

Vocalise on a Poem by Dylan Thomas is a short work for oboe and viola composed while I was a Composition Fellow at the [Tanglewood Music Center](#) in the summer of 2007, as part of the "A Piece A Day" project, in which composers wrote one new piece each day and had them performed by their chamber-music colleagues. The title refers to the 1952 poem "A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London", reprinted below.

- Kati Agócs

A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London

Never until the mankind making
Bird beast and flower
Fathering and all humbling darkness
Tells with silence the last light breaking
And the still hour
Is come of the sea tumbling in harness

And I must enter again the round
Zion of the water bead
And the synagogue of the ear of corn
Shall I let pray the shadow of a sound
Or sow my salt seed
In the least valley of sackcloth to mourn

The majesty and burning of the child's death.
I shall not murder
The mankind of her going with a grave truth
Nor blaspheme down the stations of the breath
With any further
Elegy of innocence and youth.

Deep with the first dead lies London's daughter,
Robed in the long friends,
The grains beyond age, the dark veins of her mother,
Secret by the unmourning water
Of the riding Thames.
After the first death, there is no other.

- Dylan Thomas