

# Editor's Note

*“Ye Sacred Muses” is an elegy on the death of Byrd’s friend (and possibly teacher) Thomas Tallis. The two composers shared a monopoly on music printing and had issued a joint collection of motets – “Cantiones Sacrae” in 1575. Born probably about 1505, Tallis died on 23 November 1585, giving a possible date of composition in late 1585 or early 1586. The words may be by Byrd himself.*

*The sources give no instrumentation, but the music is probably set for voice and viols. The vocal range fits a soprano, alto or mean (child mezzo-soprano). A tenor or baritone voice is possible – theoretically this results in an inversion of the harmony, but the ear fairly readily accepts the effect when a voice contrasts with instruments. Voice and recorders also works – sounding better with a bass viol or other 8-foot-pitch instrument on Part V to give a proper bass to the ensemble. The piece is effective with instruments only. The fact that the voice part is mainly at the top of the texture makes it stand out sufficiently without needing an instrument of different tone quality. The editorial keyboard reduction is intended to assist with rehearsing the voice part. It might also be used to accompany the instruments, though in England this appears to have been a practice of the mid-17th century rather than of Byrd’s time.*

*Performers are encouraged to try incorporating some elements of Elizabethan pronunciation into their performance. The following pointers may be useful:*

- *Sacred/ race (Long A = /ɛ:/ sound rather like “ai” in “air”)*
- *Jove, SorrOW (O = /o/ with lips strongly rounded and no trace of a “u” at the end as happens with modern /ɔʊ / as in “so”)*
- *R is flapped or rolled - strongly at the beginning of words and between vowels, weakly at the end of words and before another consonant (“sort” etc.) - like Scottish “r”, not modern North American “r”.*
- *Delighteth, eyes, dies (Long “I” sound / ʌi/ rather than /ai/ as in modern English [ / ʌ/ as U in “cup”])*
- *Come, above (O = / ʊ / as in “put” rather than / ʌ / as in “cup”)*
- *Down (OU = / ʌu / [pronounced similarly to this by some Canadians] - rather than normal modern English /au/)*
- *Earth (EA = /ɛ:/ like “ai” in “air” rather than “ur” in “fur”)*
- *Where (ERE = /ɛ:/R/ like “air”, rolled R, WH possibly pronounced /hw/ , though this added H not present in all English dialects)*
- *Mourning (pronounce as “morning” or possibly “moor-ning” [ still used by some English speakers, though OED gives only “morning”])*
- *Teares (EA is usually pronounced /ɛ:/ like “air” in Elizabethan English)*
- *Tallis (A = / æ / as in “apple”)*
- *Other words may be pronounced more or less as in modern English.*

## Critical commentary

*“Ye Sacred Muses” is found in three manuscript sources:*

*A: Harvard College Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MS Mus 30 f.2b – set of partbooks, lacking Cantus (early 17<sup>th</sup> Century)*



*B: British Museum, Add. MSS 29401-5 f.17b- set of partbooks (probably after 1613)*

*C: British Museum, Add. MS 31992 f.15b– lute book containing a large anthology of Byrd’s songs (probably after 1611)*

*The piece occurs in A at the pitch printed in this edition (Parts II-V only), in B a fourth higher (Parts I-V) and in C with parts II-V only arranged for lute a minor third higher (end of the piece incomplete – lacking the last 4 bars, presumably written on a now missing folio). The piece is anonymous in A and B and attributed to “Mr Byrde” in C. It is not certain what may have been the original pitch, though many consort songs seem to have been designed for a boy’s voice of “mean” range (highest note normally “E” in the 4<sup>th</sup> space of the G2 clef), which fits with the pitch of source A.*

*This edition is printed at the (low) pitch of source A. There are few differences between A and B with respect to notes. Where there is a difference, B has normally been followed. (Source C has not been used in the preparation of the edition.) A few variants of interest are listed below:*

*Part II, bar 22, note 1+2 and bar 23, note 1+2 and bar 27, note 1+2 Source B=  , Source A= *

*Part IV bar 50, note 1+2 and Bar 55, note 3 – bar 56 note 1 , Source B =  , Source A = .*

*Part II, bar 57, note 2, Source B =  , Source A, no accidental (repeated note at same pitch implies # like previous note)*

*Original clefs:*

*I (Voice): Missing in source B, source A is a fourth higher, with starting note G and key signature of one flat; II C3; III C4; IV C4; V F4*

*Part names are editorial. Time signature and note values are as in the original. Barlines have been added by the editor. Accidentals are shown according to the normal practice in Byrd’s printed editions – an accidental applies only to the note it stands before or its immediate repetition in the same octave. If it occurs in a different octave or if another note or rest intervenes, a fresh accidental is required. Editorial accidentals are shown in the usual way above the stave and apply only to the note above which they stand. Spelling has been modernized. The keyboard reduction of Parts II-V is editorial. In the keyboard reduction, voice leading has been altered where necessary to improve readability.*

*Vince Kelly, Edmonton 22 August 2007*