BRIGHTON CONSORT GREG SKIDMORE, DIRECTOR

WITH SPECIAL GUEST ORGAN SOLOIST, HAMISH DUSTAGHEER, DIRECTOR OF MUSIC AT ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH, BRIGHTON

Is it a Byrd?



Is it a Byrd?

Exploring lesser-known music by William Byrd, Renaissance Superman

Brighton Consort

Greg Skidmore, Musical Director

with special guest

Hamish Dustagheer, organist

Saturday, 29th of April, 2023 7:00pm

The Church of St-Michael-in-Lewes

As it is a Byrd year in 2023 (Byrd's death was in 1623), we continue our series of concerts focussing on the works of William Byrd with a programme entirely devoted to the great English genius. Our special guest artist is Hamish Dustagheer, Director of Music at St Bartholomew's Church, Brighton, and he will be playing specially chosen keyboard from Byrd's large output. Our repertoire this evening spans secular and sacred, with large forces and small. Get ready to celebrate the mastery of the great William Byrd, Renaissance Superman!

Concert Programme

From Cantiones Sacrae (1575)

- Miserere mihi
- Siderum rector

From Psalms, Sonnets, and Songs (1588)

- Come to me grief
- Ambitious love

From Cantiones Sacrae I (1589)

- Domine, secundum multitudinem
- In resurrectione tua

Music for keyboard - Hamish Dustagheer, organ

- The Queenes Alman
- Miserere in d
- Fantasia in G

From Songs of sundrie natures (1589)

- O Lord my God
- Attend mine humble prayer

From Cantiones Sacrae II (1591)

- Miserere mei, Deus
- Descendit de coelis

--- INTERVAL ---

From *Gradualia I* (1605)

• Pange lingua

From Gadualia II (1607)

- Vidimus stellam
- Surge illuminare

Music for keyboard - Hamish Dustagheer, organ

- Monsieurs Alman
- Miserere in a
- Fantasia in d

From Psalms, Songs, and Sonnets (1611)

- In Winter cold
- Praise our Lord, all ye Gentiles

Third Service ('Mr. Bird's Three Minnoms')

with Hamish Dustagheer, organ

- Magnificat
- Nunc dimittis

O Lord, make thy Servant

with Hamish Dustagheer, organ

Programme note

There is so much William Byrd being performed this year! Byrd died in 1623 and the Early Music world has, rightly, taken it upon itself to celebrate Byrd in all his glory. That's of course great news for us and great news for audiences everywhere! Byrd's present-day fame is difficult to overstate, but this is an echo of his fame when he was alive. He was most definitely the leading composer in England at the end of the reign of Elizabeth I, and continued to publish regularly in the first few decades of the 17th century. His well known status as a recusant Catholic at a time when that was a very dangerous thing to be is the biographical detail with which we are most familiar, but there is more to his life and his music.

Tonight's programme title and subtitle is a (feeble and probably failing attempt at a) pun on the famous slogan "It's a bird. It's a plane. It's Superman!" Byrd was indeed a musical superman. While much of his music is incredibly famous now (his *Ave verum corpus* setting or has *Mass for Four Voices*) there is an enormous amount which is rarely heard, difficult to perform, and spans many genres and topics. It is our hope that we can bring you some Byrd this evening that you may not have heard before and introduce you to some of the kinds of music that are less familiar to modern audiences.

It is our special privilege to be collaborating this evening with Hamish Dustagheer, Director of Music at Brighton's wonderful St Bartholomew's Church. He will be bringing us two sets of solo organ music by Byrd and joining us at the end of the programme to accompany us in two pieces. Byrd was very well known as a leading keyboard composer in his day and his work features heavily in the most famous collections of this music that survive.

In an attempt to give you an idea of the breadth of Byrd's output in terms of style and genre, our programme this evening will be structured around the 8 printed collections of music Byrd produced during his lifetime, not including the three masses he published in the early to mid 1590s. The final category of his output, that of works that only survive in manuscript, is represented at the very end of the programme. We will present works from these collections in chronological order as well, highlighting how Byrd's style progressed over the course of his life. These publications can be grouped into two broad categories by language; Byrd published in Latin and English. He did so consistently, in both languages, throughout his life.

Some of Byrd's most famous Latin works appear in his first publication, the well-known *Cantiones Sacrae* of 1575. This was in fact the first music book ever published in England and was the joint work of Byrd and his mentor Thomas Tallis. Elizabeth I had shortly before granted them a joint monopoly on printing music and their first use of this right contains music of unparalleled genius by both men. Famous works such as Byrd's *Emendemus in melius*, and *Tribue, Domine* appear in that volume alongside Tallis' well-known *O nata lux*, and *Te lucis ante terminum* settings. We have chosen two stunning pieces to start our programme, *Miserere mihi* (a piece for the night service of Compline), and *Siderum rector* (that sets part of a hymn at Matins for Holy Women).

While containing staggeringly beautiful music, the *Cantiones Sacrae* publication of 1575 was a commercial failure. There are many reasons for this, an important one being that

the restrictions on using Latin in the liturgy reduced the size of the market for the publication to a very select group of institutions in England. The international success that Byrd and Tallis were hoping for never materialised.

Byrd waited another 8 years before publishing again and this time chose to publish in English. His *Psalmes, Sonnets and Songs of sadnes and pietie* of 1588 actually contains only music in the 'consort song' genre, originally meant to be performed by one soloist and a group of accompanying players, most often on the viola da gamba. All the parts are texted, however, and it is equally viable to sing the music with an a cappella group or perform it with a mixture of singers and players. *Come to me, grief* is a deeply touching elegy for the poet and courtier Sir Philip Sydney who died in 1586. *Ambitious Love* is one of many songs Byrd wrote warning of the dangers of romance. While the facts that the pursuit of Love makes us do silly things, removes us from rationality, and often ends in heartache were all stock themes in poetry and music at the time, Byrd seems especially drawn to these ideas. A happily married man, it is perhaps his general melancholic outlook, very much in evidence in his religious works, that is expressed in his tendency to write 'warning' music - again here, as in his Latin works.

Byrd then turned his attention back to writing in Latin, producing another book entitled (confusingly, given his first publication with Tallis) *Cantiones Sacrae* in 1589. These titles indeed speak to the religious politics of the time, as the contents of these books were meant to be 'sacred songs' that could very well be used privately in devotion or as chamber music. These were *definitely not*, Byrd is telling his reader, books to be used in Catholic worship services! Byrd chose his texts carefully and mixed and matched them so that both he could avoid being accused of writing overtly liturgical music, but also so that he could speak secretly to the recusant community in England. Much of this music decries how Jerusalem (code for England) has become desolate and lost its way. It is from this 1589 volume that Byrd's famous *Ne irascaris* work comes. We have chosen to sing *Domine, secundum multitudinem*, a setting of a single verse from Psalm 93, and *In resurrectione tua*, in which Byrd destroys any notion that he could *only* write doleful music, tearing the roof off while rejoicing at Christ's resurrection.

The solo organ works presented this evening represent three of the genres for which William Byrd was composing for keyboard instruments: dance, sacred, and secular. Many of the pieces featured are taken from the 'Fitzwilliam Virginal Book' and 'My Ladye Nevells Booke' – two significant volumes, cataloguing the wealth of keyboard music in sixteenth century England. Like much of the music at the time, the choice of instrument is flexible: although likely composed for the virginal or harpsichord, the Fitzwilliam collection is equally at home on the organ with minimal adaptation. Byrd, as a significant and prolific composer of the age, is well represented. The Elizabethan keyboard school – of which Byrd was a follower, refiner, and innovator – established some of the stylistic traits and conventions we see further distilled through the seventeenth century and into the Baroque.

Byrd's prowess as a performer is best evidenced in the Fantasias. Improvisatory in character, these works provide insight into the virtuosity of early English keyboardists (certainly on a par with their European counterparts!). The Fantasias – like the Toccatas of Byrd's Italian contemporary, Frescobaldi – are technically demanding, with use of extensive ornamentation, intricate counterpoint, and cadenzas. Behind the showmanship

is a rich harmonic language coloured with modal inflections, and a framework which allows the music to continually expand in scale and scope.

The more intimate works share the same vocabulary, but are better suited to their (probably) domestic audiences. An Alman (or Allemande) was a couples' dance in common time – this form remained popular throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries featuring, for example, in the suites of Henry Purcell and the partitas of J. S. Bach. 'The Queenes Alman', one of Byrd's best-known works, borrows as its main theme a German melody 'Von Gott will ich nicht lassen'. We hear Byrd's frequent juxtaposition of minor and major through increasingly elaborate variations on the theme.

The Miserere in three and four parts pay homage to the sacred works for which Byrd is acclaimed. The works begin in strict polyphony, with the placement of voice parts around a cantus firmus – it is as the music unfolds that more florid keyboard textures flower from these faux choral threads. The instability suggested by the fluid tonal centre, often resulting in unexpected twists of dissonance, is most keenly felt in these works; perhaps echoing the struggles Byrd faced as a Roman Catholic in Protestant England.

Moving back to tracing Byrd's musical journey through his vocal music publications, Byrd's *Songs of sundrie natures* also appeared in 1589. In this publication of English-texted music, Byrd mixes genres as he did in *Psalms, Sonnets, and Songs*, but this time introduces music for smaller forces, writing for between two and six voices in this one volume. He also includes carols, madrigals, anthems (for use in church services), part songs, and consort songs (for soloists and accompanying players). The breadth of this music is a step change on what had gone before and shows Byrd embracing all kinds of music and not just sacred a cappella polyphony. Our programme tonight contains two sacred compositions from this collection, *O Lord my God*, and *Attend mine humble prayer*. We will present both of these collections using a small number of singers, invoking the domestic, chamber music contexts for which this music was written.

Our first half finishes with two more pieces that represent the more familiar Byrd style of sacred, Latin, a cappella motets. *Yet another* publication called *Cantiones Sacrae* appeared in 1591 and contains music stylistically similar to the 1589 book. Of the two pieces on tonight's programme, *Miserere mei* is perhaps more well known now than *Descendit de caelis*, but the latter especially is a real masterpiece. Adopting the antiquated technique of a long-note cantus firmus melody in the tenor, this piece draws its text directly from the Sarum rite, the Catholic liturgy practised in England before the Reformation, being a setting of a Matins text for Christmas Day. It could, therefore, be performed within a secret Catholic service, but perhaps is more a tender homage to a bygone era in England, both compositionally and functionally.

Our interval this evening falls at a moment of great change in Byrd's life. Through the time when the five publications we've already encountered were published, Byrd was employed at the Chapel Royal and was therefore based in London and at court. In 1594, however, Byrd moved to the countryside with his family, to Stondon Massey in Essex. It is here that he lived for the remaining three decades of his life, close by to his patrons the Petre family, themselves also recusant Catholics. This move also coincides with a long gap between Byrd's publications, as he next printed music in 1605 and 1607. (It is also around the time of his move that Byrd's three mass publications were produced, but because of

the secrecy surrounding their publication and distribution it's difficult to pinpoint when exactly they appeared.) These two Jacobean prints were both entitled *Gradualia*, a word that signalled Byrd's complete disregard for the discretion of his earlier publications. These books indeed contain works *specifically chosen* to completely fulfil the requirements of the Roman Catholic liturgy at the main feasts of the year. Given that life for practising Catholics was about to get much more difficult because of the Gunpowder Plot, it is perhaps no wonder that surviving copies of the 1605 edition of the first book are extremely rare. These Gradualia, therefore, would most likely have been first performed in secret, and we again return to our small groups to represent this. *Pange lingua* is a famous hymn sung at the feast of Corpus Christi and during Holy Week. From the 1607 volume, we have chosen *Vidimus stellam*, and *Surge illuminare*, both drawn from the music written for Epiphany.

Byrd's final publication appeared a few years later and it is possible that this book represented somewhat of a 'retrospective' collection. Choosing a confusingly similar name to that of his very first solo publication of 1588, Byrd's *Psalmes, Songs, and Sonnets* of 1611 contains another very wide range of music, including in fact some entirely instrumental works. He again writes for a range of forces, including his own solo vocal work, and addresses disparate topics. To highlight this, we have chosen to sing his magnificent *Praise our Lord, all ye Gentiles*, an expansive, exciting, and extroverted exclamation of joy, and *In Winter cold*, in which Byrd extols the virtues of... ants. That these two pieces exist in the same volume tells you all you need to know about this last publication. Byrd here sums up his skill in all its variation and presents it to the reader as a swan song. While his precise birthdate is unclear, Byrd was in his 70s when this publication was produced, by the standards of the time a very old man.

Hamish Dustagheer joins us for the final two pieces on tonight's programme. In these we touch on yet another important strand of Byrd's composition, his English liturgical music. Strangely, Byrd chose not to publish this music, but he wrote a large quantity and his Third Service is less well known now than his *Short Service, Second Service*, or mighty *Great Service*. All of this music, however, has entered the regular rotation at most English cathedrals and this *Third Service*, of which we will sing both the Magnificat and Nunc dimittis movements, is one of his more elegant and quietly joyous works.

To complete our programme, we sing one of Byrd's most famous pieces, but one with a unique and special twist. Byrd's *O Lord, make thy servant Elizabeth* is one of his most well-loved English anthems. Tonight, we will sing this music, but to a slightly different text: *O Lord, make thy servant Charles*! Given the events happening in London next weekend, we believe this to be especially apt. Further, this is not cleverness on our part. The piece we sing tonight comes from a set of manuscript partbooks currently housed in Peterhouse College, Cambridge, known as the 'Peterhouse Caroline partbooks'. These were not produced at Peterhouse but instead were collected there in the 19th century. They were originally produced between 1625 and 1640, during the reign of Charles I. The process of updating the text of music mentioning the name of a monarch was commonplace at the time, and this version of the famous Elizabethan anthem, seems like a perfect way to end our concert of music by Byrd that's a little bit off the beaten path.

Programme note by Greg Skidmore and Hamish Dustagheer.

Brighton Consort

Musical Director: Greg Skidmore

Sopranos	Altos	Tenors	Basses
Liza Axford	Eleanor Clapp	Maya Davis	Michael Bishop
Anne Bonwit	Jenny Clemens	Richard Davis	Rob Carruthers
Sue Clough	Elodie Estier dos Santos	Nick Jarvis	Mike Clemens
Hannah Loach	Janet Gascoine	Hugh Jones	Mark Findlay
Mirella Marlow	Kathy Holloway	David Waterhouse	Mitch Peaks
Pam Nickels	Stella Holman	Jan White	John Petley
	Emma Kurtz	Stephen White	Alessio Santamaria
	Alicia Newell	Liz Yeats	Peter Wells
	Rose Peterschmidt		
	Liz Petty		

Texts and translations

Miserere mihi, Domine

Et exaudi orationem meam.

Have pity on me, Lord, And hear my prayer.

Siderum rector, Deus alme nostris, Parce jam culpis, vitia remittens, Quo tibi puri resonemus almum Pectoris hymnum. Gloria Patri genitæque proli, Et tibi, compar utriusque semper Spiritus alme. Deus unus omni tempore sæcli. Amen. Ruler of the stars, God, giver of life to us, Now spare us from guilt, cancelling our faults, So that, we may sing out to you the gracious hymn of a loving heart. Glory to the Father and his true-born son And to you, always equal to both – The gracious [Holy] Spirit, One God for all of time everlasting. Amen.

Domine, secundum multitudinem

dolorum meorum in corde meo, Consolationes tuæ lætificaverunt animam meam. Lord, in proportion to the quantity of my griefs In my heart, Your comforts have filled my soul with joy. In resurrectione tua, Domine, alleluia, Lætentur cœli et exultet terra.

Alleluia.

In your resurrection, Lord, alleluia May the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice. Alleluia.

Miserere mei, Deus

Secundum magnam misericordiam tuam. Et secundum multitudinem miserationum tuarum Dele iniquitatem meam. Have pity on me, God In accordance with your great compassion. And in accordance with the great extent of your mercifulness Wipe away my sin.

Descendit de cælis.

missus ab arce Patris; Introivit per aurem virginis in regionem nostram, Indutus stola purpurea. Et exivit per auream portam, Lux et decus universæ fabricæ mundi. He has come down from the heavens, sent from the Father's citadel; He has entered through [by speaking to] a virgin's ear into our world, Clothed in a purple robe. And he has gone out through a golden door, The light and glory of the whole fabric of the universe.

Pange lingua gloriosi corporis mysterium Sanguinis pretiosi quem in mundi pretium Fructus ventris generosi Rex effudit gentium.

Nobis datus, nobis natus, ex intacta Virgine Et in mundo conversatus sparso verbi semine: Sui moras incolatus miro clausit ordine.

In supremæ nocte cenæ recumbens cum fratribus Observata lege plene cibis in legalibus Cibum turbæ Duodenæ se dat suis manibus.

Verbum caro, panem verum, verbum carnem efficit Fitque sanguis Christi merum: et si sensus deficit Adfirmandum cor sincerum sola fides sufficit.

Tantum ergo Sacramentum veneremur cernui Et antiquum documentum novo cedat ritui; Praestet fides supplementum sensuum defectui.

Proclaim, tongue, the mystery of the glorious body, Of the precious blood, the price and fruit of a unique womb which the King bestowed on the nations of the world.

Given to us and born for us from a chaste virgin,
And brought down to the world with the scattered seed of the word;
By his span of life here he brought our waiting to an end remarkably and properly.

On the night of the last supper, dining with his close companions
Once the ritual had been observed in full with the permitted foods
He gave food to each of the group of Twelve with his own hands.

The Word made flesh makes the true bread and the word into flesh
And the blood of Christ becomes pure wine; and if resolution fails
Faith alone is enough to strengthen a pure heart.

Therefore I have realised that we should worship only the Sacrament And that the ancient text should yield to the new worship; Faith will be the best guarantee against failure of resolve.

Genitori genitoque laus et jubilatio, Salus, honor, virtus quoque sit et benedictio Procedenti ab utroque compar sit laudatio. Amen.

Vidimus stellam ejus in Oriente, et venimus cum muneribus adorare Dominum.

Surge illuminare, Jerusalem, quia venit lumen tuum, et gloria Domini super te orta est. Alleluia. To the Father and the Son may there be praise and rejoicing, worship, honour, glory, and also blessing
And to the [Spirit] coming from both, may there be equal praise. Amen.

We have seen his star in the East and have come with gifts to worship the Lord.

Arise, shine out, Jerusalem, for your light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. Alleluia.

Biographies

Brighton Consort was formed by the late Daphne Elston in 1971 and is best known for its ambitious exploration of the rich repertoire of renaissance and early baroque music. Its Musical Directors have included Deborah Roberts, Katie Thomas, James Dixon and the present director Greg Skidmore. Several choir members are also closely involved in the running of the Brighton Early Music Festival. Brighton Consort's programmes have included collaborations with Ensemble Reza, the Paul Nieman Brass Ensemble and Nick Houghton, and the choir has performed in the Voices of London Festival and at various events in the Royal Pavilion, Brighton. Although our core repertoire is mainly Renaissance choral music, in order to offer variety to audiences and singers alike, our programmes sometimes include contemporary pieces and items from other musical periods too.

Born in Canada, Greg Skidmore arrived in England as an undergraduate at Royal Holloway College, University of London. After graduating with First Class Honours in Music, his post-graduate Choral Scholarship at Wells Cathedral led him to Lay Clerkships at Gloucester Cathedral and Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford. He now lives in London and pursues a varied career as a consort, choral, and solo oratorio singer alongside work as a conductor and workshop leader. He has appeared with The Tallis Scholars, The Sixteen, The Cardinall's Musick, I Fagiolini, Tenebrae, Gabrieli Consort, Alamire, Contrapunctus, The Eric Whitacre Singers, EXAUDI, Collegium Vocale Ghent, Cappella Amsterdam, La Grand Chapelle (Madrid), and the Tafelmusik Baroque Chamber Choir (Toronto). He can be heard on recordings released by Decca, Deutsche Grammophon, Harmonia Mundi USA, and Gimell Records. In February 2022, Greg made his hundredth appearance with The Tallis Scholars. While at Christ Church in Oxford, he began a course of doctoral research in Musicology at the University of Oxford and started his own men's voices consort, I Dedicati. More recently he was appointed Musical Director of The Lacock Scholars, one of the UK's premier amateur vocal consorts. Greg recently completed major coaching projects with students at the University of York and the Guildhall School of

Music and Drama and also has worked as a freelance vocal coach and conductor at the Royal Academy of Music. He has given workshops and masterclasses in the UK, France, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia in association with *The Sixteen, I Fagiolini*, and on his own and he is increasingly engaged in Canada as a guest conductor, clinician, and record producer, founding *The Canadian Renaissance Music Summer Schools* in 2018. He has been published in *Early Music* and his writing has appeared in programmes and CD liner notes for *The Tallis Scholars*, *The Sixteen*, *The Cardinall's Musick*, *The Gabrieli Consort*, *Tenebrae*, and *Ex Cathedra*.

Hamish Dustagheer is Director of Music at St Bartholomew's Church, Brighton, and College Organist and Organ Tutor at Ardingly College. Born in 1992, he graduated from the Royal College of Music with first-class honours and the keyboard prize; he subsequently completed postgraduate studies at New College, Oxford with distinction. Various appointments followed, both in ecclesiastical and educational foundations – notably his tenure as Maestro di Cappella of the Archdiocese of Malta (resident at St John's Co-Cathedral, Valletta), and Interim Director of Chapel Music at Oundle School and Lancing College. His church and teaching positions have been held alongside a busy freelance career at home and abroad, as well as serving for over a decade as Visiting Organist at Quarr Abbey.

Interested in joining us?

Brighton Consort performs mainly Renaissance and early Baroque choral music but programmes sometimes include contemporary pieces and items from other musical periods too. We normally present three concert programmes per year, usually with two performances of each. We rehearse on Wednesday evenings (7:30pm-10:00pm) at St George's Church, Kemptown. Rehearsals take place throughout the year, with a break during July and August. We are always looking to hear from enthusiastic new singers in all voice parts and the best way to inquire about joining us is to get in touch. We'll ask you a little bit about your experience and suitability for what we do, but we are a welcoming and flexible bunch! We're very open to meeting new people and can't wait to hear from you.

To reach us, please email info@brightonconsort.org.uk

Public Workshop

Would you like to spend an afternoon singing with members of Brighton Consort under the leadership of our Musical Director, Greg Skidmore?

Join us at our <u>public workshop</u> on:

Saturday, 17 June, 2023 at St Paul's, West Street Brighton BN1 2RE

Big Byrd: Large music by a large genius, William Byrd

We will explore large-scale works by Byrd, including his *Quomodo* cantabimus, and *Ad Dominum cum tribularer*.

More information, including an online form where you can sign up to participate, is available on our website:

brightonconsort.org.uk/big-byrd-workshop

More Information

For more information about **Brighton Consort**, to browse through our past projects, and learn more about the choir and our musical director, please visit our website:

brightonconsort.org.uk

or email:

info@brightonconsort.org.uk

Next Concerts

Brighton Consort next appears in a programme entitled

The Byrds & The Bees Music for summer, inspired by nature, in celebration of love

There will be two concerts of this programme:

Saturday, 15 July 2023 7:00pm

at

The Church of St Mary-de-Haura Church Street, Shoreham-by-Sea BN43 5DQ

and

Sunday, 16 July 2023 7:00pm

at

St George's Church, Kemptown St George's Road, Brighton BN2 1ED

In our continuing series of concerts highlighting the music of William Byrd, join us as we celebrate summer, good weather, the passions of love, and the beauty of nature. We will mix sacred and secular music and explore composers from around the European Renaissance including Francisco Guerrero, Clemens non Papa, Manuel Cardoso, John Taverner, Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina - and of course William Byrd. We'll also draw from the works of Byrd's contemporaries found in *The Triumphs of Oriana*, Thomas Morley's famous collection of madrigals from 1601. It promises to be sunny, warm, and luscious - weather permitting!