

Ne irascaris Domine

Isaiah 64:9–10
(Vulgate)

William Byrd (c. 1540–1623)
Edited by David Masao Zimmerman

Superius [Soprano]
Medius [Alto]
Contratenor [Tenor]
Tenor [Baritone]
Bassus [Bass]

for rehearsal only

Ne i - ra - sca - ris Do - mi -
Ne i - ra - sca - ris Do - mi - ne
Ne i - ra - sca - ris Do - mi - ne sa -

The first system of the musical score features five vocal parts: Superius (Soprano), Medius (Alto), Contratenor (Tenor), Tenor (Baritone), and Bassus (Bass). Each part is written on a five-line staff with a clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: "Ne i - ra - sca - ris Do - mi -", "Ne i - ra - sca - ris Do - mi - ne", and "Ne i - ra - sca - ris Do - mi - ne sa -". Below the vocal staves is a grand staff for the keyboard, consisting of a treble and bass clef, with the instruction "for rehearsal only".

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Ne i - ra - sca - ris Do - mi -
Ne i - ra - sca - ris Do - mi - ne
ne sa - - - - - tis. Ne i - ra - sca - ris Do - mi - ne sa -
sa - - - - - tis,
- - - - - tis,
- - - - -

The second system of the musical score begins with a measure rest marked with the number "5". It continues with the same five vocal parts and keyboard accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Ne i - ra - sca - ris Do - mi -", "Ne i - ra - sca - ris Do - mi - ne", "ne sa - - - - - tis. Ne i - ra - sca - ris Do - mi - ne sa -", "sa - - - - - tis,", "- - - - - tis,", and "- - - - -".

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ce, ec - ce, re - spi - ce,
 Ec - ce, ec - ce, re -
 Ec - ce, ec - ce, re - spi -
 Ec - ce, ec - ce, re - spi - ce,
 Ec - ce, ec - ce, re - spi - ce,

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Ec - ce, re - spi -
 spi - ce, ec - ce, re -
 ce, ec - ce, re - spi - ce,
 spi - ce, ec - ce re -
 re - spi - ce, ec - ce, re - spi -

Secunda pars

75

Ci - vi - tas san - cti tu - - - - -

Ci - vi - tas san - cti tu - - - - - i, san - cti tu - - - - -

Ci - - - - -

Ci - - - vi - tas san - cti

Ci - - - - -

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- - - - i, Ci - vi - tas san - cti tu - - - - i,

i, Ci - - vi - tas san - cti tu - - - - i, - - - - i,

- vi - tas san - cti tu - i, Ci - - vi - tas san - cti tu - - - - i, san - cti tu - i, Ci - vi - tas san - cti

Ci - vi - tas san - cti tu - i, Ci - - - -

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fa - cta est de - ser - ta, de - ser - - - ta,
 san - cti tu - - - i, fa - cta est de -
 - i, san - cti tu - i, fa - cta est de - ser - ta, fa -
 tu - - - i, fa - cta est de - ser - - - ta,
 - vi - tas san - cti tu - i,

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de - ser - - - ta, fa -
 ser - - - ta, fa - cta est de - ser - ta, de - ser - - - ta,
 - cta est de - ser - ta, fa - cta est de -
 fa - cta est de - ser - ta, de - ser - - - ta,
 fa - cta est de - ser - ta, de -

99

cta est de-ser - ta, fa - cta est de - ser - -
 fa - cta est de-ser - # - ta, fa - cta est de-ser - -
 ser - ta, fa - cta est de-ser - - # - ta, de-ser - -
 de-ser - ta, fa - cta est de - ser - ta, de-ser - -
 ser - ta, fa - cta est de-ser - ta, de - ser - -

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ta. Si - on de-ser - ta, de-ser - ta fa - - cta est,
 ta. Si - on de-ser - ta, de-ser - ta fa - cta est,
 ta. Si - on de-ser - ta, de-ser - ta fa - cta est,
 ta, Si - on de-ser - ta, de-ser - ta fa - cta est,
 ta,

Je - ru - sa - lem, Je - ru - sa - lem, de - so - sa - lem, de - so - la - ta est, de - ru - sa - lem, Je - ru - sa - lem, Je - ru - sa - lem, de - so - la - ta Je - lem, Je - ru - sa - lem, Je - ru - sa - lem, Je - ru - sa - lem, Je - ru - sa - lem,

la - ta est, de - so - la - ta est, - so - la - ta est, de - so - la - ta est, de - so est, de - so - la - ta est, de - so - la - ta ru - sa - lem, Je - ru - sa - lem de - so - la - ta est, de - so - la - ta est, de - so - la - ta est, de -

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de - so - la - ta est, de - so - la - ta est,
 la - - ta est, de - so - la - - - - ta est, de - so -
 est, de - so - la - ta est, de - so - la - ta
 de - so - la - ta est, de - so - la - ta est, de - so - la -
 - so - la - ta est, de - so - la - ta est,

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de - so - la - ta est,
 la - ta est, de - so - la - ta est, de - so - la - ta est,
 est, de - so - la - ta est, de - so - la - ta est,
 - ta est, de - so - la - - - ta est, de - so - la - ta
 de - - so - la - ta est, de - so -

About this edition

This performing edition has been compiled from a digital reproduction of the Huntington Library’s copy of the original printed parts to Byrd’s *Cantiones sacrae I* (1589), available online via IMSLP.¹ The original pitch level and note values have been retained, though a modern time signature and barlines have been added for the benefit of non-specialists. Evidence from period organs suggests that pre-1642 traditional English “quire pitch” was roughly 1 to 2 half steps higher than the modern A440 standard.² However, as Byrd’s motets were intended for *unaccompanied* performances by small groups of singers (presumably one to a part) in a domestic rather than liturgical setting,³ the choice of performing pitch must have been fundamentally flexible. Cautionary accidentals (unambiguous in the source) are shown in parentheses, while editorial accidentals are placed above the staff. Horizontal brackets represent ligatures. In the superius part at m. 96, the controversial sharp affecting the first note is shown in square brackets; it is explicitly present in the source but creates a doubtful augmented sixth.⁴ Fermatas approximate the early modern custom of writing final notes as longs. A keyboard reduction is supplied as a rehearsal aid; it has been notated for playability and is not intended to be a faithful representation of the original voice-leading.

About the text

The text of this motet is from Isaiah 64:9–10 (Vulgate) and constitutes a prayer for mercy in anticipation of the coming restoration of Israel under the Messiah. This choice of text makes clear allegorical reference to England’s spiritual “desolation” in the aftermath of her separation from Rome (initiated by Henry VIII and confirmed under Elizabeth I). Byrd, famously, was a recusant Catholic but simultaneously an esteemed member of Elizabeth’s chapel royal—as well as one of her favorite composers.

Spelling and capitalization of the text have been modernized (e.g., using *j* and *v* to represent consonantal *i* and *u*), while retaining the original (occasionally inconsistent) punctuation, except for obvious errors. Text that expands a ditto sign (“ij”) in the source is italicized. The Latin text with Byrd’s original orthography is given below (top), alongside a phonetic transcription of a reconstructed⁵ period pronunciation (middle), and an English translation from the 1610 Douay–Rheims version⁶ of the Old Testament (bottom).

Ne Irafcaris domine fatis, et ne vltra memineris iniquitatis noftre: Ecce, refpice, populus tuus omnes nos.
Ciuitas fancti tui facta eft deferta, Sion deferta facta eft, Ierufalem defolata eft.

[ne iras'kæris 'dømine 'sætis et ne 'ultræ me'mineris i'nikwi'tætis 'nøstre 'ekse 'respice 'pøpjulus 'tju.us 'ømnez nøs
'sivitas 'sanctei 'tju.ei 'faktæ est de'zertæ 'sei.øn de'zertæ 'faktæ est dʒe'ruzalæm dæzø'lætæ est]

Be not angry, O Lord, enough, and remember no more our iniquity: Lo regard, all we are thy people.
The city of thy holy one is made desert, Zion is made desert, Jerusalem is become desolate.

1. Guilielmus [William] Byrd, *Liber primus sacrarum cantionum quinque vocum* (London: Thomas E[a]st, 1589), <https://imslp.org/wiki/Special:ReverseLookup/295857>.

2. Bruce Haynes, *A History of Performing Pitch: The Story of “A”* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2002), 86–92.

3. Alan Brown, preface to *The Byrd Edition*, vol. 2, *Cantiones Sacrae I (1589)* (London: Stainer & Bell, 1988), viii.

4. For further discussion of this and several other similarly problematic accidentals, see Brown, *The Byrd Edition*, 2:ix; Watkins Shaw, “A Textual Problem in Byrd: A Purely Accidental Matter,” *The Musical Times* 102, no. 1418 (April 1961): 230–32.

5. Indications of vowel length are omitted, as they are moot in the context of explicitly notated rhythm. The precise vowel qualities that Byrd would have expected to hear can be debated. I have mainly followed Harold Copeman, “The Sound of English Latin to 1650,” chap. 9 in *Singing in Latin, or, Pronunciation Explor’d* (Oxford: self-pub., 1990). However, on the basis of more recent scholarship, I reconstruct ‘long’ *i* as [ei], ‘short’ *i* as [i], and ‘short’ *u* as [u]; see Roger Lass, “Phonology and Morphology,” in *The Cambridge History of the English Language*, ed. Richard M. Hogg, vol. 3, 1476–1776, ed. Roger Lass (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 80–91. On the unreformed use of ‘long’ (i.e., tense) vowels in open final syllables, see E. J. Dobson, introduction to *The Phonetic Writings of Robert Robinson* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), xix–xx.

6. Spelling and capitalization modernized; original from <https://n2t.net/ark:/13960/t2x350b23>. The Douay–Rheims translation of the Vulgate was prepared by exiled scholars (principally Fr. Gregory Martin) at the English College in Douai, France, for use by English Catholics living under the Protestant regime. Though the Old Testament was not published until 1609–10, it is thought to have been completed by 1582 (the year in which the New Testament volume was published) but not printed at that time for lack of funds. Byrd is known to have been familiar with the translation—including its copious, politically charged annotations—and likely had access to a pre-publication version. See Philip Brett, “Prefaces to *Gradualia*,” chap. 10 in *William Byrd and His Contemporaries*, ed. Joseph Kerman and Davitt Moroney (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 144n15.