

BYRD ENSEMBLE

directed by Markdavin Obenza

www.byrdensemble.com | 4722 Fauntleroy Way SW #123, Seattle, WA 98116

THE TUDORS

Sunday, October 20, 2024, at 7:30 p.m.
Holy Rosary Church - 4139 42nd Ave SW, Seattle, WA 98116

PROGRAM

- John Taverner** (c. 1490–1545) Dum transisset Sabbatum I
Robert White (c. 1538–1574) Christe qui lux IV
Nico Muhly (b. 1981) Fallings
William Cornysh (c. 1465–1523) Magnificat

Intermission

- John Sheppard** (c. 1515–1558) Sacris solemnibus
William Byrd (1540–1623) Mass for five voices
- *Kyrie*
 - *Gloria*
 - *Credo*
 - *Sanctus*
 - *Agnus Dei*

OUR PROGRAM EXPLORES RENAISSANCE MUSIC FROM TUDOR ENGLAND, featuring Latin motets by the finest composers of the era: John Taverner, Robert White, William Cornysh, John Sheppard, and our namesake, William Byrd. Accompanying these motets is a new work by American composer Nico Muhly, commissioned by the Byrd Ensemble in 2023 in celebration of their 20th anniversary.

Unfortunately, we do not know much about **John Taverner** (c. 1490–1545) before 1524. We know that Taverner became the first Organist and Master of the Choristers at Christ Church, Oxford in 1526. In 1528, he was reprimanded for his likely minor involvement with the Lutherans, but escaped punishment. In 1530, Taverner left the college and likely had no further musical appointments.

BYRD ENSEMBLE

DIRECTOR
Markdavin Obenza

SOPRANO
Margaret Obenza
Ruth Schauble

ALTO
Sarra S. Doyle
Haley Gabler

TENOR
Orrin Doyle
Sam Faustine
Joshua Haberman

BASS
Clayton Moser
Willimark Obenza
Matthew Peterson

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BYRD
ENSEMBLE



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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Stylistically, Taverner was the most important composer of the first half of the 16th century. His music connects the complex, florid style of the Eton Choirbook composers of the late 15th century (e.g., William Cornysh, John Browne) with the simpler, imitative style of the later mid-16th century composers—Thomas Tallis and John Sheppard. Taverner's *Dum transisset Sabbatum I* is the first of two settings of the respond on Easter Sunday. *Dum transisset* stands as one of the finest examples of English polyphony in the last days of the Sarum Rite. Scored for five voices with the chant in the tenor voice, Taverner's setting alternates polyphony and chant, employing long luxurious lines for an atmospheric and contemplative telling of the story of three women, bringing spices to anoint the body of Jesus, who arrive to find an empty tomb on Easter morning,

The first glimpse we get of **Robert White** (c. 1538–1574), son of an organ builder, is as a chorister and eventually an adult singer in the choir of Trinity College,

Cambridge, from 1554 to 1562. He moved to Ely, where he succeeded his father-in-law and composer Christopher Tye as Master of the Choristers and married Christopher Tye's daughter in 1565. Known for his abilities as a choir trainer, White was eventually appointed organist and master of the choristers of Westminster Abbey in 1570.

White was a leading composer in the generation of composers between Tallis and Byrd. Like any active composer in England during the early years of Elizabeth's reign, White was forced to make stylistic compromises as a result of the Reformation but did not exactly comply. Instead of writing Anglican music in English, White preferred writing in the Catholic style of Tallis's youth for Elizabeth I's Protestant Church, resulting in a unique compositional style that wedded the old with the new. White's *Christe qui lux IV*, a setting of a Compline hymn, asks God for protection in the coming night. The five part polyphonic setting is based

on chant quoted strictly throughout in the tenor part, second from the bottom.

Nico Muhly's (b. 1981) *Fallings* takes inspiration from William Byrd's *Ne irascaris, Domine* (not on the program). The text is taken from the verses of Isaiah directly following and preceding the verses set by Byrd. Unlike the Byrd, which laments a Jerusalem already fallen, Muhly gives the sense that we are watching the fall of the temple in real time. The opening paints a picture of an unblemished house, almost childlike in its innocence and security. But the mood quickly becomes more serious and threatened, and we are soon hearing about the temple burning in a texture that becomes increasingly agitated. In the second half, this cacophony is suspended for a moment of respite, in which the text asks God whether help is forthcoming. Muhly follows this with an earlier verse from the same chapter that takes comfort from the image of God as potter.

In his only surviving poem, which was written in Fleet Prison, **William Cornysh** (c. 1465–1523) claims that he has been falsely convicted and wrongly accused, though it is not known what the accusation was. Cornysh was a true Renaissance man. He was a composer, dramatist, actor, and poet. Cornysh had the prestigious employment at court as Master of the Children of the Chapel Royal from 1509 until his death in 1523. Like Robert White, Cornysh, too, was a good choir trainer and was responsible for the very high standard of singing in the Chapel Royal choir. In September 1513, Cornysh took the choir on tour in France and impressed the audiences so much that several descriptions of these impressive performances still survive.

The remaining large-scale works by Cornysh that have survived are all in the Eton Choirbook—a collection of English motets compiled between 1500-1505 that contain the most complex and florid polyphonic motets in the oeuvre—except the *Magnificat*, which is in the Caius Choirbook. Written for five voices, Cornysh's setting of the Magnificat demonstrates the peak of the polyphonic style in complexity, scale, and intricacy.

John Sheppard (c. 1515–1558), often overshadowed by Tallis and Byrd, was one of the greatest composers of the English Renaissance. Sheppard composed during a golden age of English cathedral music. He served under monarchs Edward VI and his sisters, Mary I and Elizabeth I, and he was a key figure in Mary Tudor's program to compose elaborate polyphony for the Sarum Rite, which was restored in 1553. Unfortunately, much of Sheppard's work has survived incomplete. Since it was usually the tenor part missing, it has been possible to reconstruct several of his pieces because Sheppard often used existing chants as the tenor parts. *Sacris solemniiis*, however, disguises the chant in the top voices. This hymn for Lauds and Vespers on All Saints Day alternates verses of chant with seven-part polyphony.

"Tallis is dead and music dies," lamented **William Byrd** (1540–1623), Tallis's pupil and, later, colleague. Byrd obtained the prestigious post of Gentleman of the Chapel Royal in 1572. Though he was not required to write in as many styles as Tallis—the political and religious situation in England had settled somewhat by Byrd's tenure—he was an impressive successor to his teacher. Byrd's musical challenges were more personal—he spent his life composing for a Protestant church as a devout Catholic. Many believe that his music often reflects his desire for the return of Catholicism in veiled terms.

Byrd's *Mass for five voices* was likely written c. 1594 during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I and is one of three mass settings he published in the early 1590s. The text of this mass, like Byrd's two others, complies with the decision of the Council of Trent that the full ordinary was always to be used, including the Kyrie. It is likely that Byrd composed his Latin liturgical music, at great personal risk, for use by dissenting Catholic families in their domestic chapels. These pieces would have been sung by a small group of singers, perhaps one to a part. Unlike most of the mass settings composed by Continental composers, Byrd's masses are not based on a theme or other unifying material. They are freely composed. The mass setting is written with an economy of style and scale that allows it to be sung manageably by smaller forces of one or two on a part. Byrd beautifully varies the vocal texture, allowing for the text to come through with the utmost clarity.

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Since 2004, the Byrd Ensemble has been committed to performing vocal chamber music, particularly Renaissance polyphony, at the highest level. Over the last few years, we have diverted more attention and resources towards education and outreach. Through our international courses, collaborations, performances, and masterclasses, we have connected with young singers from our local music educational institutions and professional-track ensemble singers from all over the world in hopes of passing on our love for vocal chamber music. Making a donation is the best way to support our work. Thank you for your support.



Markdavin Obenza
Artistic Director, Byrd Ensemble

ABOUT THE BYRD ENSEMBLE

Described as “pure and radiant” (Gramophone), “immensely impressive” (Early Music Review), and “rich, full-voiced, and perfectly blended” (Early Music America), the Byrd Ensemble has been internationally acclaimed for its performances and recordings of chamber vocal music, particularly Renaissance polyphony. The Byrd Ensemble, directed by Markdavin Obenza, is a Seattle-based professional ensemble made up of 10 to 12 singers.

Since 2004, the ensemble has performed in the greater Seattle area and also tours across the United States. In a performance in London, John Rutter described the ensemble as “a fine group that has achieved an enviable standard of tuning, blend, and ensemble.” The Byrd Ensemble signed with the Scribe Records label in 2011 and has since produced eight recordings.

The Byrd Ensemble is represented by Artist Manager Marianne LaCrosse of Suòno Artist Management (marianne@suonoartistmanagement.com).

ABOUT MARKDAVIN OBenza

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MARKDAVIN OBenza is a choral director, recording producer, singer, and composer. He is also the director of Seattle-based choral ensemble Radiance, specializing in the performance of American choral music, and is the director of choral activities at Trinity Parish Church in Seattle, WA. As the creative director and producer for independent record label Scribe Records, Markdavin has produced CD recordings for over 40 choirs and soloists, of which several have been reviewed in *Gramophone*, *Early Music America*, *Early Music Review*, and *Fanfare*. Markdavin has also produced and directed a number of virtual choirs, including Caroline Shaw's *and the swallow*, which was featured on Modern Choral Masterworks, broadcast by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. He has also produced "concertmentaries" and musical broadcasts in collaboration with various music ensembles and artists during the pandemic, including *Shaker Spirituals in Maine* (2021), featuring composer Kevin Siegfried and Radiance, for the Library of Congress American Folklife Center.

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

Dum transisset Sabbatum I

John Taverner (c. 1490-1545)

Dum transisset Sabbatum,
Maria Magdalene et Maria Jacobi et Salome
emerunt aromata ut venientes ungerent Jesum. Alleluia.

*And when the Sabbath was past,
Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome
had brought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint
him. Alleluia.*

Et valde mane una sabbatorum veniunt ad monumentum
orto iam sole ut venientes ungerent Jesum. Alleluia.

*And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they
came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun that they
might come and anoint him. Alleluia.*

Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto. Alleluia.

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
Alleluia.*

- Mark 16:1-2

Christe qui lux IV

Robert White (c. 1538-1574)

Christe qui lux es et dies,
Noctis tenebras detegis,
Lucisque lumen crederis,
Lumen beatum praedicans.

*Christ, who art the light and day,
You drive away the darkness of night,
You are called the light of light,
For you proclaim the blessed light.*

Precamur Sancte Domine,
Defende nos in hac nocte,
Sit nobis in te requies,
Quietam noctem tribue.

*We beseech you, Holy Lord,
Protect us this night.
Let us take our rest in you;
Grant us a tranquil night.*

Ne gravis somnus irruat,
Nec hostis nos surripiat,
Nec caro illi consentiens,
Nos tibi reos statuatur.

*Let our sleep be free from care;
Let not the enemy snatch us away,
Nor flesh conspire within him,
And make us guilty in your sight.*

Oculi somnum capiant,
Cor ad te semper vigilet,
Dextera tua protegat
Famulos qui te diligunt.

*Though our eyes be filled with sleep,
Keep our hearts forever awake to you.
May your right hand protect
Your willing servants.*

Fallings

Nico Muhly (b. 1981)

The house of our hallowing and of our glory, where our
fathers praised thee, is made into burning of fire; and all our
desirable things be turned into fallings.

But now, O Lord, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and
thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.

-Isaiah 64 v. 8 (King James Version)

Lord, whether on these things thou shalt withhold thee?
shalt thou be still, and shalt thou torment us greatly?

-Isaiah 64 v. 11-12 (Wycliffe, modernised)

Magnificat

William Cornysh (1465-1523)

Magnificat anima mea Dominum,
et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutare meo,
quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae.

Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes
generationes,
quia fecit mihi magna, qui potens est,
et sanctum nomen eius,
et misericordia eius a progenies in progenies timentibus
eum.

Fecit potentiam in brachio suo,
dispersit superbos mente cordis sui;
deposuit potentes de sede et exaltavit humiles;
esurientes implevit bonis et divites dimisit inanes.

Suscepit Israel puerum suum, recordatus misericordiae,
sicut locutus est ad patres nostros, Abraham et semini
eius in saecula. Amen.

*My soul doth magnify the Lord.
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
Because he hath regarded the humility of his
handmaid;
for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me
blessed.
Because he that is mighty, hath done great things to me; and
holy is his name.
And his mercy is from generation unto generations, to them
that fear him.*

*He hath shewed might in his arm: he hath scattered the proud
in the conceit of their heart.
He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted
the humble. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the
rich he hath sent empty away.
He hath received Israel his servant, being mindful of his mercy:
As he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed for
ever. Amen.*

Intermission

Sacris solemniiis

John Sheppard (c. 1515-1558)

Sacris solemniiis iuncta sint gaudia,
et ex praecordiis sonent praeconia;
recedant vetera, nova sint omnia,
corda, voces, et opera.

Noctis recolitur cena novissima,
qua Christus creditor agnum et azyma
dedisse fratribus, iuxta legitima
priscis indulta patribus.

Post agnum typicum, expletis epulis,
Corpus Dominicum datum discipulis,
sic totum omnibus, quod totum singulis,
eius fatemur manibus.

Dedit fragilibus corporis ferculum,
dedit et tristibus sanguinis poculum,
dicens: Accipite quod trado vasculum;
omnes ex eo bibite.

Sic sacrificium istud instituit,
cuius officium committi voluit
solis presbyteris, quibus sic congruit,
ut sumant, et dent ceteris.

*At this our solemn feast let holy joys abound,
and from the inmost breast let songs of praise resound;
let ancient rites depart, and all be new around,
in every act, and voice, and heart.*

*Remember we that eve, when, the Last Supper spread,
Christ, as we all believe, the Lamb, with leavenless
bread, among His brethren shared, and thus the Law
obeyed, of all unto their sire declared.*

*The typic Lamb consumed, the legal Feast complete,
the Lord unto the Twelve His Body gave to eat;
the whole to all, no less the whole to each did mete
with His own hands, as we confess.*

*He gave them, weak and frail, His Flesh, their Food to
be; on them, downcast and sad, His Blood bestowed He:
and thus to them He spake, "Receive this Cup from Me,
and all of you of this partake."*

*So He this Sacrifice to institute did will,
and charged His priests alone that office to fulfill:
in them He did confide: to whom it pertains still
to take, and the rest divide.*

Panis angelicus fit panis hominum;
dat panis caelicus figuris terminum;
O res mirabilis: manducat Dominum
pauper, servus et humilis.

Te, trina Deitas unaque, poscimus:
sic nos tu visita, sicut te colimus;
per tuas semitas duc nos quo tendimus,
ad lucem quam inhabitas.

*Thus Angels' Bread is made the Bread of man today:
the Living Bread from heaven with figures dost away:
O wondrous gift indeed! the poor and lowly may
upon their Lord and Master feed.*

*Thee, therefore, we implore, o Godhead, One in Three,
so may Thou visit us as we now worship Thee;
and lead us on Thy way, That we at last may see
the light wherein Thou dwellest aye.*

Mass for five voices

William Byrd (1540-1623)

Kyrie eleison.
Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison.

*Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.*

Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.
Laudamus te. Benedicimus te.
Adoramus te. Glorificamus te.
Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam.
Domine Deus, Rex caelestis,
Deus Pater omnipotens.
Domine Fili unigenite, Iesu Christe.
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris.

*Glory to God in the highest
and on earth peace to men of goodwill.
We praise you. We bless you.
We worship you. We glorify you.
We give thanks to you for your great glory.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God the Father
O Lord, the only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father.*

Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem
factorem caeli et terrae,
visibilium omnium et invisibilium.
Et in unum Dominum Jesum Christum,
Filius Dei unigenitum.
Et ex Patre natum ante omnia saecula.
Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine,
Deum verum de Deo vero.
Genitum, non factum, consubstantialem Patri:
per quem omnia facta sunt.
Qui propter nos homines
et propter nostram salutem
descendit de caelis.

*I believe in one God, the Father, the almighty
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is seen and unseen.
I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only begotten Son of God.
Eternally begotten of the Father.
God from God, light from light,
true God from true God.
Begotten not made, of one being with the Father:
through him all things were made.
For us men
and for our salvation,
he came down from heaven.*

Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto
ex Maria virgine: et homo factus est.

*By the power of the Holy Spirit he became
incarnate of the virgin Mary: and was made man.*

Crucifixus etiam pro nobis: sub Pontio Pilato
passus et sepultus est.
Et resurrexit tertia die secundum scripturas.
Et ascendit in caelum:
sedet ad dexteram Patris.
Et iterum venturus est cum gloria
iudicare vivos et mortuos:
cuius regni non erit finis.

*For our sake he was crucified: under Pontius Pilate
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again in accordance with the scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He shall come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom shall have no end.*

Et in Spiritum Sanctum Dominum, et vivificantem:
qui ex Patre Filioque procedit.
Qui cum Patre et Filio simul
adoratur et conglorificatur;
qui locutus est per Prophetas.
Et unam sanctam catholicam
et apostolicam Ecclesiam. Confiteor unum
baptisma in remissionem peccatorum.
Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum.
Et vitam venturi saeculi. Amen.

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.
Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem

*I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life:
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son
he is worshipped and glorified;
he has spoken through the Prophets.
I believe in one holy
and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one
baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
And I look for the resurrection of the dead.
And the life of the world to come. Amen.*

*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth.
The heavens and the earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.*

*Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have
mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us
peace.*

NEXT CONCERT:



SATURDAY, NOV 30, 2024 at 7:30 PM
SUNDAY, DEC 1, 2024 at 3:00 PM
Trinity Parish Church
609 8th Ave, Seattle, WA

Program

BACH *In dulci jubilo* a8
M. PRAETORIUS *In dulci jubilo*
BACH *Wachet auf*
BIEBL *Ave Maria*
H. PRAETORIUS *Magnificat*

M. PRAETORIUS *Puer natus in Bethlehem*
BACH *Komm Jesu Komm*
BACH *Sheep may safely graze*
GRUBER *Stille Nacht*
M. PRAETORIUS *In dulci jubilo* a16

The Byrd Ensemble and Brass present a program of festive Christmas music from Germany to usher in the holiday season. Two settings of *In dulci jubilo* by J.S. Bach and Michael Praetorius bookend the program of primarily baroque Christmas music. The program includes Bach's motet *Komm Jesu komm* and Franz Biebl's *Ave Maria*.