



Byrd (Master Musicians Series)

Kerry McCarthy

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The foremost composer under the reign of Elizabeth I and James I, William Byrd (c. 1540 - 1623) produced countless masses, motets, polyphonic songs, and works for keyboard and instrumental consort, all of which rank among the most unique and inspired works of the late Renaissance. His output was widely admired both at the time and now, and the influence he exerted on his contemporaries and on future generations of English composers was profound. Byrd was especially well-known for his motets, a musical form which he - a practicing Catholic in Anglican England and composer for the English Chapel Royal - especially favored, in spite of the threats of religious persecution he routinely faced.

This biography takes a new look at Byrd's music - instrumental and vocal, sacred and secular - and the various documents of his long life. Exploring the musical world in which Byrd grew up, author Kerry McCarthy traces his influence on the English musicians of the early Baroque, many of whom were his students, and takes on the uncomfortable paradoxes of the composer's life as a devout and influential Catholic who spent much of his career in the service of the English Protestant establishment. McCarthy also pays special attention to Byrd's literary background and activities as an older contemporary of Shakespeare who enjoyed close ties to the Elizabethan and Jacobean literary world. A detailed, fresh, and readable account of a composer who was revered by his colleagues as "our Phoenix" and "a Father of Music", *Byrd* is essential reading for scholars, students, and performers of early music, as well as general readers interested in the musical world of Renaissance England.

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