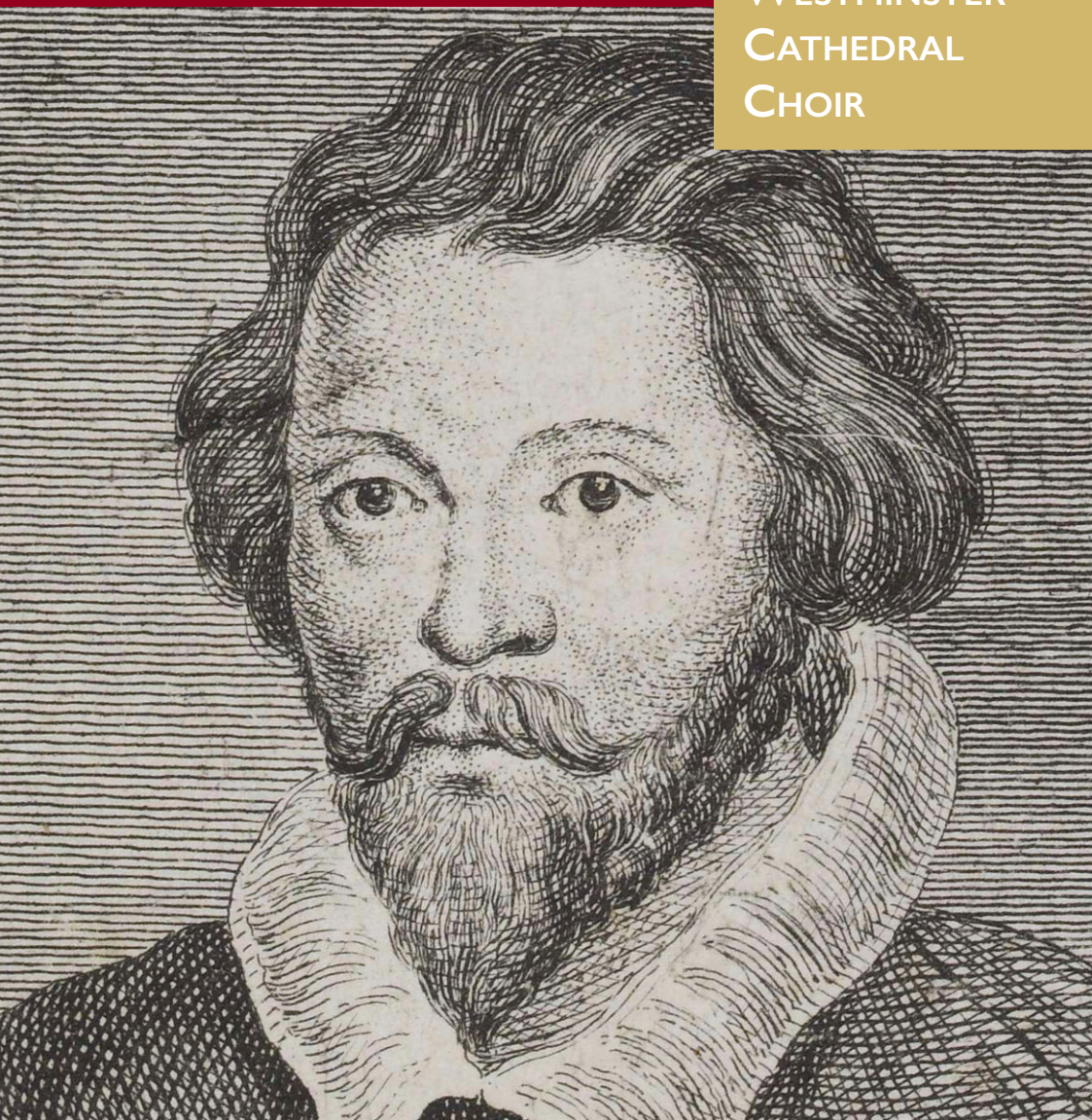


WESTMINSTER
CATHEDRAL
CHOIR



WILLIAM BYRD 1539/40 - 1623

Westminster Cathedral Choir performs the complete *Gradualia*
to mark 400 years since the death of William Byrd

December 2022 - December 2023

To celebrate the 400th anniversary of the death of William Byrd, Westminster Cathedral Choir will perform the entirety of his *Gradualia* – settings of music for Mass – during choral services at Westminster Cathedral.

William Byrd (c.1540 - 4th July 1623) was an English composer of the late Renaissance period, and considered to be one of the finest and most significant composers of his time and of his nation. He was a Catholic during the religious turbulence of the late 1500s when Catholicism was forbidden and many prominent Catholics were martyred for their beliefs.

The music was intended to help Catholics mark the different seasons of the Church's calendar, and all 109 pieces will be performed at the appropriate time of the year. The celebration begins on Sunday 18th December 2022 and will run until Monday 25th December 2023.

“

It's not for nothing that the British Isles have long been setting standards when it comes to choral singing – and Westminster Cathedral Choir gives the tradition its very own colour through its connection to a Catholic repertoire.

”

- Die Rheinpfalz, September 2022

FOREWORD

The autumn of William Byrd's life saw a distillation of the composer's musical and spiritual focus. The phenomenal creative force that had hitherto expressed itself expansively became subordinated to the ordered world of Counter-Reformation liturgy, text and ritual. The results were intense. The 1590s brought forth three sublime settings of the Mass Ordinary. The private spirituality of these works developed further in the settings of the Mass Proper that appeared in the two volumes of the *Gradualia* (1605/07). This massive collection was written for clandestine use by English Catholics at a time when their religion was forbidden. The intimacy of the originally intended locations of the work's early performances almost certainly informed the deep fervour of the music. Here we encounter Byrd as both an uncompromising and uncompromised Catholic.

Westminster Cathedral Choir sings Mass on every day during term-time, performing polyphonic settings of the Mass Ordinary alongside the prescribed plainchant of the Mass Proper in the *Graduale Romanum*. Byrd's settings of the texts of the Propers (Introit, Gradual, Alleluia, Offertory, Communion), and others within the collection, sit happily within the liturgy of the Cathedral and provide the central kernel of our celebration of English Catholic music's favourite son in his 400th anniversary year. The entirety of the *Gradualia* will be performed in its seasonal and liturgical context, alongside other works from Byrd's oeuvre.



When considered as a whole, the *Gradualia* undoubtedly represents a monolithic masterpiece of Renaissance religious art. Yet it is at the miniature level that the composer's desire "to adorn divine things with the highest art" is to be truly appreciated. Byrd invites us to develop a greater understanding of the intimacies of our own faith.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Simon Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line underneath it.

Simon Johnson
Master of Music



On 11 October 2022, I listened to the music of William Byrd being sung in the Chapel of St Peter in the Tower of London, as part a musical tribute to our late Queen, Elizabeth II. As I listened I became intensely conscious of the bodies of St Thomas More and St John Fisher, lying in the lower part of that very church since 1535. Here was music, composed during the long years of religious persecution, coming alive again in the presence of these two famous martyrs.

Shortly after their deaths, William Byrd was born. He lived through the great religious persecutions of Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth I. He was a devout Catholic and some of his earliest church music accompanied the Sarum missal, in use at that time. He composed for both his own Catholic faith and for the Church of England. His musical ability enabled him to navigate these dramatic differences. But his finest music came later in life, in particular in music for the Roman liturgy as established by the Council of Trent (1545-1563).

His settings for the Mass were first heard in secret, in private chapels and back rooms, attended by Catholics who risked their livelihoods and by priests who risked their lives. Yet despite the private nature of these first performances, Byrd made no compromises in the depth and intimacy of his music. It is full of life and emotion and communicates the vitality of a living faith, standing strong against the difficulties of the time. Every note, every phrase, is a prayer. Our prayer today stands in continuity with his.

This year, Westminster Cathedral Choir brings the music of Byrd's *Gradualia* out into the open. While the inspiring surroundings of the Cathedral stand in stark contrast to the cramped environment in which this music was first sung, Byrd's music transcends time and place. Its beauty communicates to us the faith which inspired him, and which continues to inspire us.

The beauty of his music today not only overcomes the conflicts of the past but also draws so many into the realms of faith. This is central to the mission of Westminster Cathedral.

I thank all who will contribute to this remarkable celebration of the 400th anniversary of his death. May many be attracted and come to know our Blessed Lord through the artistic genius of William Byrd, which is, truly, a great gift of God and a precious inheritance.

+ Vincent Nichols

His Eminence Cardinal Vincent Nichols



The first stone of our Cathedral was laid in 1895, 66 years after the Catholic Emancipation Act ended centuries of persecution of Catholics in Britain and Ireland. From then, we were free again to practise our faith without censure.

When William Byrd took up his first known professional appointment as Organist and Master of the Choristers at Lincoln Cathedral in 1563, the recusancy acts of Elizabeth I, removing all religious freedoms for Catholics in England, had been enacted in law for five years. It was within this historical context of the persecution of Catholics that William Byrd began composing. For centuries his compositions of music for the Mass Ordinary and the Mass Proper could only be performed in secret Masses in private homes across the country, and were slowly becoming a faint memory.



Our Cathedral Choir was founded in 1901 by Richard Terry in response to the vision of Cardinal Vaughan, who wanted the nobility of liturgy and the dignity of the building to be matched with the best of music. The then long-forgotten 16th century music by Byrd was placed at the heart of realising this vision and still forms the backbone of the repertoire of our choir. It is, therefore, hugely significant that Westminster Cathedral Choir is able to mark the 400th anniversary of William Byrd's death with performances during liturgies in the Mother Church of Roman Catholics in England and Wales.

We pray that the marriage of this music, composed under the most difficult of circumstances, and the vision of Cardinal Vaughan, will continue to inspire our devotion in our own troubled time.

Fr Sławomir Witoń
Administrator of Westminster Cathedral



All services are free to attend.

PROGRAMME

Sunday 18 December 2022 – Fourth Sunday of Advent

12 noon - Solemn Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Advent (Full choir)

Mass for five voices

Introit - *Rorate cæli desuper*

Gradual - *Tollite portas*

Alleluia - *Ave Maria*

Offertory - *Ave Maria*

Communion - *Ecce Virgo concipiet*

Sunday 25 December – Christmas Day

4pm - Solemn Vespers and Benediction (Men's voices)

Motet - *O magnum misterium*

Friday 6 January 2023 – Epiphany

5.30pm - Solemn Mass with Propers for Epiphany (Men's voices)

Introit - *Ecce advenit*

Gradual - *Surge illuminare Ierusalem*

Offertory - *Reges Tharsis et insulæ*

Communion - *Vidimus stellam eius in Oriente*

Saturday 7 January

10.30am - Mass with Propers for Christmas (Men's voices)

Introit - *Puer natus est nobis*

Gradual - *Viderunt omnes*

Alleluia - *Dies sanctificatus*

Offertory - *Tui sunt cæli*

Communion - *Viderunt omnes*

Saturday 14 January

10.30am - Mass (Men's voices)

Offertory - *Alma redemptoris mater*

Thursday 19 January

5.30pm - Votive Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary from Christmas to Candlemas (Full choir)

Introit - *Vultum tuum*

Gradual - *Speciosus forma*

Alleluia - *Post partum virgo*

Offertory - *Felix namque est*

Communion - *Beata viscera*

Wednesday 1 February 2023

5.30pm - Mass (Men's voices)

Offertory - *O admirabile commercium*

Thursday 2 February – The Presentation of the Lord

5.30pm - Solemn Mass with Propers for the Feast of Candlemas (Full choir)

Procession - *Adorna thalamum tuum*

Introit - *Suscepimus Deus*

Gradual - *Suscepimus Deus. Sicut audivimus*

Alleluia - *Senex puerum portabat*

Offertory - *Diffusa est gratia*

Communion - *Responsum accepit Simeon*

Communion - *Hodie beata Virgo*

Saturday 4 February

10.30am - Mass (Men's voices)

Offertory - *Senex puerum portabat*

Sunday 5 February – 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

4pm - Solemn Vespers and Benediction (Full choir)

Motet - *Nunc dimittis servum tuum*

Saturday 11 February – Our Lady of Lourdes

10.30am - Mass (Men's voices)

Offertory - *Ave maris stella*

Sunday 12 February – 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time

12 noon - Solemn Mass (Men's voices)

Offertory - *Venite exultemus Domino*

Tuesday 14 February – Saints Cyril and Methodius

5.30pm - Solemn Mass (Men's voices)

Offertory - *Ecce quam bonum*

Saturday 18 February

10.30am - Mass (Men's voices)

Offertory - *Ave regina cælorum*

Communion - *In manus tuas*

Wednesday 22 February – Ash Wednesday

5.30pm - Solemn Mass with Imposition of Ashes (Full choir)

Offertory - *Infelix ego (Cantiones Sacræ, 1591)*

Communion - *Emendemus in melius (Cantiones Sacræ, 1575)*

Thursday 2 March 2023

5.30pm - Votive Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary from Candlemas to Easter (Full choir)

Introit - *Salve sancta parens*

Gradual - *Benedicta et venerabilis*

Tract - *Gaude Maria*

Offertory - *Felix namque es*

Communion - *Beata viscera*

Sunday 5 March

4pm - Solemn Vespers and Benediction (Full choir)

Motet - *Miserere mei Deus (Cantiones Sacrae, 1591)*

Wednesday 15 March

5.30pm - Mass (Men's voices)

Offertory - *Ab ortu solis*

Communion - *Venite comedite*

Friday 24 March

5.30pm - Vigil Mass of the Annunciation (Full choir)

Introit - *Vultum tuum*

Gradual - *Diffusa est gratia*

Offertory - *Ave Maria gratia plena*

Communion - *Ecce virgo concipiet*

Sunday 26 March – Fifth Sunday of Lent (Passion Sunday)

4pm - Solemn Vespers and Benediction (Men's voices)

Motet - *Plorans plorabit*

Monday 27 March

5.30pm - Mass (Men's voices)

Offertory - i. *Deus venerunt gentes (Cantiones Sacrae, 1589)*

Tuesday 28 March

5.30pm - Mass (Men's voices)

Offertory - ii. *Posuerunt morticina servorum (Cantiones Sacrae, 1589)*

Wednesday 29 March

5.30pm - Mass (Men's voices)

Offertory - iii. *Effuderunt sanguinem ipsorum (Cantiones Sacrae, 1589)*

Thursday 30 March

5.30pm - Mass (Men's voices)

Offertory - iv. *Facti sumus opprobrium (Cantiones Sacrae, 1589)*

Sunday 2 April 2023 – Palm Sunday

11.30am - Solemn Mass with procession (Full choir)

Mass for four voices

Offertory - *Ne irascaris* (*Cantiones Sacrae*, 1589)

Communion - *Civitas sancti tui* (*Cantiones Sacrae*, 1589)

Friday 7 April – Good Friday

3pm - Solemn Liturgy of the Passion (Full choir)

Passione Domine secundum Joannem

Sunday 9 April – Easter Day

4pm - Solemn Second Vespers and Benediction (Men's voices)

Motet - *Victimæ paschali laudes*

Saturday 22 April

10.30am - Mass (Men's voices)

Offertory - *Hæc dies*

Communion - *Post dies octo. Mane nobiscum*

Wednesday 26 April

5.30pm - Mass with Propers for Easter (Men's voices)

Introit - *Resurrexi*

Gradual & Alleluia - *Hæc dies. Pascha nostrum*

Offertory - *Terra tremuit*

Communion - *Pascha nostrum*

Thursday 4 May – The English Martyrs

5.30pm - Solemn Mass (Full choir)

Offertory - *Lætania* (with invocations to each of the forty canonised martyrs of the Reformation)

Wednesday 10 May

5.30pm - Mass (Men's voices)

Offertory - *Christus resurgens*

Communion - *Dicant nunc Iudæi*

Thursday 11 May

5.30pm - Votive Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Eastertide (Full choir)

Introit - *Salve sancta parens*

Alleluia - *Ave Maria. Virga lesse*

Offertory - *Beata es virgo Maria*

Communion - *Beata viscera*

Saturday 13 May

10.30am - Mass (Men's voices)

Offertory - *Regina cæli*

Communion - *Alleluia. Vespere autem Sabbathi*

Wednesday 17 May 2023

5.30pm - Vigil Mass of the Ascension (Men's voices)

Introit - *Viri Galilæi*

Alleluia - *Alleluia. Ascendit Deus*

Offertory - *Ascendit Deus in iubilatione*

Communion - *Psallite Domino*

Thursday 18 May – The Ascension

5pm - Solemn Second Vespers (Men's voices)

Office Hymn - *Iesu nostra redemptio*

Friday 19 May

5.30pm - Mass (Full choir)

Offertory - *Non vos relinquam orphanos*

Saturday 20 May

10.30am - Mass (Men's voices)

Offertory - *O Rex gloriæ*

Communion - *Angelus Domini descendit*

Saturday 27 May – St Augustine of Canterbury

10.30am - Solemn Mass (Men's voices)

Communion - *O sacrum convivium*

Sunday 28 May – Pentecost

12 noon - Solemn Mass (Men's voices)

Introit - *Spiritus Domini*

Gradual - *Emitte spiritum tuum*

Alleluia - *Veni Sancte Spiritus*

Offertory - *Confirma hoc Deus*

Communion - *Factus est repente*

Sunday 4 June – Trinity Sunday

12 noon - Solemn Mass (Men's voices)

Mass for three voices

Tuesday 6 June

5.30pm - Mass (Boys' voices)

Offertory - *Salve sola Dei genitrix*

Communion - *Visita quæsumus Domine*

Wednesday 7 June

5.30pm - Mass (Men's voices)

Offertory - *O quam suavis*

Communion - *Ego sum panis vivus*

Saturday 10 June 2023

10.30am - Mass (Men's voices)

Offertory - *Salve Regina*

Sunday 11 June – Corpus Christi

12 noon - Solemn Mass (Full Choir)

Mass for four voices

Communion - *Ave verum corpus*

4pm - Solemn Vespers and Benediction (Full choir)

Office Hymn - *Pange lingua gloriosi*

Wednesday 14 June

5.30pm - Votive Mass of the Blessed Sacrament (Men's voices)

Introit - *Cibavit eos*

Gradual - *Oculi omnium*

Alleluia - *Cognoverunt discipuli*

Offertory - *Sacerdotes Domini*

Communion - *Quotiescunque manducabitis*

Saturday 17 June

10.30am - Mass (Men's voices)

Offertory - *Quem terra pontus æthera*

Sunday 18 June – 11th Sunday in Ordinary Time

12 noon - Solemn Mass (Full choir)

Mass for five voices

Tuesday 27 June – St John Southworth

5.30pm - Solemn Mass (Full choir)

Offertory - *Iustorum animæ*

Wednesday 28 June – St Irenæus

5.30pm - Vigil Mass of Saints Peter and Paul (Men's voices)

Introit - *Nunc scio vere*

Gradual - *Constitues eos*

Alleluia - *Tu es Petrus*

Offertory - *Constitues eos Principes*

Communion - *Tu es Petrus*

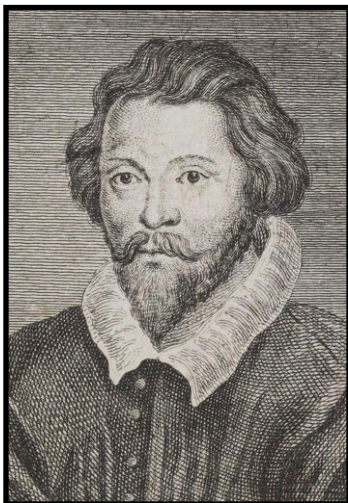
Communion - *Hodie Simon Petrus*

Sunday 2 July – 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time

4pm - Solemn Vespers and Benediction (Full choir)

Motet - *Laudibus in sanctis (Cantiones Sacræ, 1591)*

WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL



SOLEMN MEMORIAL MASS

for

WILLIAM BYRD

1539/40 - 4 July 1623

on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of his death

Tuesday 4 July 2023

5.30pm

Mass for five voices

Propers from *Missa pro defunctis* - Plainchant

Offertory - *Miserere mei Deus*

Communion - *Ave verum corpus*

Wednesday 5 July 2023

5.30pm - Mass (Men's voices)

Offertory - *Solve iubente Deo*

Saturday 8 July

10.30am - Mass (Men's voices)

Offertory - *O gloriosa Domina*

Friday 8 September – The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

5.30pm - Solemn Mass of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Full choir)

Introit - *Salve sancta parens*

Gradual - *Benedicta et venerabilis. Virgo Dei genitrix*

Alleluia - *Felix es*

Offertory - *Beata es Virgo Maria*

Communion - *Beata viscera*

Saturday 9 September

10.30am - Mass (Men's voices)

Offertory - *Memento salutis auctor*

Wednesday 13 September

5.30pm - Mass (Men's voices)

Communion - *O salutaris hostia*

Thursday 14 September – The Exaltation of the Holy Cross

5.30pm - Solemn Mass (Full choir)

Communion - *Adoramus te Christe*

Thursday 5 October

5.30pm - Votive Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary from Pentecost to Advent (Full choir)

Introit - *Salve sancta parens*

Gradual - *Benedicta et venerabilis*

Alleluia - *Post partum virgo*

Offertory - *Ave Maria*

Communion - *Beata viscera*

Sunday 8 October – 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

4pm - Solemn Vespers and Benediction (Full choir)

Motet - *Tribue Domine (Cantiones Sacrae, 1575)*

Sunday 15 October 2023 – 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

4pm - Solemn Vespers and Benediction (Men's voices)

Motet - *Laudate Dominum*

Wednesday 1 November – All Saints

5.30pm - Solemn Mass for All Saints (Full choir)

Introit - *Gaudeamus omnes*

Gradual - *Timete Dominum*

Alleluia - *Timete Dominum*

Offertory - *Iustorum animæ*

Communion - *Beati mundo corde*

Thursday 9 November – The Dedication of the Lateran Basilica

5.30pm - Mass (Full choir)

Offertory - *Unam petii a Domino*

Communion - *Ut videam voluntatem Domini*

Wednesday 15 November – Our Lady of Pignero

5.30pm - Votive Mass of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Full choir)

Introit - *Gaudeamus omnes*

Gradual - *Propter veritatem*

Alleluia - *Assumpta est Maria*

Offertory - *Assumpta est Maria*

Communion - *Optimam partem elegit*

Saturday 18 November – The Dedication of the Basilicas of Saints Peter and Paul

10.30am - Mass (Men's voices)

Offertory - *Tu es pastor ovium*

Communion - *Quodcumque ligaveris*

Sunday 25 December – Christmas Day

4pm - Solemn Second Vespers and Benediction (Men's voices)

Motet - *Hodie Christus natus est*

Deo gratias

WILLIAM BYRD

William Byrd (b. London 1539/40, d. Stondon Massey 1623) is considered among the finest composers of the Renaissance, having written some 470 works for all of the contemporary genres, and he exerted a profound influence across the musical landscape of Europe.

Byrd learnt his trade under Thomas Tallis, almost certainly as a singer at the Chapel Royal during the reign of Queen Mary, whose taste for sumptuous Latin church music inspired the finest composers of the day. It was the perfect artistic melting pot into which the young composer was able to pour his own creative spirit and learn from some of the greatest masters. From 1563 he was Organist and Master of the Choristers at Lincoln Cathedral. Puritan tendencies there may have been the cause of difficulties – Byrd played elaborately – and so the offer to take up a prestigious position as Gentleman of the Chapel Royal saw his return to London in 1572.

Byrd's entire life was affected by the political and religious upheavals of the time. *Lex orandi, lex credendi* - the notion that how people worship determines what they believe – was a commonplace concept in the 16th century, and he had to reconcile the navigation of turbulent political times with his own private beliefs. He probably began life as a Protestant, but from the 1570s onward became increasingly pre-occupied with Catholicism, despite the prevailing political and religious situation. Pope Pius V's papal bull, *Regnans in Excelsis*, in 1570, made Queen Elizabeth an outlaw in the eyes of the Catholic Church but, despite this, Byrd seems to have had a cordial relationship with the monarch. He and Tallis obtained a joint printing license from the Queen that resulted in three collections of Latin motets or *Cantiones Sacrae*, some of which seem to obliquely reference a bitterness about the plight of the English Catholic community (several of these works are presented within this cycle). Despite the ongoing suspicion of the authorities, Byrd seems to have emerged relatively unscathed from his association with characters involved in both the Throckmorton and Gunpowder plots.

Perhaps tired of compromise, in 1593 he moved with his family to the small village of Stondon Massey in Essex, and spent the remaining thirty years of his life there, devoting himself more and more to music for the Roman liturgy: the Masses, the *Gradualia*. Court records show him involved in endless lawsuits, mostly over his right to own property, and paying heavy fines relating to his recusancy. The reputation he had built as a young man in London, and the patronage of the Queen, must have helped him through his later years.

He died on 4 July, 1623, and is buried in an unmarked grave in the Stondon Massey churchyard.





WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL CHOIR

Westminster Cathedral Choir is acclaimed as one of the world's great choirs. Since its foundation in 1901, Westminster Cathedral Choir has occupied a unique and enviable position at the forefront of English church music, not least because of the groundbreaking work of Sir Richard Terry, who revived the great works of the English and continental Renaissance composers. The choir's fame grew under Terry as it presented this forgotten music, revolutionising attitudes to the repertoire. Innovation continued under George Malcolm who pioneered the development of the choir's sound along continental lines, resulting in a choir that was truly revolutionary in both what and how it sang. The choir continues these traditions today, and it remains the only Catholic Cathedral choir in the world to sing daily Mass and Vespers. More recent Masters of Music have included Colin Mawby, Stephen Cleobury, David Hill, James O'Donnell, Martin Baker and, since September 2021, Simon Johnson.

The choir's reputation is ever-expanding and it continues to reach new audiences through its series of acclaimed recordings on the Hyperion label. In 1998 the choir was awarded the Gramophone Awards for 'Best Choral Recording of the Year' and 'Record of the Year' for the performance of Frank Martin's *Messe* and Pizzetti's *Requiem*. The choir's most recent release, recorded in 2019, is *Vexilla Regis*: A sequence of music from Palm Sunday to Holy Saturday on the Ad Fontes label.

The choir has a history of commissioning and performing new music, famous examples being Britten's *Missa brevis* for boys' voices, the *Mass in G minor* by Vaughan Williams and compositions by Wood, Holst and Howells. Within the last decade the choir has commissioned new Masses from James MacMillan, Peter Maxwell Davies, Judith Bingham, John Tavener, Matthew Martin and Stephen Hough, all of which were first performed in the context of the regular liturgies at Westminster Cathedral.

Westminster Cathedral Choir features frequently on radio and television. When its busy liturgical schedule permits it takes its music further afield. In addition to regular concerts around the UK, recent tours have included Hungary, Norway, Germany, Belgium, Italy and the USA.

“In short: the performance of the English choir under its new Music Director Simon Johnson was sensational.” - Die Rheinpfalz (September 2022)



With grateful thanks

Westminster Cathedral Choir remains the only Catholic Cathedral choir in the world to sing daily Mass and Vespers, meaning everyone can enjoy world class music for the glory of God, free of charge.

It is the support of generous individuals, charitable trusts and corporate partners that sustains our activity year on year. We are hugely grateful for their continued generosity, and for recent grants from the **Traditional Cathedral Choir Association** and the **Cathedral Music Trust**.



To make a one-off donation to support the choir, scan the QR code or visit:

<https://westminstercathedral.org.uk/support-us/make-a-gift/>



Support Westminster Cathedral Choir

Westminster Cathedral Choir celebrated its 120th anniversary in 2021. We are embarking on an exciting new chapter, and need your help to ensure that the Choir's unique sound, reach and tradition are passed on for future generations to enjoy.

You will be supporting the performance of sacred music within the liturgy, the training of choristers, the commissioning of new works, and evangelism through sacred music in concerts, recordings and tours.

to all our supporters

To become a regular supporter of the choir, to leave a gift for the choir in your will, or for more information, please contact the Cathedral Fundraising Manager, Marie-Louise Van Spyk

mlvanspyk@rcdow.org.uk

07596 855460

<https://westminstercathedral.org.uk/support-us/>

