

The Relationship of Music and Poetry in

Dies Natalis by Gerald Finzi

by

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the relationship of text and music in *Dies Natalis* by Gerald Finzi. Many of Gerald Finzi's compositions have been researched and analyzed, but *Dies Natalis*, a work for high voice and string quartet, has received limited attention. The text is by Thomas Traherne, a lesser-known English poet and theologian. The research investigates textual interpretation and an explanation or a discussion of the religious mysticism of Traherne. After a biographical discussion of the composer and the poet, this paper provides a musical analysis, including a study of thematic and harmonic relationships in the work, and an examination of word painting and text setting. To facilitate my analysis, I used the piano reduction and not the string score for this project.

DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this work to my parents Penney and Tony McKee. Their love and support has made this degree possible.

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I would like to thank my committee members, for their patience, hard work, and guidance, each of whom have helped hone my skills as a musician and educator.

A special thanks to Jerry Doan for his not-so-gentle but always well-intentioned prodding to get “words on paper.”

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The relationship between music and text remains unexplored in *Dies Natalis*, a multi-movement work by Gerald Finzi. This paper investigates the connection of words and music through musical and textual analysis, considering word painting, motives, and text setting.

Literature Review

This study includes an examination of the life and music of Gerald Finzi and the life and writings of Thomas Traherne. Diana McVeigh, a British music journalist, offers valuable information on Finzi's music and even more information on his family and lifestyle in *Gerald Finzi: His Life and Music*.¹ Stephen Banfield's book *Gerald Finzi: An English Composer*² provides additional musical background. Like Finzi, Banfield is British – albeit a musicologist, not a composer – and the book was commissioned by the Finzi trust. *Letters of Gerald Finzi and Howard Ferguson*³ compiled by Howard Ferguson & Michael Hurd is helpful in understanding Finzi as a person and a composer.

¹ Diana M. McVeagh, *Gerald Finzi: His Life and Music* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005).

² Stephen Banfield, *Gerald Finzi: An English Composer* (London: Faber and Faber, 2008).

³ Gerald Finzi, *Letters of Gerald Finzi and Howard Ferguson*, ed. Howard Ferguson and Michael Hurd (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2001).

Ferguson was one of Finzi's life-long friends, and they frequently exchanged letters. This book discusses Finzi's personality traits and compositional practices.

Thomas Traherne, a seventeenth century theologian and poet, wrote the text of *Dies Natalis*. Significant information can be found in three books of the same title: *Thomas Traherne* by Q. Iredale,⁴ K.W. Salter,⁵ and Gladys Wade.⁶ Wade's book is biographical while the others are critiques of Traherne's writings. Traherne's beliefs as a Christian mystic, and its symbolism, will lead to a more complete understanding of the foundation of his writings.

An examination of ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global shows many results, but these findings primarily focus on the choral works of Gerald Finzi and his settings of Thomas Hardy poems. "The Solo Vocal Collections of Gerald R. Finzi Suitable for Performance by the High Male Voice"⁷ by Samuel R. Germany, Jr. and "Stylistic Characteristics and Trends in the Choral Music of Five Twentieth-Century British

⁴ Q. Iredale, *Thomas Traherne* (Oxford: The Folcroft Press Inc., 1970).

⁵ K.W. Salter, *Thomas Traherne: Mystic and Poet* (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc., 1965).

⁶ Gladys I. Wade, *Thomas Traherne a Critical Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946).

⁷ Germany, Samuel Rudolph, Jr. "The Solo Vocal Collections of Gerald R. Finzi Suitable for Performance by the High Male Voice, a Lecture Recital Together with Three Recitals of Selected Works of J. S. Bach, H. Wolf, R. Vaughan Williams, A. Jolivet, F. J. Haydn, J. Brahms, L. V. Beethoven, R. Strauss, J. P. Rameau, M. Ravel, S. Barber, G. Faure." Order No. 9401141, University of North Texas, 1993. In PROQUESTMS ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, <http://login.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/304055372?accountid=4485>.

Composers”⁸ by George E. Hansler investigates Finzi’s compositional style. This research provided valuable information because Samuel Germany interviewed Finzi’s son, Christopher, who spoke of Finzi’s intentions in his compositions, specifically *Dies Natalis*.

Finzi: A Brief Biography

Gerald Finzi was born on July 14, 1901, in London, England, to a prosperous Jewish family. Finzi’s father, John (“Jack”) Abraham was a shipbroker, and his mother, Eliza Emma (“Lizzie”) Levenson, was also from a well-to-do family. Gerald was the youngest of five children in a family that encouraged all the children to be artists.⁹

As a child, Finzi repeatedly saw tragedies strike his family. Jack, his father, died of cancer in 1909 and in 1912, Douglas, the third child, died of pneumonia. A year later in 1913, Felix, the oldest son, died from an overdose. Finally, a World War I battle claimed Edgar, another brother’s, life in 1918, which left Mrs. Finzi to dote on Gerald. Kate, the oldest child, was grown and had left the home.¹⁰

⁸ Hansler, George E. "Stylistic Characteristics and Trends in the Choral Music of Five Twentieth-Century British Composers: A Study of the Choral Works of Benjamin Britten, Gerald Finzi, Constant Lambert, Michael Tippett, AND William Walton." Order No. 5800651, New York University, 1957. In PROQUESTMS ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, <http://login.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/301960411?accountid=4485>.

⁹ McVeagh, 3-4.

¹⁰ Ibid, 6-15.

Finzi started composition lessons at age fourteen with Ernest Farrar. Upon enlisting in World War I, Farrar recommended Finzi continue his lessons with Sir Edward C. Bairstow, who had a reputation for being strict.¹¹ Reluctantly, Finzi began composition lessons with Bairstow in 1918 and continued with him for four and a half years.¹² Bairstow, who also taught singing, insisted on clear enunciation and faultless prosody. He likely was responsible for teaching Finzi the importance of proper text setting.¹³

Finzi began studying with R.O. Morris in 1925, who was known as the “country’s best teacher.”¹⁴ During one of his lessons, Finzi met Howard Ferguson, also a student of Morris, who was to become one of Finzi’s closest friends.¹⁵ They respected each other’s compositional ability and musicianship enough to send their music to one another for feedback. Soon there were “weekly sessions much like the Vaughan Williams-Holst ‘field days’ when the two went through each other’s compositions, got to know music by playing it as piano duets.”¹⁶

After moving to London in 1926, Finzi associated himself with many of London’s composers, including Ralph Vaughan Williams. Being a determined and enthusiastic composer, Finzi would turn up when he knew the composers were meeting, yet “his

¹¹ Ibid, 14-15.

¹² Banfield, *Gerald Finzi: A British Composer*, 19.

¹³ Ibid, 34-35.

¹⁴ McVeagh, 34.

¹⁵ Ibid, 47.

¹⁶ Ibid, 48.

insistence did not put the older composers off; they recognized his need and his single-mindedness.”¹⁷

In 1930, Finzi began teaching part time at Royal College of Music, which he referred to as “The Royal Crematorium”¹⁸ –Finzi found the college to be artistically confining. His tenure ended when Oxford University Press agreed to publish *A Young Man’s Exhortation* in 1933.¹⁹

In 1933, Finzi married Joy Black, an artist, sculptor, and musician. Christopher, their first son, was born in 1934, and the second son, Nigel, was born in 1936.²⁰ Howard Ferguson describes Finzi’s family life:

No reminiscence of Finzi, however short, could omit mention of the home life that meant so much to him. He and his wife Joy, in whom he was so profoundly blessed, made with their two sons a rare and united family circle in that long, attractive house at Ashmansworth, overlooking a twenty-five mile stretch of country towards Winchester, which they built for themselves just before the war.²¹

Reluctant to add phrasing and dynamic markings, Finzi often sought advice from Howard Ferguson.²² Ferguson points out, “the problems of dynamics and phrasing began to vanish miraculously once he himself gained active experience of performance through

¹⁷ Ibid, 50.

¹⁸ Ibid, 63.

¹⁹ Ibid, 71.

²⁰ Ibid, 68-82.

²¹ Howard Ferguson, “Gerald Finzi (1901-1956),” *Music and Letters* (Apr., 1957): 134, accessed October 18, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/stable/729308>.

²² Banfield, *Gerald Finzi: A British Composer*, 223.

conducting the Newbury String Players, a small, mainly amateur orchestra he founded at the beginning of the war.”²³ The Newbury String Players performed all genres, but Finzi frequently featured “composers whom he felt to be unfairly neglected, whether they were contemporary with him or of another age.”²⁴

In 1951, Finzi was diagnosed with what is now known as non-Hodgkin lymphoma. Finzi was told that he had up to fifteen years to live. He and Joy told no one except for their boys.²⁵ Finzi continued to focus on composing, the success of the Newbury String Players, and research. In early September 1956 at the Three Choirs Festival, Finzi “conducted the first full orchestra version of his *In Terra Pax* and he was delighted with the performance.”²⁶ On a short holiday after the festival, Finzi contracted chicken pox. Due to a compromised immune system, chicken pox led to encephalitis. On the evening of September 27, 1956, Finzi died.²⁷ In January 1957, a memorial concert was given in his honor where both his sons and Howard Ferguson performed some of Finzi’s music.²⁸

Gerald Finzi led a remarkable life. He survived as a composer and remained close to the people he loved and admired. Fellow composer and friend Edmund Rubbra

²³ Ferguson, *Music and Letters*, 133.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 134.

²⁵ McVeagh, 198-199.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 249.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 250.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 251.

testified: ‘I cannot remember a single occasion when, in contact with him, I did not carry away something of vital importance.’²⁹

***Dies Natalis*: Critical Reception**

Originally, *Dies Natalis* was set to debut at the Three Choirs Festival in 1939, but the festival was cancelled because Germany invaded Poland.³⁰ The first performance of *Dies Natalis* was at Wigmore Hall in London on January 26, 1940. Finzi reported to Howard Ferguson that it was “a good enough performance.”³¹ Through the next few years, *Dies Natalis* performances came with good reviews. “Finzi’s claim for a place in the history of British music rests largely on *Dies Natalis*, op. 8 (1926-1939.)”³² Other reactions of the first performance of *Dies Natalis* include: “Your tune is beautiful and Elsie [Suddaby] sang it divinely” from Vaughan Williams; The conductor, Maurice Miles, “was struck by his [Finzi’s] charm and the ‘otherworld atmosphere about him’”; *The Times* called it “a glowing and strong work” noting its “vein of spontaneous melody and a sense of verbal accentuation”: it was ‘Finzi’s Week.’³³

²⁹ Stephen Banfield, “Composer of the Month: Gerald Finzi - Master of Song, Neglected Pastoral Visionary,” *BBC Music Magazine* 9, no. 11 (July 2001): 59-60.

³⁰ McVeagh, 106.

³¹ *Ibid*, 108.

³² Otto Karolyi, *Modern British Music: The Second British Musical Renaissance--from Elgar to P. Maxwell Davies* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, ©1994), 56.

³³ McVeagh, 108.

In December of 1943, *Dies Natalis* was first broadcast on the radio³⁴ and Herbert Howells told Gerald, “It was strangely comforting: and (it seemed to me) it all gives one back a standard of beauty that virtuosity has so nearly wrecked in so much contemporary music.”³⁵ “*The Times* considered it established in the repertory”³⁶ when it was again performed at Wigmore Hall in January of 1944.

The frequent performances of *Dies Natalis* made the work a more popular composition. Finzi received positive feedback in response to his work. “Finzi’s wartime audiences began to respond to *Dies Natalis*’s own ‘astounding conclusion’ about innocence and unattainable perfection as the lost birthright of humankind,” as well as, “Finzi’s first fan letters from unknown people were about *Dies Natalis*.”³⁷ In January of 1946, Robin Milford wrote to Finzi: “I am really glad to hear, from a number of sources, of the proper appreciation your *Dies Natalis* seems to be obtaining.”³⁸ In that same year, “Finzi conducted it [*Dies Natalis*], at Vaughan Williams’s invitation, with Bradbridge White at the Leith Hill Festival in April, and again at the Three Choirs in Hereford in September, with Suddaby—its first performance postponed for seven years, in effect.”³⁹

In conclusion, “The work that changed the world’s perception of him [Finzi] as a composer of importance and originality was a setting of poems by Thomas Traherne for

³⁴ Ibid, 137.

³⁵ Ibid, 137.

³⁶ Ibid, 137.

³⁷ Banfield, *Gerald Finzi: A British Composer*, 322.

³⁸ Ibid, 320.

³⁹ Ibid, 320.

voice and string orchestra: *Dies Natalis*. Typical of his method of composition, the music had been quietly simmering since 1925.”⁴⁰ Finzi rarely wrote for the female voice, which is why it is now thought of as a tenor cycle. It is unfortunate that the work has not maintained popularity, considering that *Dies Natalis* was Finzi’s first public success.

⁴⁰ Ferguson, *Letters of Gerald Finzi and Howard Ferguson*, 17.

CHAPTER 2

TEXT OF *DIES NATALIS*

History

The text for *Dies Natalis* was written by Thomas Traherne (c.1638 - 1674), a priest in the Church of England. Referred to as a Christian mystic, Traherne's writings are religious in nature. Alison Sherrington, an expert on mystical symbolism, explains:

Traherne's ardent sincerity saves him from the charge of arrogance, if not from a lack of the particular kind of religious humility that most Christian mystics feel. No reader can doubt the genuineness of his spiritual fervor, least of all in those daring passages in which he tries to convey something of a the wonder of his own experience.⁴¹

Traherne was a scholar, theologian, author, and poet, but upon beginning his education at Oxford, he was not religious. Although he enjoyed his studies, Traherne realized there was a void in his life. Traherne spent the next few years in search of his purpose in life or for what he eventually referred to as Felicity.⁴² "The enjoyment of Felicity begins with the enjoyment of this relationship, and particularly with a deep appreciation of the value of oneself to one's body."⁴³ The writings in *Centuries of Meditations* are teachings and lessons wherein Traherne endeavors to convey his experiences and to show others the path to Felicity. Traherne tells of his own experience in *Centuries of Meditations*, a religious text:

When I came unto the country, and being seated among silent trees and meads and hill, had all my time in mine own hands, I resolved to spend it all, whatever it cost me, in search of happiness, and to satiate that burning thirst which Nature had

⁴¹ Alison J. Sherrington, *Mystical Symbolism in the Poetry of Thomas Traherne*, (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1970), 58.

⁴² Wade, 51-56.

⁴³ Sherrington, 16.

enkindled in me from my youth. In which I was so resolute, that I chose rather to live upon ten pounds a year, and to go in leather clothes, and feed upon bread and water, so that I might have all my time clearly to myself, than to keep many thousands per annum in an estate of life where my time would be devoured in care and labor. And God was so pleased to accept of that desire, that from that time to this, I have had all things plentifully provided for me, without any care at all, my very study of Felicity making me more to prosper, than all the care in the whole world. So that through his blessing I live a free and kingly life as if the world were turned again into Eden, or much more, as it is at this day.⁴⁴

“This was definite consecration of himself to mysticism, to the attainment by discipline of firsthand experience of union and communion with God, a decision requiring courage in the making and the utmost endurance in the execution.”⁴⁵

Traherne believed that “the fall” or an apostasy was natural. He also thought that questioning the existence of God or traveling a path of sinfulness was normal, and the important part was choosing to re-accept God and the path of righteousness. Traherne was certain that after the apostasy was realized and a virtuous decision was made the mystical world would begin to reveal itself. As this way of living continues, the gifts of God become apparent and more perceptible. This is Traherne’s Felicity and how he lived his life. “The loss of the first light is in a sense necessary for the complete awareness of the later experience, the Felicity which is to come.”⁴⁶

“Traherne emerged absolutely sure of the honesty and rightness of his position as a priest of the Anglican Church, aflame with the zeal for her cause, and fully armed to do

⁴⁴ Thomas Traherne, *Centuries of Meditations* (London: Dobell, 1908), 46.

⁴⁵ Wade, 60.

⁴⁶ Salter, 30.

battle in her name.”⁴⁷ Traherne had found Felicity. He recognized this accomplishment and spent the rest of his life trying to show others the path to enlightenment.

Centuries of Meditations is a religious text based on Traherne’s beliefs of man’s relationship with God, nature, himself, and fellow man.⁴⁸ There are 100 verses per *Century* and it is believed to have been written for a distant relative, one also on a quest for Felicity.⁴⁹ In *Centuries of Meditations*:

There are four *Centuries*, and ten sections of a fifth. The second *Century* follows on without any real break from the first, but the third has a separate character; it contains Traherne’s account of his own progress in the enjoyment of Felicity. The Fourth *Century* aims at setting out the ‘principals’ of Felicity, and the unfinished fifth is concerned with the mystical theme of God as both the Way towards, and the Object of, the seeker for Felicity, ‘The Infinity of God is our Enjoyment.’⁵⁰

Texts from *Poems of Felicity* serve for the final three songs of *Dies Natalis*. This collection of poems was published in 1910⁵¹ and, though slightly less personal than *Centuries of Meditations*, it also serves as an educational aid. All three poems are in iambic pentameter. “Traherne made use of only one rhythm—the iambic—and yet there is no monotony in his verse. Substitution is used freely, particularly in the first foot, to avoid too great a regularity of beats.”⁵²

⁴⁷ Wade, 64.

⁴⁸ Wade, 183.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 80.

⁵⁰ Salter, 22.

⁵¹ Graham Dowell, *Enjoying the World: The Rediscovery of Thomas Traherne* (London: Mowbray, 1990), 130.

⁵² Wade, 193.

Original Text, Portions Used By Composer, And Various Interpretations

Textually, *Dies Natalis* is connected by theme, subject matter, and words. Traherne tells of his affinity for certain things by the regularity of their occurrence in his writings. In referring to these objects, he considers them gifts from God. Traherne considered nature, stars, the sun, and the human body to be treasures. Several words occur often in the text: glory, divine, light, and strange. *Strange* is used multiple times and consistently used to emphasize how peculiar religion can be. *Divine* and *Stars* are used in three of the movements. Repetition is used to add emphasis to philosophies, therefore, “Any poet who senses strongly that words are inadequate to express his vision would tend to resort not only to repetition of ideas and images but also to lists of words, symbols, or comparisons serving as pointers to the ineffable.”⁵³

I. Intrada

There are several interpretations of the first movement “Intrada.” It is unusual in that it is the sole instrumental movement of the work, although thematically and motivically connected to the rest of the work. “Intrada” might also be considered an introduction to “Rhapsody,” the second movement, with a similar sentiment. Perhaps “Intrada” is the origin of the world, or the creation of the spirit of a baby. McVeagh agrees, “The song ‘Intrada’ (‘An empty book is like an infant’s soul’) certainly shares the thought of *Dies Natalis*.”⁵⁴ Furthermore, mystics believe in a “pre-existence and reminiscence: that the soul comes to earth with a faint memory of the beauty it has known

⁵³ Sherrington, 115-116.

⁵⁴ McVeagh, 47.

in a prior life.”⁵⁵ This important religious tenet may help in interpreting parts of this work.

II. Rhapsody

“Rhapsody” comes from *Centuries of Meditations*. The following prose is the first three verses from the *Third Century*, which “contains Traherne’s account of his own progress in the enjoyment of Felicity.”⁵⁶ The portions indicate the fragments that Finzi selected for use in “Rhapsody:”

Third Century verse 1:

Will you see the Infancy of this Sublime and Celestial Greatness? Those Pure and Virgin Apprehensions I had from the Womb, and that Divine Light wherewith I was born are the Best unto this Day, wherein I can see the Universe. By the Gift of GOD they attended me into the World, and by His Special favor I remember them till now. Verily they seem the Greatest Gifts His Wisdom could bestow, for without them all other Gifts had been Dead and Vain. They are unattainable by Book, and therefore I will teach them by experience. Pray for them earnestly: for they will make you Angelical, and wholly Celestial. **Certainly Adam in Paradise had not more Sweet and Curious Apprehensions of the World, than I** when I was a child.

Third Century verse 2:

All appeared New, and Strange at first, inexpressibly rare and Delightful and Beautiful. I was a little Stranger, which at my Entrance into the World was Saluted and Surrounded with innumerable Joys. My Knowledge was Divine, I knew by Intuition those things which, since my Apostasy, I Collected again by the Highest Reason. My very Ignorance was advantageous. I seemed as one Brought into the Estate of Innocence. **All Things were Spotless and Pure and Glorious:** yea, and infinitely mine, and Joyful and Precious. **I knew not that there were any Sins, or Complaints or Laws. I Dreamed not of Poverties, Contentions or Vices. All Tears and Quarrels were hidden from mine Eyes. Everything was a Rest, free and Immortal.** I knew nothing of Sickness or Death or Rents or Exaction, either for Tribute or Bread. In the Absence of these **I was entertained like and Angel with the Works of God in their Splendor and Glory, I saw all in the Peace of Eden; Heaven and Earth did Sing my**

⁵⁵ Iredale, 39.

⁵⁶ Salter, 22.

Creator's Praises, and could not make more Melody to Adam, than to me. All Time was Eternity, and a Perpetual Sabbath. Is it not Strange, that an Infant should be Heir of the whole World, and see those mysteries which the Books of the Learned never unfold?

Third Century verse 3:

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 Dust and Stones of the Street were as precious as Gold: the Gates were at first the End of the World. **The Green Trees when I saw them first** through one of the Gates **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.** The Men! **O what Venerable and Reverend Creatures did the Aged seem! Immortal Cherubims! And young Men Glittering and Sparkling Angels, and Maids strange Seraphic Pieces of Life and Beauty!** Boys and Girls Tumbling in the street, and playing were moving Jewels. **I knew not that they were Born or should Die; But all things abided Eternally** as they were in their Proper Places. Eternity was Manifest in the Light of the Day, and something infinite behind everything appeared: which talked with my Expectation and moved my Desire. The City seemed to stand in Eden, or to be Built in Heaven. The Streets were mine, the Temple was mine, the People were mine, their Clothes and Gold and Silver were mine, as much as much as their Sparkling Eyes, Fair Skins and ruddy faces. The Skies were mine, and so were the Sun and Moon and Stars, and all the World was mine; and I the only Spectator and Enjoyer of it. I knew no Churlish Proprieties, nor Bounds, or Divisions: but all Properties and Divisions were mine: all Treasures and the Possessors of them. So that with much ado I was corrupted, and made to learn the Dirty Devices of this World. Which now I unlearn, and become, as it were, a little Child again that I may enter into the Kingdom of God.⁵⁷

Finzi took liberties in rearranging the original text, as McVeagh comments, “he was composer enough to be ruthless with Traherne’s words.”⁵⁸ “The words of *Dies Natalis* are Traherne’s but the sequence of thought is Finzi’s,”⁵⁹ who “omitted any specifically religious references”⁶⁰ in the text he chose.

⁵⁷ Traherne, *Centuries of Meditations*, 156-158.

⁵⁸ McVeagh, 43.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 105.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 44.

Interpretations of “Rhapsody” vary greatly. The images in the writing evoke feelings of awe, wonder, and joy. Wade states that, *Centuries* “contain the most complete expression of Traherne’s philosophy, because it was the purpose of their writing to present the unity and glory.”⁶¹ Other ideas include: “In ‘Rhapsody’ he celebrates natural beauty,”⁶² and “The experience provides an image of the paradise.”⁶³

Poems of Felicity provide the final three poems of *Dies Natalis*. The three poems, “The Rapture,” “Wonder,” and “The Salutation,” speak of the magnificence of God and the gifts bestowed upon humankind. Additionally, the poetry expresses divinity within man, the gifts of our bodies, and the glories in all of God’s works.

III. The Rapture

The third movement is entitled “The Rapture” and *Poems of Felicity* is the source for the text. Unlike the other poems, Finzi used all of the stanzas. Following is the poem in its original language, spelling, and line variances.

The Rapture

Sweet Infancy!
O Hevenly Fire! O Sacred Light!
How Fair and bright!
How Great am I
Whom the whol World doth magnify!

⁶¹ Wade, 183.

⁶² McVeagh, 105.

⁶³ Salter, 25.

O heavenly Joy!
O Great and Sacred Blessedness
Which I possess!
So great a Joy
Who did into my arms convey?

From God above
Being sent, the Gift doth me enflame
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!⁶⁴

“The Rapture” may be interpreted several ways. Traherne tells of the joy that he felt after “the fall” and then choosing to dedicate his life to God. Wade states, “The Rapture’ fitly expresses the joy of its recovery . . . in seeking a lost childlikeness,”⁶⁵ “Thus, in ‘The Rapture’ the mystic expresses the joy of the recovery of childlikeness,”⁶⁶ In contrast, McVeagh believes, “The Rapture” is all praise of the divine in man.”⁶⁷

IV. Wonder

Wonder, the fourth movement, is also from *Poems of Felicity*. Finzi used the first three stanzas of an eight stanza poem. The unused stanzas are descriptive lists of objects.

⁶⁴ Thomas Traherne, *Poems of Felicity* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1910), 19.

⁶⁵ Wade, 171.

⁶⁶ Sherrington, 78.

⁶⁷ McVeagh, 105.

Wonder

How like an Angel came I down!
How Bright are all things here!
When first among his Works I did appear
O how their glory me did Crown?
The World resembled his *Eternitie*,
In which my Soul did Walk;
And evry Thing that I did see,
Did with me talk.

The Skies in their Magnificence,
The Lively, Lovely Air;
Oh how Divine, how Soft, how Sweet, how fair!
The Stars did entertain my Sence,
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 shew,
I felt a Vigour in my Sence
That was all SPIRIT. I within did flow
With Seas of Life, like Wine;
I nothing in the World did know,
But 'twas Divine!

Harsh ragged Objects were conceald,
Oppressions Tears and Cries,
Sins, Grief, Complaints, Dissentions, Weeping Eys,
Were hid: and only things reveald,
Which Heav'nly Spirits, and the Angels prize.
The State of Innocence
And Bliss, not Trades and Poverties,
Did fill my Sence.

The Streets were pavd with Golden Stones,
The Boys and Girles were mine,
Oh how did all their Lovly faces shine!
The Sons of Men were Holy Ones.
In Joy, and Beauty, then appear'd to me,
Joy, beauty, welfare did appear to me
And evry Thing which here I found,
While like an Angel I did See,
Adornd the Ground.

Rich Diamond and Pearl and Gold
In evry Place was seen;
Rare Splendors, Yellow, Blew, Red, White and Green,
Mine Eys did evry where behold.
Great Wonders clothd with Glory did appear,
Amazement was my Bliss.
That and my Wealth was evry where;
No Joy to this!

Cursd and Devised Proprieties,
With Envy, Avarice 'ævərɪs = greed
And Fraud, those Feinds that Spoyl even Paradise,
Fled from the Splendor of mine Eys.
And so did Hedges, Ditches, Limit, Bounds,
I dreamed not ought of those,
But wandered over all mens Grounds,
And found Repose.

Proprieties themselvs were mine,
And Hedges Ornaments;
Wall, Boxes, Coffers, and their rich Contents
Did not Divide my Joys, but all combine.
Did not divide my joys but shine.
Clothes, Ribbans, Jewels, Laces, I esteemd
My Joys by other worn;
For me they all to wear them seemd
When I was born.⁶⁸

Interpretations of “Wonder” are not too dissimilar. Traherne attempts to convey all the magnificence and splendor that he experiences since finding Felicity. He questions his being, the universe, and life. Traherne now sees with new eyes and all of

⁶⁸ Traherne, *Poems of Felicity*, 3.

his senses are amplified. Sherrington clarifies, “Traherne’s idealized child figure discerns three great mystical truths: That all things are Gods gifts to him, that the spiritual is in the material, and that all things are boundless.”⁶⁹ Iredale believes that, “The child, like an angel descending to earth, but once there, enjoying it with simple animal vigor and childish curiosity is colored with a sense of deeper mystery, which was probably more obscure and unformulated than the poems suggest, but nevertheless existed.”⁷⁰

IV. The Salutation

The final poem of *Dies Natalis* is “The Salutation.” It has six stanzas, of which Finzi omitted the third and fourth.

The Salutation

**These little Limbs,
These Eys & Hands wch here I find,
This panting Heart wherwith 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 ly,
How could I Smiles, or Tears,
Or Lips, or Hands, or Eys, or Ears perceiv ?
Welcom ye Treasures wch I now receiv.**

⁶⁹ Sherrington, 78-79.

⁷⁰ Iredale, 14.

I that so long
Was Nothing from Eternity,
Did little think such Joys as Ear & Tongue
To celebrat or see :
Such Sounds to hear, such Hands to feel, such Feet,
Such Eys & Objects, on the Ground to meet.

New burnisht Joys !
Which finest Gold & Pearl excell !
Such sacred Treasures are the Limbs of Boys
In which a Soul doth dwell :
Their organized Joints & azure Veins
More Wealth include than the dead World contains.

**From Dust I rise
And out of Nothing now awake ;
These brighter Regions wch salute mine Eys
A Gift from God I take :
The Earth, the Seas, the Light, the lofty Skies,
The Sun & Stars are mine ; if these I prize.**

**A Stranger here
Strange things doth meet, strange Glory see,
Strange Treasures lodg'd in this fair World appear,
Strange all & New to me :
But that they mine should be who Nothing was,
That Strangest is of all ; yet brought to pass.⁷¹**

Interpretations of “The Salutation” are numerous. It could be argued that the poem is about the spirit of the baby meeting its body in the womb for the first time. If the *Poems of Felicity* are about a return to a childlike state, then *The Salutation* might represent the meeting of the body after finding Felicity, and realizing that it is a miraculous work of art. Sherrington states, “In “The Salutation,” the child greets the miracle of his birth. He feels deep delight in the discovery of all the parts of his body.”⁷² Iredale believes, “This poem suggests some preexistence of the spirit, though all that

⁷¹ Traherne, *Poems of Felicity*, 1.

⁷² Sherrington, 73-74.

formed the body, 'beneath the Dust did in a Chaos lie,' until it awoke out of nothing and rose from the dust to possess all things fair by the very act of beholding them."⁷³

In summation, the contrasting interpretations of the scholars are curious and thought-provoking. These ideas can alter perspective or add to understanding when contemplated with an open mind.

⁷³ Iredale, 13.

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS

Compositional Style and Influences

Gerald Finzi wrote in a style that was very much his own; individual qualities that make his music distinctive are discussed in this chapter. He was a meticulous composer, whose compositions habitually took years to complete. Diana McVeagh speaks of Finzi's curious compositional process and the manner in which the literature so inspired him:

"As lines [of poetry] ran through his head, so they would gather music to them."⁷⁴

Finzi's son, Christopher, states "He would read something and it would produce maybe only a couple of bars . . . a completely spontaneous reaction. He might then find that was all he got, and he would put it away in his drawer and leave it."⁷⁵ "Each of these would be added to from time to time as the mood took him, until a large batch of sketches, generally quite discontinuous, was built up for particular work."⁷⁶ "This putting-together of the sketches by filling in the gaps was never an entirely fluent endeavor; songs that appeared spontaneous might have been compiled only after endless sketches and rough drafts."⁷⁷

Melody

Finzi's melodies are seemingly simple, but at second glance, they are rather intricate, plus the accompaniment is not necessarily helpful. "He modeled himself on the

⁷⁴ Hanlser, 398.

⁷⁵ Germany, 30.

⁷⁶ Ferguson, *Music and Letters*, 131.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 132.

idea of the minor English poet, and we have come to see him as he probably saw himself.”⁷⁸ Finzi’s songs having a comfortable range, utilizing more small intervals than large, and keeping the tunes sounding simplistic avoids pretentiousness, which suits his idea of how song composition should be approached. Music historian Trevor Hold observed, “Certain fingerprints recur time and again in Finzi’s songs. The expressiveness of his vocal lines is usually achieved by contour rather than chromaticism, in a mixture of conjunct movement and large expressive leaps”⁷⁹ and he “did at times use motivic connections for formal unity.”⁸⁰ McVeagh adds, “Finzi often employs recitative, arioso, sustained melody all in one short song. Usually recitative suggests questioning, and cantilena confirms certainty.”⁸¹ “Finzi’s voice is lyrical, candid, and fastidious. No one else has quite his shades of shy rapture or melancholy, his characteristic radiance.”⁸²

Harmony

The harmony in Finzi’s music is an integral part of the whole, and often its complexity is because he works diligently to obscure the key. Regarding Finzi’s harmony, Hansler wrote, “This avoidance is accomplished in two ways: (1) by

⁷⁸ Banfield, *Gerald Finzi: An English Composer*, 2.

⁷⁹ Trevor Hold, *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 2002), 397.

⁸⁰ Carlisle, Mark Robert. "Gerald Finzi: A Performance Analysis of "A Young Man's Exhortation" and "Till Earth Outwears", Two Works for High Voice and Piano to Poems by Thomas Hardy." Order No. 9212475, The University of Texas at Austin, 1991. In PROQUESTMS ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, <http://login.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/303948658?accountid=4485>., 12.

⁸¹ McVeagh, 260.

⁸² *Ibid*, 263.

substitution of seventh chords...and occasionally ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth chords for the triad; and (2) by the use of accented nonharmonic tones (appoggiaturas, suspensions, and pedals).”⁸³ Finzi’s rich, nostalgic harmony, then, employs chromaticisms of the non-harmonic tone type to convey the mood of the text.”⁸⁴ Hansler states:

Occasionally, he uses other practices to obscure the tonality in varying degrees: the employment of the tonic only in weak inversions or on weak beats after a new key is suggested by accidentals; and the suggestion of two closely related keys, often a major and its relative minor, without clearly establishing either one.⁸⁵

Even when “the tonality is clear, Finzi often uses tonic avoidance at cadences to achieve continuation of poetic thought.”⁸⁶ He used bitonality and modes, but it is primarily for effect, color, and atmosphere.

Rhythm

Rhythm is an essential element in Finzi’s compositional style since it is one of the basic means of keeping the prosody of the text in its regular pattern. “Rhythmically, the vocal lines of Finzi’s songs are obvious conversational matches to the poetry.”⁸⁷

Germany adds, “In some settings, on the surface, Finzi’s rhythms can appear to be highly complex and difficult, yet upon reading the text they make sense,” as well as, “the natural

⁸³ Hansler, 403.

⁸⁴ Burton B. Parker, “Textual-Musical Relationships in Selected Songs of Gerald Finzi,” *The NATS Bulletin* 30, no. 4 (May/June 1974): 18.

⁸⁵ Hansler, 398.

⁸⁶ Parker, 18.

⁸⁷ Banfield, 325.

rhythm and stress of words must be preserved at the expense of metrical accents.”⁸⁸ In comparing Finzi to Hugo Wolf, Hold states, “His care, consideration and almost aristocratic sensitivity towards his texts, not only in interpreting them faithfully, but in setting them in music which follows ‘just note and accent’, is unsurpassed in English song.”⁸⁹ “In setting poetry with lines of equal length and more recognizable rhyme schemes, Finzi exhibits more regularity and repetition.”⁹⁰ He often employs syncopation to call attention to a word or a phrase. Additional use is for shock value, or to turn a rhythmically clumsy phrase into something more graceful. In using a hemiola, a larger phrase or section is set against the rhythm that was previously established. “The overall rhythmic freedom of the vocal line within the framework of a more tightly constructed instrumental accompaniment is crucial to the effectiveness of much of Finzi's vocal writing.”⁹¹

Accompaniment

The accompaniment in Finzi’s music is not merely for garnish or support. It is an active participant in the scheme of the music that provides foreshadowing, imitation, and echoing of the melody. Commonly, the accompaniment portrays a dialogue between the singer and the piano or other instruments. In Finzi’s vocal music the accompaniment is often busier than the vocal line. This adds variety, and allows for the words to be easily understood. “Finzi has suddenly learned how to give a song both instant character and

⁸⁸ Germany, 37.

⁸⁹ Hold, 420.

⁹⁰ Parker, 14.

⁹¹ Long, N. G. 1946. “The Songs of Gerald Finzi”. *Tempo*, no. 2. Cambridge University Press: 7–11. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/943970>. 9.

lasting momentum through the use of a simple, flexible and vivid accompaniment motif.”⁹²

Texture

Finzi utilized a variety of textures in his compositions, from strummed, to “sensuous textures,”⁹³ to “an often a bass-dominated texture,”⁹⁴ yet, on occasion, “his admiration for Brahms would seep through in the sonorous piano textures.”⁹⁵ “An outstanding feature of Finzi’s style is the close-knit texture, often subtly contrapuntal.”⁹⁶ In his vocal music, Finzi used the texture as a device to aid in the atmosphere and to assist in expressing the text. “He generates excitement by working up a figure rather than by chord-changes, and much of the texture is formed by imitation.”⁹⁷ “Warlock and Finzi took the most definite steps in establishing a more linear texture with a greater contrapuntal interest between accompaniment and vocal line...And both were somewhat adventurous in their gestures toward an accommodation of the new tolerance for dissonance.”⁹⁸

⁹² Banfield, *Gerald Finzi: An English Composer*, 184.

⁹³ Banfield, *Gerald Finzi: An English Composer*, 125.

⁹⁴ Banfield, *BBC Music Magazine*, 59.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 60.

⁹⁶ Parker, 14.

⁹⁷ McVeigh, 24.

⁹⁸ Donald Ivey, *Song* (New York: The Free Press, 1970), 239.

Form

Finzi utilized an array of the formal designs in his compositions. The rhythm and meter of the text chosen often delegated the form he applied. “His usual trend was to use through-composed structures on longer poems, and simpler strophic, varied-strophic, or ternary forms on shorter ones. The through-composed songs contain sectionalizations that are normally very recognizable, involving changes in one or more of the basic components of music such as tempi and dynamics.”⁹⁹

Influences

“Englishness” was the main influence in the musical style of Gerald Finzi. Arthur Bliss, Finzi’s friend and student wrote, “If a foreigner new to England wished to taste the special flavor of English music, and find wherein it differed from the music of his own country, he could not do better than to study first the music of Gerald Finzi.”¹⁰⁰ Finzi was “well versed in the musical and literary traditions of England, he expressed love for their traditions alone.”¹⁰¹ Not only was Finzi deeply influenced by the English countryside and the pastoral melodies that it inspired, but his biggest influences were Vaughan Williams, Holst, and Parry. Finzi’s music is influenced by Vaughan Williams, particularly by the Pastoral Symphony: the rounded shape of his melodies . . . often running between duplets and triplets; the way the melodies interweave, grow different

⁹⁹ Carlisle, 12.

¹⁰⁰ Arthur Bliss, “Gerald Finzi: An Appreciation,” *Tempo* 42 (Winter, 1956-1957): 5.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 5.

tails, change intervals and time values, flexibility evolving while keeping their basic shape.¹⁰²

“He danced ‘incessantly’ for several days on account of the success of Holst’s ‘great work’ (The Planets).”¹⁰³ Finzi was fortunate to hear Vaughan Williams’s “*London Symphony* during 1920, and been to the first performance of the *Pastoral [Symphony]* at the Queen’s Hall in 1922, and then gone to Bournemouth to hear the composer conduct it himself.”¹⁰⁴ Hubert Parry’s influence is most probably through Vaughn Williams and Holst since he was their teacher at the Royal College of Music. While teaching at the RCM, “Finzi was amused to hear that members of the Royal College of Music staff professors were asking ‘Why is this fellow Finzi talking about Parry when he never knew him?’ The answer, Gerald told Robin (Milford), ‘is that I’m talking about him precisely because I didn’t know him!’”¹⁰⁵ “Possibly Bach’s influence was refracted through Parry,”¹⁰⁶ along with the baroque revival that was happening in the 1920s.

In conclusion, Finzi’s distinctive compositional style is influenced by countless ideas. His ability to set the mood in order to enhance the music, yet having elegance without pretentiousness, is all attributed to his unique talent and panache.

¹⁰² McVeagh, 29.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 19.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 25.

¹⁰⁵ Banfield, *Gerald Finzi: An English Composer*, vi.

¹⁰⁶ McVeagh, 46.

**ANALYTICAL COMPONENTS:
Structure, Harmonic and Rhythmic Content, and Motives**

Dies Natalis has five movements, four of which have text. The texts are a set of religious writings by Thomas Traherne. *Dies Natalis* is both a cantata and a song cycle. It is sometimes referred to as a cantata because it is a shorter multi-movement work with instrumental accompaniment, and consists of both recitative and aria sections. Diana McVeagh, a Finzi scholar, states that “The completed cantata is compact and coherent.”¹⁰⁷

I. Intrada

The first movement of *Dies Natalis* is “Intrada.” Melodically, *Dies Natalis* is linked through themes and motives, yet each movement has its own character. As an instrumental movement, “Intrada” introduces the main motives of the work. These motives foreshadow and hint at the following songs. “*Dies Natalis* opens with ‘Intrada’ for strings alone, musing on themes to come in the ‘Rhapsody,’ the second movement.”¹⁰⁸ “Intrada” is in ternary form: A¹ B A² and is 144 measures long with a duration of approximately 5:15.

The A¹ section begins in a lilting 6/8, the first phrase is a single voice, while three more are added in m. 2. The voices usually move together, and the underlying pulse of quarter note plus eighth note is almost constant. The A¹ section is primarily built on motives *a* and *b*, and are discussed later in this chapter.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 102.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 44.

Part B of “Intrada” is marked with a time change to 2/4. The melody line is managed by the violin I and violin II parts, while the cello line is either pizzicato or strummed on beats one and two with occasional decorations. Motives *d*, *e*, and *f* are first heard at this point, as well as, being prominent in the third movement, “The Rapture,” which develops from this section.

A² returns in m. 121 with the original theme; both motives *a* and *b*, are present. The texture stays thinner than the first A section with mostly sustained chords in the cello line. Occasionally, the bass line moves with or instead of the violin and viola parts. It ends on a G minor chord that goes directly to the down beat of “Rhapsody,” the second movement. An alternate ending is available for “Intrada,” for use when it might be performed alone. In that situation, there is a two bar extension of a D Major chord.

The following table shows the sections of “Intrada,” as well as, key shifts and time signature changes. Although there are exceptions, the table reveals that when the key mutates, Finzi usually only adds or takes away one flat or sharp at a time. In m. 23, there is a shift from D Minor to E-flat major. While this is untraditional, it is a chromatic shift with a mode change.

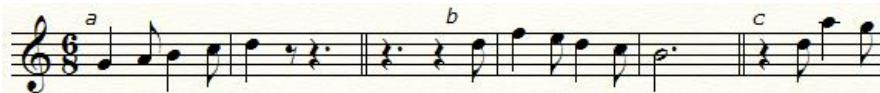
Additionally, Figure 1 shows that time signatures, at least in “Intrada,” mark section changes. (In the table measure numbers followed by decimal points refer to specific beats: 9.3 = Measure 9, beat 3.)

Figure 1. Table of Structure and Key Areas for “Intrada”

Section	Measure Numbers	Time Signature	Key Signature	Keys	
A ¹	1 - 36	6/8	None		
	1 - 3			G Mixolydian	
	4 - 8			A Minor	
	9 - 23.1			D Minor	
	23.1 - 24.1			E ♭ Major	
	24.2 - 27			G Minor	
	28 - 29			E ♭ Major	
	30 - 36			G Minor	
	B	37 - 120	2/4	3 flats	
		37 - 54			E ♭ Major
55 - 59				G Minor	
60 - 81				C Minor	
82 - 85.1				F Major	
85.2 - 86				A Minor	
87 - 98				C Minor	
99 - 116				B ♭ Major	
117 - 120.1				E ♭ Major	
A ²		121 - End	6/8	None	
	120.2 - 123			B ♭ Major	
	124 - 133			A Minor	
	134 - 140			D Minor	
	141 - 143.1			A Major	
	143.2 - End			G Minor	

“Intrada” presents several musical ideas that are developed throughout the work. Example 1 is an illustration of the first three motives *a*, *b*, and *c*; they first appear in “Intrada” in measures one, two, and twenty-seven respectively. These motives return in later movements of the composition.

Example 1. “Intrada,” Motive *a*, *b*, and *c*



Motive *a* is a five-note pattern, ascending in scalar fashion, and will appear in many forms throughout the work. Motive *b* is a collection of six notes in which the

second note leaps up a third and then descends in a stepwise manner. Occasionally, the first interval of the *b* motive changes during the work, so small ascending leaps are considered to be the *b* motive, as well. Although a version of these two motives can be found in all the movements of the work, motives *a* and *b* are prevalent in the first two movements of *Dies Natalis*, often as a pair.

The B section of the “Intrada” brings with it four more motives. The first two motives are *d* and *d*², and are seen in mm. 38-40 (Example 2). The *d* motives are assigned the same letter name since they are both based on a four-sixteenth note pattern. The first note in motive *d* is tied to the previous beat, and motive *d*² is not tied to another beat. The notes following the set of sixteenth notes sometimes change and do not alter the motive.

Example 2. “Intrada,” Motives *d*¹ and *d*²



Motives *e* and *f* are the next two motives that emerge in “Intrada,” as seen in Example 3. Motive *e* is a four-note ascending scale that begins on an upbeat. The *f* motive is also collection of four notes beginning on an upbeat, but descends in a stepwise manner and then leaps up a third to the final note.

Example 3. “Intrada,” Motives *e* and *f*



“Intrada” opens *Dies Natalis* with an instrumental tune. It alludes to the following movements through motives and themes.

II. Rhapsody

“Rhapsody,” subtitled *recitativo stromentato* (accompanied recitative), is the second movement of *Dies Natalis*. It is the longest of the movements with 161 measures, taking approximately six minutes and thirty seconds to perform. The time signature is 6/8 throughout the movement, but the subdivisions fluctuate between groupings of two and three eighth notes—two eighth-note groups sound like 3/4 rather than 6/8. Markings of *animato*, *ritardando*, and *accelerando* occur within the movement to allow the performer flexibility within the tempi and in order to clarify diction and add weight to certain words. The vocal range of the piece is D4 to A#5 (C4 = Middle C).

Finzi knew “Rhapsody,” based on prose text, would be more challenging to set “since it has no regular line-lengths or rhymes to suggest a structure.”¹⁰⁹ Therefore, he employed several tactics in order to manage this issue. By titling the movement *Recitativo stromentato* (accompanied recitative), he indicates freedom within the rhythms and tells the singer that the text is most important. “Rhapsody” is through-composed with eight sections – Finzi rearranged the text so that it was assembled by subject matter for each part. “Rhapsody” is continually evolving, and contains both lyric and declamatory sections. Moreover, if the phrase of the text is elaborate or complex, Finzi maintains musical continuity within each section, usually via rhythm either in the voice or the instruments. Trevor Hold adds, “Though setting prose rather than poetry, Finzi is

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 44.

completely at ease, and the song is one of the finest examples of his gift for fusing vocal line and the inflections of speech.”¹¹⁰ Although “Rhapsody” is labeled a recitative, most of the movement does not sound like a recitative. The writing is melodic and lyrical; in contrast, the E section is *secco* (dry) recitative style that makes for a nice variance.

“Rhapsody” consists of eight sections, labeled A through H. The layout is most easily seen in the table below (Figure 2). Figure 2 shows that the key changes do not necessarily occur at structural division points; however, among the numerous key shifts, Finzi does tend to save the most unusual key changes for sectional divisions.

Figure 2: Table of Keys for “Rhapsody”

Section	Measure Numbers	Key Signature	Key Areas
A	1-19 (downbeat)	1 Sharp	
	1 - 9.3		D Mixolydian
	9.4 - 18		G Major
	18-25.4		E Major
B	19-33		
	25.5-30		G \sharp Minor
	31	4 Flats	
	31-43.3		A \flat Major
C	34-50		
	43-70		F Minor
D	51-62		
E	62-92		
	71	4 Sharps	
	71-82		E Major
	83-86		C \sharp Minor
	86-92		G \sharp Minor
F	93-115	3 Flats	
	93-100.2		E \flat Major
	100-103		G Minor
	104-110		F Minor
	110-115		C Minor
G	116-151	2 Flats	
	115.4-122		G Minor
	122.4-128		C Minor
	129-151		G Minor
H	152-161	None	
	152-158		C Major
	158.4-161		A Minor

¹¹⁰ Hold, 415-416.

The first two movements, “Intrada” and “Rhapsody,” are intertwined in that there is no pause between the two, and both “Intrada” and “Rhapsody” start with the same thematic material as demonstrated by Example 4. The *a* and *b* motive plus a few additional notes make up the first three measures of “Intrada,” as well as, the first four measures of “Rhapsody” (see Example 4) – only the final note of motive *b* is askew. Example 4 shows the similarities between the two movements.

Example 4. “Intrada,” motive *a* and *b*, mm. 1-4 and “Rhapsody,” motive *a* and *b*, mm. 1-4

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Motives *a* and *b* are found in every movement, and from the examples above these two essential motives can be extracted. Throughout the work the motives do undergo transformation, which is to be expected in a multi-movement work. Two more important motives, *c* and *f*, are cultivated in “Rhapsody.” They do occur in other movements but are particularly significant in this movement.

In division G of “Rhapsody,” motive *c* comes to fruition, also known as the “I knew not” motive, it is first seen in m. 27 of “Intrada” (Example 7). This motive happens four times in section G and it associated with negative thought, and to highlight this

concept, the rhythms of the *c* motive are syncopated. The syncopation is another method Finzi has employed to make this section sound unsteady. Example 5 illustrates how this motive is linked to negative ideas.

Example 5a. "Intrada," Motive *c*, m. 27 (Original Motive)



Example 5b. "Rhapsody," Motive *c*, mm. 116-128

I knew not... that they were born or should
die; but all things a - bid - ed e - ter - nal - ly.
I knew not that there were sins or com - plaints or laws.. I
dream'd not... of po - ver - ties, con - ten - tions or vi - ces..

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Another essential point associated with Section G, and the brooding of the two previous examples, is the weeping figure presenting in the viola line. This two-note moaning figure only happens in this sorrow and despair filled part of the work. The viola line aids in solidifying the feeling associated with destructive acts and is further

explained in mm. 117-119 (Example 6). Examples 5 and 6 work in tandem to demonstrate how the music and words work together to create a sensation in music.

Example 6. “Rhapsody,” Weeping figure, mm. 116-119



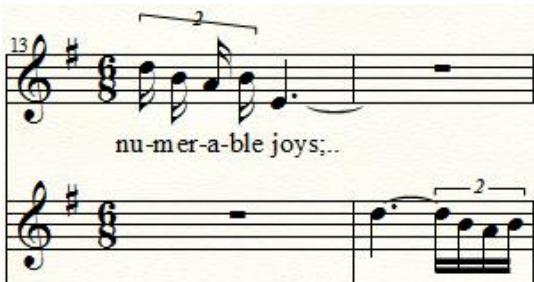
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The d motives appears in “Rhapsody,” as well, and often as a device to keep the energy and flow of the music moving. Example 7 is shown as a reminder of the d motives original form. In the following illustration of “Rhapsody” (Example 11), motive d^2 is in the voice line and motive d is in the violin I line. In both cases the first interval is a third instead of a second. That is a common alteration of the motive.

Example 7a. “Intrada,” Motives d^1 and d^2 mm. 39-40 (Original motive)



Example 7b. “Rhapsody,” motive d^2 and d^1 respectively, mm. 13-14



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The *f* motive plays an important role in “Rhapsody” and in m. 84, it becomes prominent. Example 8a is a prompt of the original from *Intrada*. The similarities between Example 8a and Example 8b, the *f* motive from “Rhapsody” are discernable, and indicate another tie between the two movements.

Example 8a. “Intrada,” Motive *f*, mm. 44-45 (Original motive)



Example 8b. “Intrada,” Motive *f*, mm. 84-87

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In “Rhapsody,” motive *f* begins with text and then becomes an instrument of transition. It presents three times in mm. 84-87 (Example 8b). In m. 84, motive *f* is in three parts, voice, violin I, and violin II. During the second statement, the final note does not leap up, but continues down. This time, the motive sets up to be used in a sequential pattern. These motivic devices are interesting musical ideas that Finzi utilized in the second movement, “Rhapsody,” and show unifying thought.

III. The Rapture

The third movement, “The Rapture,” brings a new sensation. It begins with an outburst of sound and continues with a lively and energetic atmosphere. The vocal line in “The Rapture” is declamatory and heroic; the intervals in the vocal line tend to be larger than the other pieces of the work, due to the need for vitality and excitement. The vocal line has more sustained notes and less movement when compared to the strings. In general, the strings are busier than the other movements. The dynamic markings, for “The Rapture,” are elevated for both strings and voice. Furthermore, the tessitura of this movement sits higher than the other songs. In addition to the excitement of “The Rapture,” the tempo of the A sections are faster than the other movements.

“The Rapture” was the last movement composed because Finzi had not originally planned on a fifth movement. Subsequently, “Boosey & Hawkes had more or less agreed to publish *Dies Natalis*, provided Gerald would produce one more movement, a fast one for contrast.”¹¹¹ In 1939, when he was under pressure to compose a quick movement to complete *Dies Natalis*, his mind made a connecting leap, and on 2 February Joy recorded his thought: “There is a great resemblance between the static and the ecstatic...I discovered this one day when I was standing in March church and looking up at the double hammer beam roof and the hundred (rows?) of carved angels – which gave the feeling of a Botticelli Nativity and were static from very ecstasy.”¹¹² The painting Finzi was thinking of was Botticelli’s “Mystic Nativity.”¹¹³ These two ideas inspired the

¹¹¹ McVeagh, 101.

¹¹² Ibid, 105

¹¹³ Ibid, 103.

sounds of “The Rapture.” The trills and swift sixteenth-notes of “The Rapture,” imitate the fluttering of frantic angel wings. Shortly after the flurry of d^2 motives, a section of syncopations and suspensions hold over the barline. This creates a random feel to the music, but it may also represent Finzi’s frenzied angels that are busy constructing the works of God. This movement is an oratorical praise song with a lot of spinning energy. Finzi’s wife, Joy referred to it as “The Rapture” – and angelic roundabout.”¹¹⁴

“The Rapture” is the epitome of Finzi’s “dance of delight.” In the swirling *Allegro* the accompaniment and the voice go their separate ways; trills, violins twining in thirds over a pizzicato bass, and syncopations give a springy airy bounce over which the voice’s long-held notes sound like trumpet calls. The strings move mostly scale wise, the voice in great leaps.¹¹⁵

In “The Rapture,” the third movement of *Dies Natalis*, Finzi seems to be featuring the trinity. Though Finzi was agnostic, he was aware of and knew the meaning of the trinity. Finzi makes use of the trinity though scalar passages and motives that are doubled in thirds. There is deliberate use of triplets, in both the vocal and instrumental line. Moreover, a three note figure composed of eighth note, eighth note, quarter note that is common in this movement, along with two sets of descending thirds one step apart (Example 9).

Example 9. “The Rapture,” mm. 94-97



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¹¹⁴ Ibid, 103.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 103-104.

“The Rapture” subtitled “*Danza*,” Italian for “dance,” is 147 measures long and the performance duration is approximately four minutes. The form of “The Rapture” is ABCD with a Coda, additionally, some of the instrumental passages are repeated during the course of the movement – this effect is similar to that of a ritornello. “The Rapture” is in 2/2 time and the tempo is marked *Allegro vivace e giojoso* half note = *c.* 104. Occasional meter changes to 3/2 and 5/4 are common. These are to insert an extra beat and usually only last one measure. The vocal range is from Eb4 to Bb5.

Figure 3: Sectional Key Table for “The Rapture”

Section	Measure Numbers	Keys
A	1 - 49	
	1 - 9.1	G Phrygian
	9.2 - 17	Bb Major
	18 - 24.1	G Phrygian
	24.2 - 26.3	G Minor
	26.4 - 36.2	Bb Major
	36.3 - 49	F Phrygian
	B	50 - 74
50 - 54		B b Major
55 - 59		F Major
60 - 85.3		C Minor
C	75 - 114	
	85.4 - 98.2	G Minor
	98.3 - 104	B b Major
	105 - 114	C Minor
D	115 - 139	
	115 - 121.2	G Minor
	121.3 - 132	C Minor
	133 - 143	G Phrygian
Coda	140 - 147	
	144 - 147	C Major

Figure 3 of “The Rapture” shows use of modes is more prevalent than in the other movements. It also illustrates that while key shifts are common, Finzi stays within a few

keys that are all somewhat related. Even C Major, the final key, is related when there is use of C Minor. He is continuing his compositional characteristic of using related keys, then finishing with a Major key of what had previously been Minor.

“Rapture” incorporates two versions of the *a* motive. In m. 92, the *a* motive is not exact, but it is a five note ascending passage that starts on the beat, while the second note of the motive moves on an upbeat; in addition, a collection of five notes is not common in “The Rapture” as in Example 10b. Since the music must evolve to avoid monotony, flexibility is given within the motives. Another version of the *a* motive exists in “The Rapture.” It is a five-note ascending passage that begins on a downbeat, but the final note leaps up a fifth. This motive will be named motive a^2 (Example 10c).

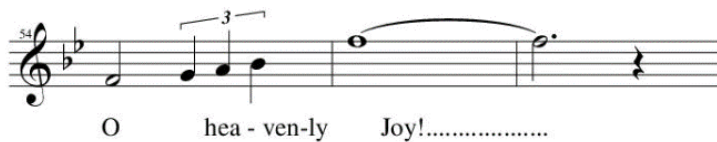
Example 10a. “Intrada,” Motive *a*, mm. 1-2 (Original motive)



Example 10b. “The Rapture,” Motive *a*, mm. 92-93



Example 10c. “The Rapture,” Motive a^2 , mm. 54-56



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The *b* motive in “The Rapture” is an effective way to demonstrate what can happen to a motive when it must fit into another time signature – “Intrada” being in 6/8 time, while “The Rapture” is in 2/2 time. The original Motive *b* is shown in Example 11a and Example 11b shows two *b* motives at an interval of a sixth, which is an inverted interval of a third. Even though the rhythm is different than the earlier versions, Example 11b is quite similar. Another significant figure that appears in “The Rapture” is a motive found only in this movement. It is motive *b*², Example 11c. This motive ascends and third, though it is stepwise, and then descends. It is often used as a transitional device in “The Rapture,” and in Example 11c it is in thirds.

Example 11a. “Intrada,” Motive *b*, mm. 2-3 (Original motive)



Example 11b. “The Rapture,” Motive *b*, mm. 124-125



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Example 11c. “The Rapture,” motive *b*², m. 99



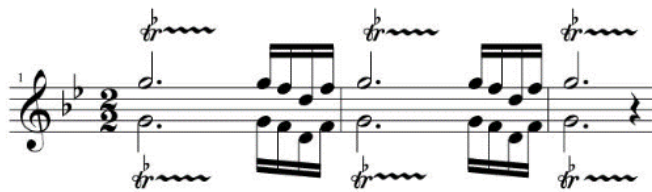
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The d motive is popular in “The Rapture” too. Example 12a is presented as a reminder of the d motives in original form. The d^2 motive, Example 12b, grows out of a trill in the beginning of “The Rapture.” The third note of the motive is a third instead of a second, because it is better suited to the chord. Furthermore, Example 12c is an augmentation of both d and d^2 motives; an augmentation is an interesting device in which to present a motive in a new and different style, while maintaining the unifying feature of the motive.

Example 12a. “Intrada,” Motives d and d^2 , mm. 39-40 (Original motives)



Example 12b. “The Rapture,” motive d^2 , mm. 1-3



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Example 12c. “The Rapture,” d and d^2 augmented, mm. 40-41



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Another important motive in “The Rapture” is motive *e*, first seen in m. 41 of “Intrada.” The value of the final note in motive *e*, is different, but does not effect what is heard as the motive. Small changes are allowed and expected in motives as they transform throughout the composition. In Example 13b, the *e* motive occurs three times in the violin I and violin II lines, and two of these motives are in thirds.

Example 13a. “Intrada,” motive *e*, m. 41 (Original motive)



Example 13b. “The Rapture,” motive *e*, mm. 24-27



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“The Rapture” exhibits most of the main motives of *Dies Natalis*. This movement is demonstrates how motives change through the course of a multi-movement work.

IV. Wonder

The fourth movement of *Dies Natalis* is “Wonder.” This movement is quiet and contemplative while providing the ambiance of being in the countryside with a sky full of stars; possibly reflecting on the universe. Many of the thoughts in “Wonder,” are rhetorical or incomplete, which causes the phrase lengths to vary. Additionally, most of the song is kept within the staff, which keeps the volume at a tranquil level and the mood

peaceful. “After the vigorous, wide-intervalled ‘Rapture,’ ‘Wonder’ (*Arioso*) is slow, almost painfully introspective. The phrases curl inward; the closest possible imitations and semitone clashes make for dense texture and harmony. There is a sense of overhearing a private devotion.”¹¹⁶

In “Wonder,” there is imitation, foreshadowing, and echoing between the voice and the instrumental lines. Generally, this ensues, when the instrumental parts follow and comment on the vocal line. Stepwise motion is common along with small interval leaps. Many phrases begin, leap up a 4th, and then descend. Large intervals are typically saved to emphasize an important word.

The form of “Wonder” is ternary; A¹BA² with a coda. The time signature changes frequently so that the accented syllables of the text can be sung on a strong beat. For the most part, the time signature fluctuates between 4/4, 5/4, and 6/4 with occasional 3/4 measures. The line lengths of the poetry are irregular, therefore setting the words to a fixed meter and keeping the prosody in line would not be possible. “Wonder” has fifty-one measures, takes approximately five minutes to perform, and the vocal range is D4 to A5.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 104.

Figure 4: Table of Structure and Key Areas for “Wonder”

Section	Measure Numbers	Keys
A ¹	1 - 18	
	1 - 3	E♭Major
	4 - 5	F Minor
	6 - 9	F Major
	10 - 15	D Minor
	16 - 19.3	D Major
B	19 - 34	
	19.4 - 23	G Minor
	24 - 28.1	E Minor
	28.2 - 35.1	D Minor
A ²	34.5 - 42	
	35. 2 - 38.1	F Minor
	38.2 - 40.3	F Major
	40.4 - 47	D Minor
Coda	45 to End	
	48 - End	D Major

Figure 4 shows a twist in Finzi’s tendencies with the untraditional key shifts of the B section. The G Minor to E Minor key change is employed as though it is resolving to G Major and just sinks to E minor. This modification sounds similar to the resolutions that happen in the endings to the A sections. Figure 4 also demonstrates Finzi’s compositional practice of rotating through keys most of which are close in key signatures, especially a relative Major and Minor and then ending the section with the Major mode of the key. Section A1 sits mainly in an F Major and D Minor pitch collection and then ends in a very solid D Major, complete with a Picardy cadence and root position triads.

Another point in the use of this changing tonality could be, that “Wonder” begins with several passive, observing, queries, and as the uncertainty begins to fade or possibly

the questions are answered, the tonality unexpectedly changes and stabilizes. Perhaps, this is Finzi commenting on the profundity of the previous text and music. The music sounds like questions being answered or finding contentment in the mysteries of the universe in a root position D Major triad that gives a solid, comfortable sense to a perpetually changing tonal environment.

Example 14 displays Finzi's ability to disguise the tonality of the song. His preference is to sustain a fluctuation of keys so that the music does not have a definitive feel or a traditional cadence.

Example 14. "Wonder," mm. 14-18

The musical score for Example 14, "Wonder," measures 14-18, is presented in two systems. The first system shows measures 14-16, and the second system shows measures 17-18. The vocal line is in a soprano clef, and the piano accompaniment is in a grand staff. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: "And ev - 'ry thing that I did see Did with me talk.....". The piano accompaniment features a mix of chords and moving lines, with a triplet in the right hand in measure 18.

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The opening phrase of “Wonder” can be thought of as the earth. It begins on a single note in the violin and then adds the cello. Both lines then move in contrary motion in an almost scalar manner. The violin line proceeds up an octave and comes back down to an F, while the bass line descends a minor sixth then climbs back up to a B-flat. With the assistance of the alto line, they come together to form an E-flat seven chord (Example 15).

Example 15. “Wonder,” mm. 1-3



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In “Wonder,” the violin I and the voice are together intermittently, because the instruments are more independent than in the previous movements. With this freedom, Finzi is able to intricately weave the lines together to make chords when needed and keep enough tonality to imply key areas, and yet keep the ethereal sensation of the movement.

The A² section of “Wonder” starts almost identically first to the first sung phrase of the song. The words are different and the rhythms soon change, but the listener would hear enough similarities to consider it a return to the A section of the song.

As in the previous songs, the coda of “Wonder” is an observation or reflection made with the wisdom attained in the previous text. Possibly, Traherne’s message followed by Finzi’s musical conclusion. In “Wonder,” the sound is reminiscent of the

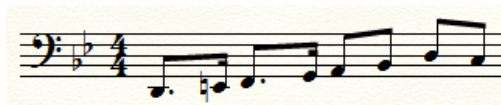
musical statements at the end of both the A^1 and A^2 segments when the tonality stabilizes into a major key. “Wonder” is concluded on a D Major chord so that the questions and concerns are resolved with an Imperfect Authentic Cadence. “This has the summing-up, clinching effect of the final rhyming lines of a sonnet, and was to become a Finzi characteristic”¹¹⁷

Motives from the other movements surface in “Wonder,” too. Motive *a* appears in a diminished form, yet it manages to keep the long-short lilt even though the time signature is 4/4, as in Example 16b. Although in Example 16c, a transformation of motive *a*, motive a^3 , also presents in “Wonder.” Motive a^3 is mostly scalar with the exception that the third interval is a minor third as compared to the usual second, and the final interval is a fourth. This is similar to a^2 found in “The Rapture.”

Example 16a. “Intrada,” Motive *a*, mm. 1-2 (Original motive)



Example 16b. “Wonder,” Motive *a*, m. 7



Example 16c. “Wonder,” Motive a^3 , mm. 1-2



¹¹⁷ Ibid, 23.

mediums.¹¹⁹ “In March of 1926 he heard the Bach Cantata Club perform the *B Minor Mass* and he wrote on the program (the finest performance I ever heard).”¹²⁰ Finzi started composing the *Dies Natalis* that same year, 1926. “In his catalogue Finzi gives no dates for *Dies Natalis*, though in his program notes for the first performance he says three movements (he doesn’t say which!) were composed in 1926.”¹²¹ “The Salutation” was inspired by J.S. Bach, and the character is at times is neo-baroque, quite busy, and curious like a small child.

Music scholars believe that “The Salutation” was inspired by J.S. Bach’s *Wachet Auf ruft uns die Stimme*, BWV 140. The main theme of “The Salutation” is inspired by the oboe line of “the chorale prelude movement of Cantata 140 (*Wachet auf*) for its winning and ingenuous instrumental melody broadened by the voice into a three-part texture.”¹²² Example 19a is the oboe line of “Movement I: Chorus: of *Wachet Auf, ruft uns die Stimme*, BWV 140. Example 19a and Example 19b reveal parallels between *Wachet Auf, ruft uns die Stimme* and “The Salutation.” These similarities observed mainly in the rhythms for instance the clustering of sixteenth notes and eighth notes, as well as, the ties across the bar line. The use of scales or stepwise motion are common in both works, as well. Additionally, the bass lines of the two songs are related in that they are a walking bass with an eighth note followed by an eighth rest combination.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 45-45.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 45.

¹²¹ Ibid, 47.

¹²² Banfield, 136.

Example 19a. *Wachet Auf, ruft uns die Stimme* mm. 5-16

Musical score for Example 19a, measures 5-16. The score is written in G major and 3/4 time. It consists of three staves. The first staff shows measures 5-8, the second staff shows measures 9-12, and the third staff shows measures 13-16. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some measures containing rests.

Example 19b. “The Salutation,” main theme mm. 1-7

Musical score for Example 19b, measures 1-7. The score is written in G major and 3/4 time. It consists of two staves. The first staff shows measures 1-4, and the second staff shows measures 5-7. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some measures containing rests.

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“The Salutation” begins with the main theme that ends on the downbeat of m. 7 and appears in some form or another in all of the A sections (Example 19b). The first three and a half beats are the head motive of the main theme and it appears many times in the song and in all of the A sections (Example 20).

Example 20. “The Salutation,” Head motive of the main theme, m. 1

Musical score for Example 20, measures 1-4. The score is written in G major and 3/4 time. It consists of one staff. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some measures containing rests.

“The Salutation” starts with the main theme over a walking bass line. During the last notes of the first theme, the theme starts again and the voice soon enters. In this statement of the main theme, the first bar of the theme is the same, but soon departs in a new direction. The main theme in one configuration or another continues until the second beat of 19. The voice line is a melody that fits within the foundation previously laid. There are leaps and jumps, but stepwise motion is frequent. Finzi seems to have developed a countermelody, a bit at a time, like a baby develops. The premier of the first complete countermelody begins on the third beat of m. 16, as in Example 21. The countermelody is almost three measures long and progresses through the first beat of m. 19 where the B section starts. At this point the countermelody also functions as a transitional device.

Example 21. “The Salutation,” Countermelody, mm. 16-19



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As the music progresses to the B section, the walking bass line becomes quarter notes and has intermittent rhythmic passages. Additionally, there are glimpses of the main theme during the B portion, these hints are primarily rhythmic, but the actual theme is not present. The harmonies are Finzi, yet the baroque influence is present primarily in the rhythms, that the movement is cohesive. The B section modulates at m. 19 with a transient key change to E Minor. The transition lasts only two measures and ends with a deceptive cadence taking the tonality back to G Major.

The B and C sections both sound baroque in style but are mixed with 20th century harmonies, which keep the song consistent with the style of the other movements. In m. 25 the A² segment of “The Salutation” starts with the main theme in the viola line that overlaps into section C. During this section, the voice is singing the countermelody. The C section is brief, while tonally, it feigns changing keys, but it just using borrowed chords. While the voice continues moving in mostly eighth notes, the cello line, in both the B and C sections, is more sonorous than the A parts. A false start of the main theme in m. 35 in the second violin and viola line suggest a return to A, which does happen on the pick-up to m. 37. In the A³ section, the theme returns for six beats in which it evolves, along with the countermelody. The theme stays similar to the original, but there are six independent lines moving at once, which hides most of the changes to the theme. The final voice entrance is in m. 45 and it is quite similar to the voice’s first entrance with the exception of the words. The last exhibition of the theme begins in the second violin line in m. 52 and it is complete.

The instrumental lines in “The Salutation” create a compact contrapuntal texture and continue in a quasi-baroque style. The vocal line is not as involved as the accompaniment and there are less sixteenth notes in the vocal line. “The Salutation” adds lines throughout the piece, as it develops a thicker texture. The A sections of “The Salutation” are reminiscent of Bach with 20th century harmonies, while the B and C portions seem to be in the style of 20th century English romantic music. In 1940, Arthur Bliss wrote to Finzi, “It is a beautiful work and very characteristic with its composer

standing firmly in the middle giving a courteous bow to VW [Vaughan Williams] on the one side and JSB [Johann Sebastian Bach] on the other.”¹²³

“The Salutation,” marked *Tempo comodo* quarter note = *c.* 69, stays in 4/4 time for its entirety. The formal design shows clear Rondo elements of A¹ B A² C A³ with a Coda. It is fifty-eight measures long and has a duration of approximately four and a half minutes. Similar to the other movements, the vocal range is D4 to A5.

Figure 5: Sectional Key Table for “The Salutation”

Section	Measure Numbers	Keys
A1	1 - 18	G Major
B	19 - 25	
	19.3 - 21.1	E Minor
	21.2 - 25	G Major
A2	25 - 30	G Major
C	31 - 36	G Major
A3	37 - 52.2	G Major
Coda	52.3 - 58	G Major

The main factor, illustrated in the table above, is that the key of this movement is more stable than any of the other songs in the cantata. With the exception of a few measures, “The Salutation” sits firmly in G Major. Figure 5 also shows the brevity of the B, A2, and C sections.

“The Salutation” exhibits motives reminiscent of the other movements. Since “The Salutation” was composed under the influence of Bach, flexibility is a must when considering motives. Example 22a shows the original motive *a* from “Intrada,” while

¹²³ McVeagh, 104.

mm. 14 and 15 are a sound version of motive *a*. Example 22b starts on a strong beat with the second note moving on a weak beat. This form also has an extra note, and they all move stepwise. This is enough proof that it can be considered an *a* motive.

Example 22a. “Intrada,” Motive *a*, mm. 1-2 (Original motive)



Example 22b. “The Salutation,” Motive *a*, mm. 14-15



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Example 23b is a segment from the main theme of “The Salutation.” This *b* motive is the straightest version of the motive with no rhythmic variation, but the intervals are correct. Example 23a shows as a reminder of the original so motive *b* can be easily compared to motive *b* in “The Salutation.”

Example 23a. “Intrada,” Motive *b*, mm. 2-3 (Original motive)

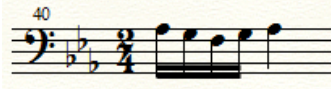


Example 23b. “The Salutation,” Motive *b*, mm. 2-3



The d^2 motive appears in “The Salutation,” too. It is mainly used as an ornament, but it is present as in Example 24b. As a reminder, Example 24a, is motive d^2 from “Intrada,” has been placed here for comparison.

Example 24a. “Intrada,” motive d^2 , m. 40 (Original motive)



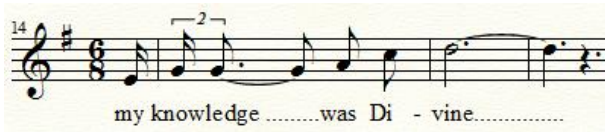
a combination of the aforementioned. Finzi used these methods to accent a word or phrase that he thought to be important. As a British literature enthusiast, Finzi recognized the verbal nuance and highlighted them in his music. His son, Christopher, states: "He was probably a literary man first and a musician second . . . I think there was no other musician who read as widely in the English language as he did, or had such an extensive knowledge of English literature."¹²⁵ Trevor Hold further expands this idea with, "Such rightness and beauty of scansion is a joy in itself, and in one respect, achieves the melo-poetic ideal. No wonder he has been called the 'poet's composer."¹²⁶

In a religious work, such as *Dies Natalis*, ascending lines towards heaven are to be expected. In the same way, Finzi used this idea for word painting or to further a concept. Therefore, assigning the following examples an ascending line would be a rather straightforward idea. In Examples 25a, 25b, and 25c the music rises towards heaven, God, or the Divine, and in Example 25b, "his" represents God so the idea is similar. Additionally, the significant word of the phrase is elongated for added emphasis (Example 25b). In the phrase "to shew his love," the highest note in this section is held for three and one half bars and is marked *fortissimo*. The height and the dynamic add emphasis to the greatest gift and love, which must be exclaimed.

¹²⁵ Germany, 27.

¹²⁶ Hold, 398.

Example 25a. “Rhapsody,” mm. 14-17



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Example 25b. “Wonder,” mm. 26-27



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Example 25c. “The Rapture,” mm. 100-104

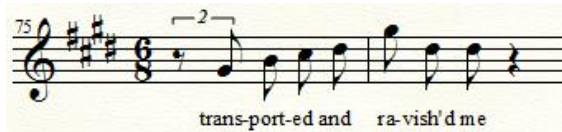


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Setting a note to an unexpectedly high pitch would be another idea affiliated with text painting or emphasizing a word. In the instances that follow, Finzi used height of tone to strengthen the meaning of the word.

In Example 26a, the height of the word “ravish’d” suggests excitement. Ravish, a strong word that in present day has a negative connotation, but in this context, and with regard that it was written in the 18th Century, means a thrilling delight. Therefore, Finzi uses the high G-sharp to indicate excitement.

Example 26a. “Rhapsody,” mm. 75-76



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The next illustration, Example 26b, is a specimen of musical onomatopoeia. The word “Magnify” begins on a Bb5 and drops a perfect fourth to an F5, while the first syllable starts on a dotted rhythm, which adds to the amplification. The final syllable is then held for just over four measures, furthermore, the phrase is marked *fortissimo* to increase the effect.

Example 26b. “The Rapture,” mm. 40-45



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In Example 26c, the word “bright” is not only pitched higher than the notes around it, but also it is set off by a syncopation. These factors work together to create excitement. The syncopation facilitates in awareness, while the height enhances the brilliance and spin of the pitch for an increased result.

Example 26c. “Wonder,” mm. 6-7



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In Examples 27a-27c, the pitch has been raised for important words or the accented syllable of important words, many of which have also been lengthened. The next few examples are not identical, but they have commonalities. In Examples 27a and 27b, the pitches are the same, though the rhythms and text vary. In Example 27a, “Sacred” and “Fair” are both set on a higher pitch since it is referring to the light of God. “Stars” and “Sun” are both high and sustained in mm. 93-100 because they are celestial objects (Example 27b).

Example 27c belongs in this group, due to the pitches and the arc of the phrases being similar to Examples 27a and 27b. There are differences, but the previous models are from “The Rapture” while Example 27c is from “The Salutation.” All three specimens have two arcing phrases, with a high note in each. In the above illustrations the higher of the two high notes is last, and that is reversed in Example 27c. It could be referred to as a retrograde and diminished version of the previous illustrations.

Example 27a. “The Rapture,” mm. 26-34

O..... Sa - - - - red Light!.....

..... How Fair..... and bright.....

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Example 27b. “The Rapture,” mm. 93-100

The Stars..... do move,.....

..... The Sun..... doth shine,

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Example 27c. “The Salutation” mm. 39-42

The Sun and Stars..... are mine,..... if these I prize.

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Harmonic color is another effective way to set a word or note apart from the others. Setting a word to a note with an untraditional tonal relationship, is an alternate way to attract attention. The words in the following three examples, are set to

unanticipated pitches (Examples 28a, 28b, and 28c). In Example 28a, the first syllable of “Splendor,” is on a G-sharp, the major seventh of an A Major chord and sounds somewhat untraditional. Another essential point is, the G-sharp is the same pitch as the previous pitch, except it is an octave higher. Previously, the G-sharp is the root of the chord, however, after the octave leap, it becomes the Major seventh of the chord to add a color clash. This practice serves to catch the listener’s interest and raise the level of excitement, by employing a note that is unexpected.

Example 28a. “Rhapsody,” mm. 24-27

in..... their splen-dour.and glo - ry.....

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Another version of this technique is found on the word “Mad” in m. 79 (Example 28b). “Mad” is on a high A-sharp which is the major seventh of an implied B Major chord while the accompaniment is silent for this measure. The high A-sharp is sustained into the next measure, and the strings play an E Major chord with no third. At this time, “Mad” becomes a tritone in the chord. Along with this conflicting tone, the rhythms are dotted and more rapid, bringing vitality into these measures.

Example 28b. “Rhapsody,” mm. 79-81

heart to leap, and al-most mad..... with ec - sta-sy,.....

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The next device used, in highlighting words with unconventional tones, is setting a deserving word, “strange” to a bitonal chord. In Example 29c, “strange” is situated on the third of a D-sharp minor chord, while the viola and cello play a C-sharp minor chord. Seeing that the chords are only a major second apart this dissonance is appropriate to highlight such a word.

Example 28c. “Rhapsody,” mm. 83

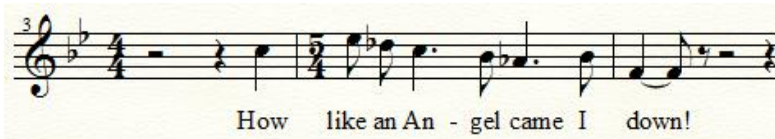
strange.....and

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Descending lines are also useful in word painting as seen in the following illustrations. The next three examples are all from the fourth movement, “Wonder;” in addition, a case could be made that they are associated with motive *b*. In “Wonder;” Example 29a, the line is doing exactly what the text says. Even though “I” breaks from

the pattern, which saves the phrase from monotony, it is still a descending phrase. The intervals at the beginning of the phrase are small, and when added to the irregular rhythm it provides a floating sensation.

Example 29a. “Wonder,” mm. 3-5



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Example 29b is like the previous example, however, it ends on an ascending leap. This music could be indicating that the “Glory” is coming down from heaven, but then the line must go back up towards the head where a crown or halo sits, or possibly one has been crowned by the Glory of God, and in this case they are the same note.

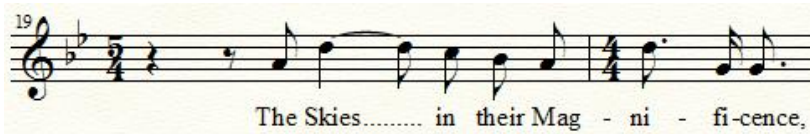
Example 29b. “Wonder,” mm. 9-10



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Additionally, Example 29c, is in the same collection of descending lines. “The Skies” are up in the heavens, so again, the phrase start higher, and the word “Magnificence” must be exclaimed. This is achieved by placing the accented syllable up a forth and making the note value a dotted to strengthen the word.

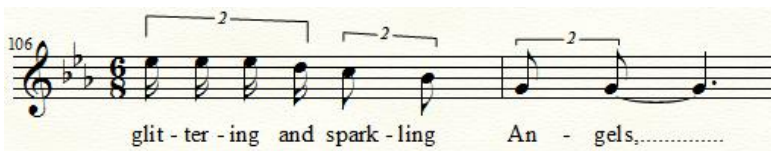
Example 29c. “Wonder,” mm. 19-20



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Rhythms can also be used to showcase a word, as shown in the following examples. The word “glittering,” in “Rhapsody,” is set to sixteenth-notes so that the energy increases and the word shimmers like glitter, especially when the consonants are sung with intention (Example 30a). For the word “vigor” in Example 30b, Finzi uses a dotted-sixteenth eighth combination in order to liven up the music. Furthermore, this is the place in “Wonder” when the sixteenth notes begin to propel the song toward the end. Finally Example 30c, from “The Salutation,” the word “little” is set to sixteenth-notes. These are the smallest note value used in the song and emphasize the meaning of the word.

30a. “Rhapsody,” mm. 106-107



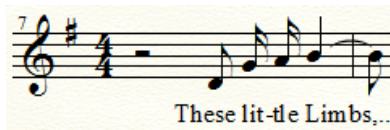
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Example 30b. "Wonder," mm. 38-39



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Example 30c. "The Salutation," m. 7



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A final thought-provoking specimen of word painting occurs in "Rhapsody." In Example 31, the third syllable of the first everlasting, is the same pitch enharmonically of the note before it. Possibly, this is to show the stability of heaven and how it is everlasting, even though everything around it changes. It could also represent the constancy and everlasting love of God, while everything changes, his love and providing for humankind does not.

Example 31. "Rhapsody," mm. 69-72

69

I thought it had stood from e-ver - last-ting to e-ver - last-ting.

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In conclusion the music, the subject matter all work together to create a tightly woven fabric. These examples are of music and words traveling together to present a complete picture. Correctly constructed, these elements enhance the other and reveal the potential of the art, while helping the poetry to stand out.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Dies Natalis is a lesser-known work that in the 1940s was referred to as a minor masterpiece, and was well received from the beginning. It is curious that it is not better known, since it is one of only a few pieces that Finzi wrote for soprano. Other Finzi song cycles such as, *A Young Man's Exhortation*, *I Said to Love*, and *Till Earth Outwears*, are standard recital repertoire.

In composing, Finzi's principal concern was to showcase the words and to provide atmosphere to help explain what he saw in the poetry. He worked slowly and meticulously, often spending many years rewriting compositions to achieve a particular sound and mood. His profound understanding and love of poetry is illustrated in his compositions. Finzi carefully chose texts and then created the appropriate atmosphere to showcase the words. In addition, he labored to keep the rhythm of speech as natural as possible so that the words and meaning remained unaffected. Finzi used pitch, meter, and lengthening of words to emphasize language. Finzi utilized syncopation to denote darker images, and to increase tension in his works.

Although Finzi preferred tonally ambiguous sound, he used a definitive pitch center in most of this work and emphasized diatonic pitch collections. Additionally, Finzi created stable tonal centers for musical comments, to resolve musical questions, or to end a section. *Dies Natalis's* movements are linked together not only by subject matter and lyricist. The work is also thematically related, making the composition a coherent work.

It is difficult to discern what Finzi knew about Traherne and his background. Most of the research on Traherne happened simultaneously with the composition of *Dies Natalis*. Although Finzi and Traherne did not share the same religious ideology, Finzi understood Traherne's zest for life. Both men had a profound love of nature, and Finzi's setting of the text and musical commentary show that he appreciated Traherne's view of the universe.

Several main motives were discussed in this paper, and there is room for further in-depth motivic studies of *Dies Natalis*. A good reference for performance practice is "The Solo Vocal Collections of Gerald R. Finzi Suitable for Performance by the High Male Voice, a Lecture Recital Together with Three Recitals of Selected Works of J. S. Bach, H. Wolf, R. Vaughan Williams, A. Jolivet, F. J. Haydn, J. Brahms, L. V. Beethoven, R. Strauss, J. P. Rameau, M. Ravel, S. Barber, G. Faure" by Samuel Rudolf Germany, Jr.

As a whole, *Dies Natalis* demonstrates Finzi's characteristically text-driven compositional expertise. The movements of the composition are related by subject matter and themes, providing a solid foundation for a well-constructed work.

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