scholar, and professor at Pembroke College, Cambridge.

With grateful thanks to Paul Guppy, Director of the Lancaster based quire Gladly Solemn Sound, for the use of his music. Paul is a Musician and Music Instrument repairer. and works from the Covered Yard in Lancaster UK. https://vimeo.com/134500619 This setting © 2022 Shelwin Music, Oxford.

