

Tallis is Dead and Music Dies

a musical narrative by Ricardo Alves Pereira

This musical narrative describes the mournful struggle of the composer William Byrd against the silence born from the death of his dearest friend Thomas Tallis and how they, through God and music, reunite once again.

The Everlasting Stillness

T. Tallis (-): "My Soul Cleaveth to the Dust"

The pale white soul of Thomas Tallis gradually arose to the illuminated Heavens. Down on earth, his body lay lifeless in the arms of his dearest friend William Byrd. A dark silence imprisoned them, freezing them into an everlasting stillness. Byrd shook his head mournfully and told himself: "Tallis is dead and music dies".

And The Earth Trembled

W. Byrd (-): "Terra Tremuit"

Still holding his friend in his arms, Byrd felt the world tremble beneath him. Filled with anger he cried out: "Angels above, why do you deceive me? I won't leave his side!". The windows shattered, the walls and ceiling cracked open, and the floor beneath them fell apart, breaking into a thousand pieces, giving way to a black pit of nothingness.

A Cry in the Dark

W. Byrd: "Arise, o Lord"

Embedded in this prison where no light or sound could possibly exist, Byrd called to God with all his strength. As the last precious gasp of air left his lungs, he felt only a soundless crushing pain conquering his imploding chest.

A Message of Hope

W. Byrd: "Lord Make me Know"

A bright angel appeared in front of Byrd. His face emanated the steadfast purity of the heavenly realm. The angel gently took Tallis from Byrd's arms, and gave him in exchange a message of hope: "If you wish to break the darkest silence of death, you shall write the holiest music and sing it to the sacred skies. Thereafter, your friend shall be guided back to you and the silence shall be broken".

The Search for Harmony

T. Tallis: O Sacrum Convivium

The angel faded away in a shaft of light, taking the body of Tallis with him. The dark void faded away and Byrd appeared back at his home. He hastened to the nearest church and with the blessings of the priest he took the sacramental bread and finally felt inner peace. He stopped in front of the statue of Christ on the cross. There he stayed for a long time, listening deeply and

searching his heart. As a vision of holy harmonies filled his mind, he thanked the Lord: "I was lost within the emptiness inside, but now I've found my voice."

The Final Prayer

W. Byrd: "Ye Sacred Muses"

Byrd climbed to the top of the bell tower in the church. The sky was covered in black clouds and rain fell heavily as he tried to keep his head lifted to the dark barriers that blotted out the heavens. With his very last strength he called out this prayer: "Oh God and merciful souls, hear my music and let Tallis be guided by my voice."

The Holy Light

T. Tallis: "O Nata Lux"

The skies remained locked, dark and heavy, even after Byrd's glorious cry. With neither hope nor inner strength left, he turned his back to descend the tower. It was then that the rain stopped and he felt a bright warmth on his back. As he turned once again to the skies, he saw an opening in the barrier of clouds, and from it came a shaft of light, illuminating him with the blessings of the holy heavens.

Breaking the Silence

T. Tallis: "If Ye Love Me"

The golden light bathed Byrd's soul and through those ethereal beams came the sacred music of Tallis. The silence of death was finally broken. As Byrd stared at the Heavens his eyes caught his dearest friend descending to him. Tallis' divine spirit stretched its arm gently towards Byrd and welcomed him: "Here I am my friend. Now hold my hand..."