

**Naxos 8.570417**

**Gerald Finzi (1901-1956):**

**Dies natalis • Farewell to Arms • 2 Sonnets**

*Thomas Traherne (c.1637–1674)*

**1 Intrada**

**2 Rhapsody**

Will you see the infancy of this sublime and celestial greatness? I was a stranger, which at my entrance into the world was saluted and surrounded with innumerable joys: my knowledge was divine. I was entertained like an angel with the works of God in their splendour and glory. Heaven and Earth did sing my Creator's praises, and could not make more melody to Adam than to me. Certainly Adam in Paradise had not more sweet and curious apprehensions of the world than I. All appeared new, and strange at first, inexpressibly rare and delightful and beautiful. All things were spotless and pure and glorious.

The corn was orient and immortal wheat, which never should be reaped nor was ever sown. I thought it had stood from everlasting to everlasting. The green trees, when I saw them first, transported and ravished me, their sweetness and unusual beauty made my heart to leap, and almost mad with ecstasy, they were such strange and wonderful things.

O what venerable creatures did the aged seem! Immortal cherubims! and the young men glittering and sparkling angels, and maids strange seraphic pieces of life and beauty! I knew not that they were born or should die; but all things abided eternally. I knew not that there were sins or complaints or laws. I dreamed not of poverties, contentions or vices. All tears and quarrels were hidden from mine eyes. I saw all in the peace of Eden. Everything was at rest, free and immortal.

**3 The Rapture**

Sweet Infancy!  
O heavenly fire! O sacred Light!  
How fair and bright!  
How great am I  
Whom the whole world doth magnify!

O heavenly Joy!  
O great and sacred brightness  
Which I possess!  
Sao great a joy  
Who did into my arms convey?

From God above  
Being sent, the gift doth me inflame,  
To praise his name.  
The stars do move,  
The sun doth shine, to show his love.

O how divine  
Am I! To all this sacred wealth  
This life and health  
Who raised? Who mine  
Did make the same? What hand divine!

**4 Wonder**

How like an angel I came down!  
How bright are all things here!  
When first among his works I did appear  
O how their glory did me crown!  
The world resembled his eternity  
In which my soul did walk;  
And everything that I did see  
Did with me talk.

The skies in their magnificence  
The lovely, lively air,  
O how divine, how soft, how sweet, how fair!  
The stars did entertain my sense;  
And all the works of God so bright and pure,  
So rich and great, did seem,  
As if they ever must endure  
In my esteem.

A native health and innocence  
Within my bones did grow,  
And while my God did all his glories show,  
I felt a vigour in my sense  
That was all spirit: within I did flow  
With seas of life, like wine:  
I nothing but the world did know  
But t'was Divine.

**5 The Salutation**

These little limbs, these eyes and hands which I here find,  
This panting heart wherewith my life begins;  
Where have ye been? Behind what curtain were ye from me hid so long?  
Where was, in what abyss, my new made tongue?

When silent I so many thousand thousand years  
Beneath the dust did in a chaos lie, how could I smiles, or tears,  
Or lips, or hands, or eyes, or ears perceive?  
Welcome, ye treasures which I now receive.

From dust I rise and out of nothing now awake,  
These brighter regions which salute my eyes,  
A gift from God I take, the earth, the seas, the light, the lofty skies,  
The sun and stars are mine: if these I prize.

A stranger here, strange things doth meet, strange glory see,  
Strange treasures lodged in this fair world appear,  
Strange, all, and new to me: But that they mine should be who nothing was,  
That strangest is of all; yet brought to pass.

## TWO SONNETS

*John Milton (1608–1674)*

### 8 When I consider how my life is spent

When I consider how my life is spent,  
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,  
And that one talent which is death to hide  
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent  
To serve therewith my Maker, and present  
My true account, lest He returning chide,  
“Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?”  
I fondly ask; But patience, to prevent  
That murmur, soon replies “God doth not need  
Either man’s work or his own gifts. Who best  
Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best. His state  
Is kingly: thousands at His bidding speed  
And post o’er land and ocean without rest;  
They also serve who only stand and wait.”

### 9 How soon hath Time

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,  
Stol’n on his wing my three-and-twentieth year!  
My hasting days fly on with full career,  
But my late spring no bud or blossom shew’th.  
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth  
That I to manhood am arrived so near;  
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,  
That some more timely-happy spirits endu’th.  
Yet it be less or more, or soon or slow,  
It shall be still in strictest measure even  
To that same lot, however mean or high,  
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heav’n:  
All is, if I have grace to use it so  
As ever in my great Task-Master’s eye.

## FAREWELL TO ARMS

### 11 Introduction

*Ralph Knevet (1600–1671)*

The helmet now an hive for bees becomes,  
And hilts of swords may serve for spiders’ looms;  
Sharp pikes may make  
Teeth for a rake;  
And the keen blade, th’arch enemy of life,  
Shall be degraded to a pruning knife.  
The rustic spade  
Which first was made  
For honest agriculture, shall retake  
Its primitive employment, and forsake  
The rampires steep  
And trenches deep.  
Tame conies in our brazen guns shall breed,  
Or gentle doves their young ones there shall feed.  
In musket barrels  
Mice shall raise quarrels

For their quarters. The ventriloquious drum,  
Like lawyers in vacations, shall be dumb.  
Now all recruits,  
But those of fruits,  
Shall be forgot; and th'unarmed soldier  
Shall only boast of what he did whilere,  
In chimney's ends  
Among his friends.

**12** **Aria**

*George Peele (c.1558–1597)*

His golden locks Time hath to silver turned.  
O Time too swift! Oh swiftness never ceasing!  
His youth 'gainst Time and Age hath ever spurned,  
But spurned in vain; youth waneth by increasing.  
Beauty, strength, youth are flowers but fading seen;  
Duty, faith, love are roots and ever green.

His helmet now shall make a hive for bees,  
And lovers' sonnets turn to holy psalms.  
A man-at-arms must now serve on his knees,  
And feed on prayers which are Age's alms.  
But though from Court to cottage he depart,  
His Saint is sure of his unspotted heart.

And when he saddest sits in homely cell,  
He'll teach his swains this carol for a song:  
Blest be the hearts that wish my Sovereign well.  
Curst be the soul that think her any wrong.  
Goddess, allow this aged man his right  
To be your bedesman, now that was your knight.