Kirk O’Riordan

Dying Light
for
Violoncello and Piano
Kirk O’Riordan (b. 1968)

Dying Light (2004)

Notes

The title of this piece is taken from Dylan Thomas’s “Do not go Gentle into That Good Night” (1937). This well-known villanelle implores the poet’s father to fight against impending death. Ultimately, of course, the struggle is futile; however, we are still compelled to rage against the dying of the light. My piece has less to do with death than it does with the struggle. The piece explores the guilt, the frustration, and the acceptance of a futile struggle (a struggle that is not necessarily that of coming to terms with impending death). The musical gestures that represent these feelings are all derived from the opening chord.

The work was composed for pianist Holly O’Riordan and cellist Andrew Rammon and premiered by them.
Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

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

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

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

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

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

Dylan Thomas
“Do not go Gentle into That Good Night” (1937)