

Dylan Thomas Suite
Music by Scott Sanders, Poetry by Dylan Thomas

Performance Notes

I.	In the beginning	6' 00"
II.	When all my five and country senses see	3' 31"
III.	Light breaks where no sun shines	7' 20"
IV.	The force that through the green fuse	2' 20"
V.	Once it was the colour of saying	3' 11"
VI.	In the White Giant's Thigh	17' 41"
VII.	And death shall have no dominion	10' 51"
VIII.	Do not go gentle into that good night	7' 27"
Total duration		58' 21"

Composed between 2008 and 2014, this suite comprises of eight arrangements each responding in some way to elements of the text. It is designed to be both a complete ordered suite and a modular set of individual pieces.

There are special notations throughout highlighting options or tricky bits to look out for, but in general:

In the beginning

A quite literal arrangement, one voice 'forking' to two, then growing proportionally, with entries marked by relevant poetry. Ending with two voices, Soprano as Eve and Tenor as Adam.

When all my five and country senses see

It's all about fives and threes. Sopranos and Altos sing the melody split between them, with the phonetic sounds constructed so that the aggregate should be intelligible as the poem. Tenor and Bass smoothly morph the vowel sounds of each entry into one seamless vowel, matching the vowel of the poem at each new interval.

Light breaks where no sun shines

The choir is split into three sub-choirs, separated left-to-right on stage [Choir 1 – Choir 2 – Choir 3]

Each stanza has its own arrangement, based on one keyword in the poem:

1. Tides
Each choir sings the same part, but with varying dynamics to create a wave-like overall dynamic movement
2. Stirrs
Similar, but now more like a Mexican wave, or a circular whirlpool dynamic movement
3. Slides
Continuous glissando effect, based on a computer music phenomenon called the Shepard-Risset tone.
4. Rounds
A round in four parts.
5. Logics
Mock digital-delay effect across the three choirs.

The force that through the green fuse

Musically-notated poetry based on my interpretation of the spoken performance. As it is one of my favourite poems, but I just couldn't notate the pitch discretely enough with semitones – I tried to notate it in third-tones originally but then decided that it is probably strong enough to rely on just the rhythm and dynamics.

Once it was the colour of saying

The entire choir as one voice [ie one colour], with each individual member sing every note within their personal range. The one chord in the middle ['shades'] is split evenly with the parts singing opposite dynamics, to morph or crossfade from the bass harmony to the treble harmony.

In the White Giant's Thigh

A dramatic arrangement with each part as an actor, either lead or supporting. There are three main ideas used:

- One part singing the melody, and a selection of other parts singing an accompaniment based on similar vowels
 - o With the accompaniment evolving into interludes
- Female / male chorus blocks in accordance with the poem's story
- Polyphonic repetition of lines [bar 280] creating a 'descent into madness' effect
 - o The repetition in some parts is occasionally 'out of rhythm', in that triplets cross the beats. These parts are marked 'odd' to show that standard rhythmic notation has not been adhered to, even though the bar adds up to the correct number of beats. For example, bar 284, Alto I.
 - o Occasional notes are altered in some repetitions, to avoid semitone clashes. These notes are marked with an asterisk *. For example, bar 290, Soprano II.

And death shall have no dominion

For 5-part chorus singing the refrain and murmuring through verses, and 5 pairs of soloists singing the verses. With sprechstimme interludes, with soloists drawn from the chorus.

A traditional choral setting for the soloists, no special tricks here. For the murmurs I have added an option, should the conductor wish, to suggest extra direction apart from murmuring tunelessly.

The poem itself doesn't have a verse-refrain structure but I took a liberty here I hope Thomas would not have objected to.

Do not go gentle into that good night

Eight-part choir split between:

- Tenor and Bass singing a phased-loop ostinato. The loops are not very long, but they are different lengths so that each moment is unique.
- Soprano and Alto dividing up the melody into thick tone clusters for the chorus and simple block-chords for the verses.

Apologies to the Bass for all the low Ds, I tried to transpose it but it just didn't work, not even in E^b.