

**The Memorial Church of Harvard University**  
**Music Notes for Sunday, February 5, 2023**

This morning's music comes from the pen of William Byrd, a composer who represents the pinnacle of artistic achievement in the Tudor period. Byrd was a prolific and versatile composer in virtually all contemporary English genres, and his music could be heard in the great cathedrals, in private chapels, at court, and in domestic amateur music-making. Indeed, the quality of his output even transcended the bitter religious divisions of the time, and his music was admired and performed by Protestants and Roman Catholics alike.

The richly-scored, eight-part "Diliges Dominum" comes from the *Cantiones Sacrae* of 1575—a collection that Tallis and Byrd published themselves, having been granted one of the first patents—by Queen Elizabeth I—for the printing and marketing of part-music and lined music paper.

Byrd's three well-known settings of the Mass Ordinary—for three, four, and five voices—were probably written to provide music for English Catholics to sing during their clandestine services. The Gloria and Agnus Dei from the *Mass for Four Voices* display Byrd's exquisite mastery of vocal polyphonic writing: the hauntingly beautiful setting of the text "dona nobis pacem" is particularly noteworthy.

William Byrd's keyboard music has always stood in the shadow of his vocal music, notwithstanding admirers as diverse as Moscheles, Rubinstein, and Glenn Gould. Byrd masterfully combined English and Italian Renaissance traditions to create an independent musical language suitable to the refined keyboard instruments of the time. The prelude comprises three settings of the Dorian-mode plainsong *Clarificame, Pater* (a Sarum antiphon to the *Magnificat*), which Byrd probably composed in the 1560s. The postlude is the composer's *Fantasia in C*, which is contained in the primary source of keyboard music from the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean period in England, the *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*.