If music be the food of love
verses by Colonel Henry Heveningham
music by Henry Purcell, 1691/2 (Z. 379 b)

Many choristers believe this song to be a Purcell setting of a Shakespearean text, but the only direct quotation is the first line, which matches the opening seven words of *Twelfth Night*. Purcell set this text twice in the 1690s, and made two slightly different versions of the first setting. The first version of the earlier setting for solo voice and harpsichord (Z. 379 b), is here arranged for a capella mixed choir and transposed down two whole tones. In this version Purcell set only the first verse to music, so the alternate version, which was published in the Gentleman’s Journal of June 1692 (Z. 379 a) has been consulted to provide a second verse; singers should note the rhythmic differences at the outset of each verse in all parts.

This song was made famous in modern times by the countertenor Alfred Deller in the version arranged by Sir Michael Tippett and Walter Bergmann.

Heveningham:  
If music be the food of love,  
sing on till I am fill’d with joy;  
for then my list’ning soul you move  
with pleasures that can never cloy,  
your eyes, your mien, your tongue declare  
that you are music ev’rywhere.

Pleasures invade both eye and ear,  
so fierce the transports are, they wound,  
and all my senses feasted are,  
tho’ yet the treat is only sound.  
Sure I must perish by your charms,  
unless you save me in your arms.

Shakespeare:  
If music be the food of love, play on,  
Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,  
The appetite may sicken, and so die.  
That strain again! it had a dying fall;  
O, it came o’er my ear like the sweet sound  
That breathes upon a bank of violets,  
Stealing and giving odour! Enough, no more;  
’Tis not so sweet now as it was before.  
O spirit of love, how quick and fresh art thou!  
That, notwithstanding thy capacity  
Receiveth as the sea, nought enters there,  
Of what validity and pitch soe’er,  
But falls into abatement and low price  
Even in a minute. So full of shapes is fancy,  
That it alone is high fantastical.
If Music be the Food of Love

Henry Purcell
(1659-1695)

Col. Henry Heveningham

Soprano

1. If music be the food of love, Sing on, sing on, sing
2. Pleasures invade both eye and ear, So fierce, so fierce, so

Alto

1. If music be the food of love, Sing on, sing
2. Pleasures invade both eye and ear, So fierce, so fierce, so

Tenor

1. If music be the food of love, Sing on, sing
2. Pleasures invade both eye and ear, So fierce, so fierce, so

Bass

1. If music be the food of love, Sing on, sing
2. Pleasures invade both eye and ear, So fierce, so fierce, so

Copyright © 2004 Philip Legge, for the Choral Public Domain Library: http://www.cpdl.org/
Edition may be freely distributed, duplicated, performed, or recorded. All other rights reserved.
soul you move With pleasures that can never cloy, Your

soul you move With pleasures that can never cloy, Your

soul you move With pleasures that can never cloy, Your

soul you move With pleasures that can never cloy, Your

eyes, your mien, your tongue declare That you are music

eyes, your mien, your tongue declare That you are music

eyes, your mien, your tongue declare That you are music

eyes, your mien, your tongue declare That you are music

me in your arms, Sure arms.

me in your arms, Sure arms.

me in your arms, Sure arms.

me in your arms, Sure arms.

me in your arms, Sure arms.

me in your arms, Sure arms.

me in your arms, Sure arms.

me in your arms, Sure arms.

me in your arms, Sure arms.

me in your arms, Sure arms.

me in your arms, Sure arms.