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## *The Dying of the Light*

Duration 10'10"

The poetry of Dylan Thomas (1914–1953) is characteristically Welsh and dark. Death is a common topic in his writings. Yet despite the somber imagery, there is often a strength and resilience. The journey of death is described, but not taken. Death is the adversary, not the ruler.

*The Hand that Signed the Paper* speaks of the often cruel and deadly power of a signed document—a document of taxation, of treaty or of counting casualties. The five fingers mark the dead, but do not soothe. “Hands have no tears to flow.” *And Death Shall Have No Dominion* expresses the triumph of the human spirit over death. “Though lovers be lost love shall not.” *Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night* represents the fight against death. “Rage, rage against the dying of the light.”

The musical expression of these poems places the voice in the low (dark) range. Tempi are slow, and minor keys are prevalent. Only occasionally are major tonalities presented. These passages combine with particularly uplifting phrases such as “Though they sink through the sea, they shall rise again” and “Wild men, who caught and sang the sun in flight...”

Near the end of the last song, the poet addresses his deceased father: “And you, my father, there on the sad height...” The voice stays on a constant pitch while the harmony lifts beneath (to the heights), in the Lydian (raised) mode. [One might hear the voice as “perched atop” the rising chords.] This is one of the most personal lines of Dylan Thomas’ poetry. As the poet speaks to his father, the climax of the song comes with the rising phrases of “Rage, rage against the dying of the light.” The final chords are dissonant, marked “with determination and triumph.”

### **The Hand that Signed the Paper**

The hand that signed the paper felled a city;  
Five sovereign fingers taxed the breath,  
Doubled the globe of dead and halved a country;  
These five kings did a king to death.

The mighty hand leads to a sloping shoulder,  
The finger joints are cramped with chalk;  
A goose’s quill has put an end to murder  
That put an end to talk.

The hand that signed the treaty bred a fever,  
And famine grew, and locusts came;  
Great is the hand that holds dominion over  
Man by a scribbled name.

The five kings count the dead but do not soften  
The crusted wound nor stroke the brow;  
A hand rules pity as a hand rules heaven;  
Hands have no tears to flow.

### **And Death Shall Have No Dominion**

And death shall have no dominion.  
Dead men naked they shall be one  
with the man in the wind and the west moon;  
When their bones are picked clean, and the  
clean bones gone,  
They shall have stars at elbow and foot;  
Though they go mad they shall be sane,  
Though they sink through the sea they shall  
rise again;  
Though lovers be lost love shall not;  
And death shall have no dominion.

And death shall have no dominion.  
Under the windings of the sea  
They lying long shall not die windily;  
Twisting on racks when sinews give way,  
Strapped to a wheel, yet they shall not break;  
Faith in their hands shall snap in two,  
And the unicorn evils run them through;  
Split all ends up they shan’t crack;  
And death shall have no dominion.

And death shall have no dominion.  
No more may gulls cry at their ears  
Or waves break loud on the seashores;  
Where blew a flower may a flower no more  
Lift its head to the blows of the rain;  
Though they be mad and dead as nails;  
Heads of the characters hammer through daisies;  
Break in the sun till the sun breaks down,  
And death shall have no dominion.

### **Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night**

Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,  
Because their words had forked no lightning they  
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright  
Their frail deeds might have danced  
in a green bay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,  
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,  
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with  
blinding sight  
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,  
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears,  
I pray.  
Do not go gentle into that good night.  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

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# The Dying of the Light

*for Baritone Solo and Piano*

Dylan Thomas (1914–1953)

Gwyneth Walker

## 1. The Hand That Signed the Paper

Moderately slowly ♩ = 80

Piano

*p*

*mf*

*p*

*(p)*

4

The hand that signed the pa-per felled a cit-y;—

7

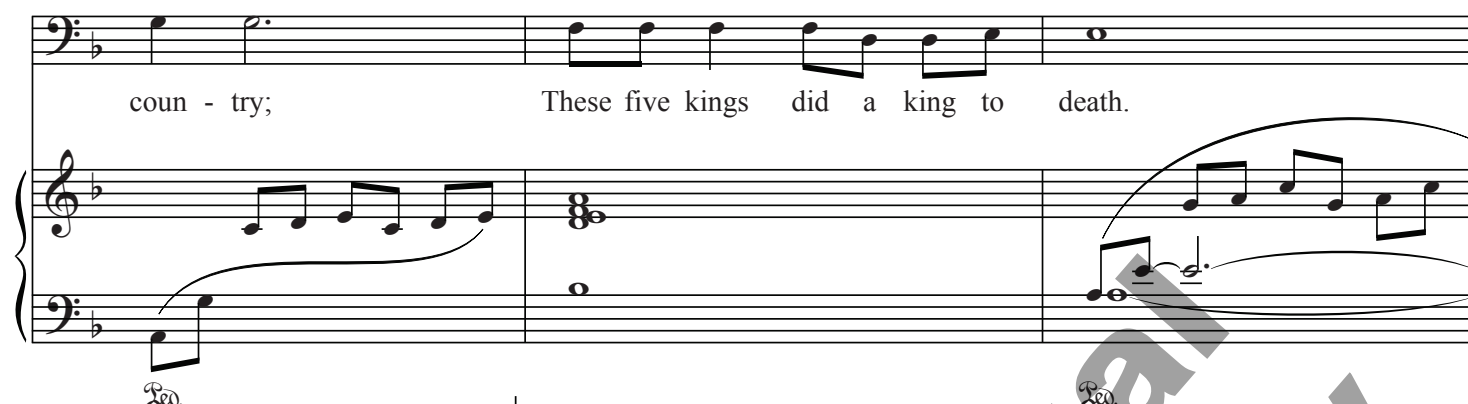
Five sov-ereign fin-gers taxed the breath, Dou-bled the globe of dead and halved a

*3*

*Reo.*

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coun - try;                      These five kings   did a king to   death.



13                      (*mf*)

The   might-y   hand   leads to a slop-ing   shoul - - - der, The



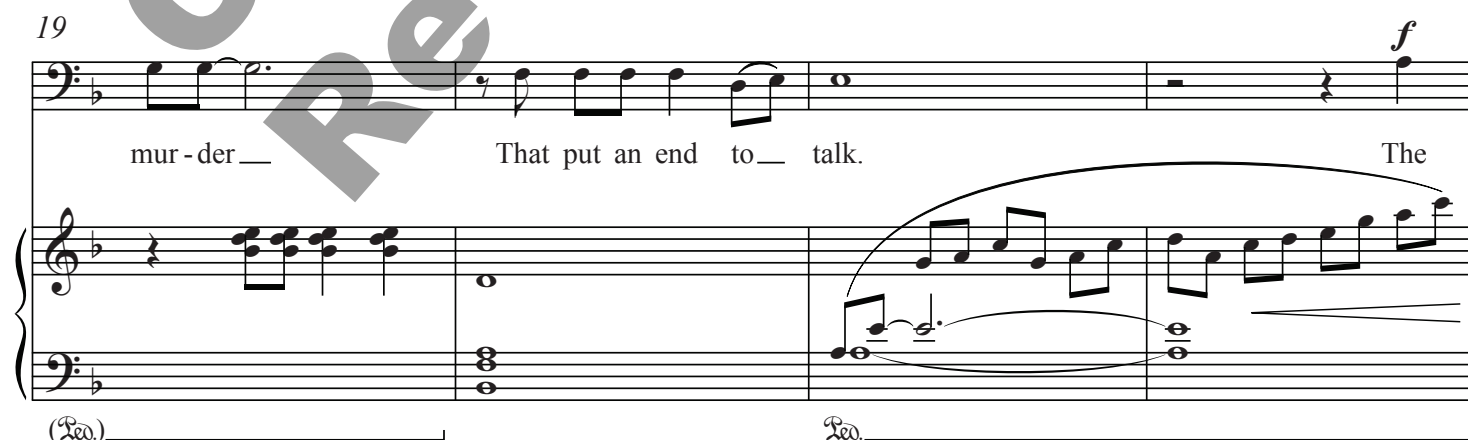
16

fin - ger joints are cramped with chalk;                      A   goo-se's quill has put an end to



19

mur - der                      That put an end   to   talk.                      *f*                      The



23

hand that signed the trea - ty bred a fe - - - ver, And

*f*

Reo.

25

fam - ine grew, and lo - - custs came;

Reo.

27

Great is the hand that holds do - min - ion o - ver Man \_\_\_\_\_ by a scrib - bled

*p* *f*

Reo.

# Transition to No. 2. And Death Shall Have No Dominion

[Omit if performing No. 2 separately]

$\text{♩} = 100$

*p*

*rit.*

*with pedal*

## 2. And Death Shall Have No Dominion

At a stately tempo  $\text{♩} = 100$

*f*

*with pedal*

4

*f*

And death shall have no do-min-ion.

*p*

*f*

*Rec.*

8

Dead men na-ked they shall be one with the man in the wind and the

*p*

*f*

*p*

*Rec.*

12 *smoothly*

west moon; \_\_\_\_\_ no do-min-ion, no do-min-ion,

15 *p* *mf*

no do-min-ion, no do-min-ion. \_\_\_\_\_ When their

18 *mf*

bones are picked clean, and the clean bones gone, \_\_\_\_\_ They shall have

21 *f* *f*

stars at el-bow and foot; Though they go mad they shall be

*with pedal*

sane, Though they sink through the sea they shall rise a - gain;

Though lov - ers be lost love shall not; And

*poco rit.* *a tempo*

*poco rit.* *a tempo*

death shall have no do - min - ion.

*poco accel.* *mf* Slightly faster ♩ = 108

*poco accel.* And death shall have no do - min - ion.

*dim.* *mf* Slightly faster ♩ = 108



Rev. \_\_\_\_\_

8vb- - - - -  
Leo. - - - - -

6 *mf*  
Do not go gen-tle in - to that good night, \_\_\_\_\_

10  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day; \_\_\_\_\_

13 *f* *p* *mf*  
Rage, rage a-gainst the dy-ing of the light. \_\_\_\_\_

16 *(mf)*

Though wise men at their end know dark is

*mf* *p*

(Leo.)

19

right, Be-cause their words had forked no light - ning they *LH mf*

*mf* *(p)*

(Leo.)

21 *p*

Do not go gen - tle in - to that good night.

*(mf)* *p*

(Leo.)

24 *mf*

Good men, the last wave by, cry - ing how

*mf*

(Leo.)

*lightly*

bright Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay, —

*lightly*

(Reo.)

Rage, rage a - gainst the dy - ing of the light. — Wild —

*f* *p* *accel.* *f*

*f* *mf* *p* *accel.*

(Reo.)

**Faster** ♩ = 100

— men who caught and sang the sun in —

**Faster** ♩ = 100

*f* 3

(Reo.)

flight, — And learn, too late, they

3

(Reo.)