



King's College Choir Cambridge Tudor Masters Byrd & Gibbons

Byrd: 5 Part Mass
Ave Verum Corpus
Magnificat &
Nunc Dimittis

alto

Very little is known about the early years of **William Byrd** and even the year of his birth is uncertain. Bearing in mind that in his will, dated 15 November 1622, he described himself as being ‘nowe in the eightieth yeare of myne age’ most scholars have, until recently, come to the conclusion that he must have been born in 1643. However, there is another document dated 2 October 1598 in which he is described as being ‘fifty-eight yeares or ther abouts’ which means that he could have been born as early as 1540 or even 1539. The proposers of this theory point to the fact that since wills in Tudor times often took a long time to draw up he may have been in his eightieth year when he started writing his will and somewhat older when he signed it.

It is thought that Byrd may have been born in Lincoln but he was brought up in London where it is said that he was a pupil of Thomas Tallis (c.1505-85), possibly at the Chapel Royal. Nothing definite is recorded about his life until 25 March 1563 when it is known that he was appointed Organist and Master of the Choristers at Lincoln Cathedral. Three years later he married Juliana Birley and, in 1570, was sworn in as a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal. He left Lincoln in 1572 and travelled to London with his wife and two children to take up the post of joint-organist, along with Thomas Tallis, at the Chapel Royal itself.

So far during Byrd’s lifetime there had been four monarchs. Henry VIII was on the throne when he was born and then, in quick succession, came Edward VI and Mary Tudor. By the time he arrived in London, Elizabeth I had been reigning for some 14 years and it was she who granted to Tallis and Byrd the virtual monopoly for printing and selling both music and manuscript paper for a period of 21 years. By way of gratitude, they dedicated their first publication, a set of *Cantiones Sacrae*, to the Queen. However, their printing business was not a great success and they soon found themselves petitioning the Queen for more support. (After Tallis’ death, Byrd was to publish another two books of *Cantiones sacrae*, one in 1589 and the other in 1591.)

Although his duties took him often to the palaces of Whitehall and Greenwich, Byrd had chosen to live in Harlington, a village to the west of London near to where Heathrow Airport stands today. As a Roman Catholic under a Protestant Queen, he found it more convenient to be somewhat removed from the City although, even so, he and his family were regularly reported to the authorities for not attending church as they should. As a musician, however, Byrd was equally able to provide music for both the Anglican and Catholic ritual as well as secular madrigals and instrumental music. In 1593 Byrd and his family moved across London to Essex where they settled at Standon Massey,

a village between Chipping Ongar and Ingatestone, the home of his Catholic patrons, the Petre family. It therefore seems very likely that Byrd's mass settings and much of his other liturgical music was composed for the clandestine services that were held at Ingatestone Hall, the Petre family seat. Although the dates of composition of his three Masses are not known precisely, it would appear that it was the four-part one that he wrote first, then the one in three parts and, finally, in about 1595, the **Five-Part Mass**. Ten years later, he published his first volume of *Gradualia* - a collection of motets, masses, hymns and the like, including the famous motet,

Ave verum corpus. This was the year of the Gunpowder plot, when a group of Catholics made an attempt to blow up King James I and both Houses of Parliament, and it is recorded that someone was arrested for being in possession of a copy of the *Gradualia* at that time. Nonetheless, a second volume, this one dedicated to Lord Petre of Writtle, appeared two years later, in 1607.

Much of Byrd's time during his latter years was taken up with long and complicated litigation but it seems that he was back in London in 1619 to share the organ playing with **Orlando Gibbons** and Edmund Hooper at the funeral of Queen Anne, wife of his fifth monarch, James I. Byrd died at his home, Stondon Place, on 4 July 1623.

Writing in the July 1943 edition of *Music and Letters*. J.A.Westrup noted that the rival merits of Byrd's Latin and English church music had been hotly debated over the years and suggested that it would be 'simpler to say not that one is better than the other but that they serve different ends.' Using as a comparison, the *Kyrie* of the *Five-Part Mass* with the equivalent section (to the words 'Lord have mercy') in the *Great Service*, Westrup maintained that 'behind the first lies a tremendous tradition, as solid as the foundations of the Church itself' whereas his English setting 'is the approach of a marvellously equipped musician to a problem that was then recent'.

Orlando Gibbons was born in Oxford but, as a boy, sang in the choir of King's College, Cambridge, where his brother, Edward, was Master of the Choristers. He enrolled at the University in 1599 and took his B.Mus. degree there in 1606. Sixteen years later he was to take his D.Mus. at Oxford but, in the meantime, he had become organist at the Chapel Royal. In 1613 a collection of keyboard pieces by William Byrd, John Bull and Gibbons was published as a tribute to Princess Elizabeth, the daughter of James I, on the occasion of her marriage to Prince Frederick V, Elector Palatine of the Rhine. This was reputed to be the first music ever printed for the virginals and is said to contain some of Gibbons best pieces for the instrument.

Gibbons was to remain in his post at the Chapel Royal to the end of his life and, for the last two years of it, he was also organist at Westminster Abbey. Indeed, one of his last duties was to play his part in the funeral of James I in March 1625. Shortly after that he travelled to Canterbury in the company of the rest of the Chapel Royal where the new King, Charles I, was to await the arrival from France of his Queen, Henrietta Maria. Once in Canterbury, Gibbons would, no doubt, have been expected to officiate at services in the Cathedral and possibly to compose some special music for them. However, on Whit Sunday, just over a week before Henrietta Maria arrived in Canterbury, Gibbons suddenly died of apoplexy. He was buried next day in the Cathedral where a monument to him was duly erected.

As a composer, Gibbons is justly renowned for his verse anthems, notably *This is the Record of John*. He was not, however, the originator of this form of anthem as Byrd had already written similar pieces but, in the words of Edmund Fellowes (in 'Orlando Gibbons and his family - The last of the Tudor School of musicians') he was its most important pioneer. 'All praise is due to him,' according to Fellowes, 'for his enterprise in exploring new fields when he could have remained in the tried regions of polyphonic music in which he scored such splendid successes'.

See, see the Word is incarnate is a setting of a religious poem whose five verses describe the most important events in the life and death of Christ while, unusually, in *Glorious and powerful God* it is an alto and bass duet which sings the verses rather than a solo voice as with most of Gibbons' other verse anthems. The second of Gibbons' two *Preces* is a setting of the words *I will magnify thee* (Psalm 145) and is intended for Evensong on Easter Day.

It was King Henry VI who, in 1441, founded **King's College, Cambridge**, and determined that there would be a choir to sing the daily services in the magnificent chapel he was hoping to build for it. The intention was to have 16 choristers who were to be under the age of 12, of a strong constitution and able to both read and sing. As well as singing Matins, the Mass and Vespers each day, the choristers' duties also included waiting at table at meal times. The Wars of the Roses and the accession to the throne, first of Edward IV and then Henry VII, interrupted the building work on the chapel and it was not until towards the end of his reign that the latter managed to find enough money to complete it. Before long a school for the choristers was founded and, eventually, this was opened to non-singing boys. Although the chapel did not suffer the destructive fate of many other churches during the Civil War, as choristers were not being replaced when their voices broke, choral services had to be abandoned. The choir was re-formed after the Restoration and a

succession of choristers has continued to sing in the chapel ever since. In more recent times the choir has been heard on radio and TV, made many commercial recordings and toured the world. In 1974, Philip Ledger took over as the choir's Director of Music and, when he left in 1982, his place was taken by Stephen Cleobury.

Sir David Willcocks was born in Newquay in December 1917 and, as a boy, was a chorister at Westminster Abbey. Later he studied at Clifton College, the Royal College of Music in London and, as an organ scholar, at King's College, Cambridge. Following military service in the Second World War, during which he won the Military Cross, he returned to King's College for two years before taking up the post of organist at Salisbury Cathedral. From there he moved to Worcester Cathedral where he was not only the organist and choir master but also conductor of the *Three Choirs Festival* for the meetings which took place in that city. In 1957 he returned once more to King's College and became, in succession to Boris Ord, the organist and director of its chapel choir. During his time in that post, the already famous *Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols* achieved greater popularity than ever through the medium of radio and television. For these festivals, Willcocks composed and arranged countless Christmas carols which have since become an essential part of the repertoire of choirs throughout the world. For many years, he was also the conductor of the Bach Choir in London and, on his retirement from King's College in 1974, he became Director of the Royal College of Music. He was knighted three years later.

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ALC 1181 King's College Choir sing JS Bach: Motet, Part-songs, exc St John Passion

ALC 1176 Vivaldi Vespers (incl Stabat Mater, Beatus Vir, etc/ Ex Cathedra, Jeffrey Skidmore

**Mass for 5 Voices (in Latin) ie: Kyrie Gloria
Credo Sanctus Benedictus Agnus Dei**

Ave verum Corpus

Ave, verum corpus natum
ex Maria Virgine:
vere passum, immolatum
in cruce pro homine:
cuius latus perforatum
unda fluxit et sanguine:
esto nobis praegustatum,
in mortis examine.
[O dulcis, O pie, O Jesu, Fili Mariae.]
[Miserere mei. Amen].

Hail the true body, born
of the Virgin Mary:
You who truly suffered and were sacrificed
on the cross for the sake of man.
From whose pierced flank
flowed water and blood:
Be a foretaste for us
in the trial of death.
[O sweet, O merciful, O Jesus, Son of Mary.]
[Have mercy on me. Amen.]

Magnificat

My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For he hath regarded
the low estate of his handmaiden:
for, behold, from henceforth
all generations shall call me blessed.
For he that is mighty
hath done to me great things;
and holy is his name.
And his mercy is on them that fear him
from generation to generation.
He hath shewed strength with his arm;
he hath scattered the proud
in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seats,
and exalted them of low degree.
He hath filled the hungry with good things;
and the rich he hath sent empty away.
He hath holpen his servant Israel,

in remembrance of his mercy;
As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham,
and to his seed for ever.
My soul doth magnify the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior

Nunc dimittis

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant
depart in peace: according to thy word.
For mine eyes have seen: thy salvation,
Which thou hast prepared:
before the face of all people;
To be a light to lighten the Gentiles:
and to be the glory of thy people Israel.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son:
and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be: world without end. Amen

Orlando Gibbons

See, see the Word is incarnate

See, see the Word is incarnate;
God is made man in the womb of a Virgin.
Shepherds rejoice,
wise men adore and angels sing
“Glory be to God on high: peace on earth,
good will towards men.”
The law is cancelled,
Jews and Gentiles converted by the preaching
of glad tidings of salvation.
The blind have sight
and cripples have their motion;
diseases cured, the dead are raised,
and miracles are wrought.
Let us welcome such a guest with Hosanna.

The Paschal Lamb is offered,
Christ Jesus made a sacrifice for sin.
The earth quakes, the sun is darkened,
the powers of hell are shaken;
and lo, he is risen up in victory.
Sing Alleluia.

See, O see the fresh wounds, the gored blood,
the prick of thorns, the print of nails.

And in the sight of multitudes
a glorious ascension.
When now he sits on God's right hand
where all the choir of heaven all jointly sing;
Glory be to the Lamb that sitteth on the throne.
Let us continue our wonted note with Hosanna:
Blessed be He that cometh
in the Name of the Lord;
with Alleluia, we triumph in victory,
the serpent's head is bruised,
Christ's kingdom exalted,
and heaven laid open to sinners
Amen.

Glorious and Powerful God

Glorious and Powerful God,
We understand thy dwelling is on high
Above the starry sky.
Thou dwell'st not in stone temples
made with hands,
But in the flesh hearts of the sons of men
To dwell is thy delight, near hand,
though out of sight.

We give of thine own hand,
Thy acceptance is very life and blood,
To all actions good:
Whenever here or hence our supplication,
From pure and with unfeigned hearts
To thee ascends, be present with thy grace,
Show us thy loving face.

O down on us full show'rs of mercy send;
Let thy love's burning beams
Dry up all our sins' streams;
Arise, O Lord, and come into thy rest.
Both now and evermore thy name be blest,
Fountain and foundation of endless habitation.
Amen.

Preces

[Priest.] O Lord, open thou our lips.
And our mouth shall show forth thy praise.
Priest. O God, make speed to save us.
O Lord, make haste to help us.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost;

As it was in the beginning, and is now,
and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.
Praise ye the Lord.

Psalms CXLV

I will magnify thee, O God, my King :
and I will praise thy Name for ever and ever.
Every day will I give thanks unto thee :
and praise thy Name for ever and ever.
Great is the Lord,
and marvellous worthy to be praised :
there is no end of his greatness.
One generation shall praise thy works
unto another : and declare thy power;
and declare thy power.

As for me, I will be talking of thy worship :
thy glory, thy praise, thy praise
and wondrous works;
So that men shall speak of the might
of thy marvellous acts :
and I will also tell of thy greatness.
The memorial of thine abundant kindness
shall be shewed :
and men shall sing of thy righteousness.
The Lord is gracious and merciful :
long-suffering and of great goodness.
The Lord is loving unto every man :
and his mercy is over all his works.

All thy works praise thee, O Lord :
and thy saints give thanks unto thee.
They shew the glory of thy kingdom :
and talk of thy power; and talk of thy power
That thy power, thy glory,
and mightiness of thy kingdom :
might be known unto men;
might be known unto men
Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom :
and thy dominion endureth throughout all ages.
The Lord upholdeth all such as fall :
and lifeth up all those that yet be down.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost and to the Holy Ghost
As it was in the beginning and is now
and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

William Byrd /Orlando Gibbons

The Choir of King's College, Cambridge
directed by David Willcocks

William Byrd (1543-1623): Mass For Five Voices

1	Kyrie	1.51
2.	Gloria	5.32
3.	Credo	10.30
4.	Sanctus	2.37
5.	Benedictus	1.41
6.	Agnus Dei	4.08
7.	Magnificat (from The Great Service)	10.35
8.	Nunc Dimittis (from The Great Service)	6.07
9.	Motet: Ave Verum Corpus	4.28
(1-9) Recorded 1960		

Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625) (10-12) with the Jacobean Consort of Viols:
Thurston Dart (Treble Viol), Desmond Dupre (Tenor Viol), Dennis Nesbitt,
Dietrich Kessler (Bass Viols), Nigel Amherst (Violone) Recorded 1959

10.	See, See the Word is Incarnate	7.15
11.	Glorious and Powerful God	6.03
12.	Second Preces: I Will Magnify Thee	5.53

TOTAL TIME 67:00 Produced by Tony Watts
Final master by Paul Arden-Taylor (www.dinmore-records.co.uk)