

Reges Tharsis

Edited by Jason Smart

William Byrd (1539/40–1623)

[Optional]



Treble

Mean

Countertenor [Missing]

Tenor

Bass

Re - ges Thar - sis et in - su -

Re - ges Thar - sis et in - su -

et in - - -

Re - ges Thar - sis et in - su -

Re - ges Thar - sis et in - su-lae, et

4

- lae mu - ne-ra of - fe-rent, mu - ne-ra of - fe -

- - - - lae mu - ne-ra of - fe-rent, mu - ne-ra of - fe -

su -

- - - - - lae mu - ne - ra of - fe-rent, of - fe -

in - su-lae mu - ne-ra of - fe-rent, mu - ne-ra of - fe -

8

- rent, mu - ne-ra of - fe-rent, re - ges Thar - sis et in-su -
 - rent, mu - ne-ra of - fe - rent, mu - ne-ra of - fe -
 - - lae mu - ne - ra -
 - rent, mu - ne-ra of-fe-rent, mu - ne-ra of-fe-rent, mu - ne -
 - rent, mu - ne-ra of - fe - rent, mu re - ges Thar - sis et

13

- - - - - lae mu - ne-ra
 - - rent, of - fe - rent, mu - ne-ra of - fe - rent, of -
 of - fe - - - - -
 - ra of - fe - rent, of - fe - rent, mu - ne-ra of - fe -
 in-su - lae, et in - su-lae mu - ne-ra of - ferent, of - fe -

18

of - fe - rent. Re - ges A - ra - bum et Sa - ba
 - fe - rent. Re - ges A - ra - bum et Sa - - - - - ba,
 - rent. Re - ges A - - - - -
 - - rent, mu - ne-ra of - fe - rent. Re - ges A - ra - bum et Sa -
 - - rent. Re - ges A - ra - bum et Sa - ba,

23

do - na Do - mi - no De - o, do - na Do - mi -
re - ges A - ra - bum et Sa - ba
- ra - - - - - bum et
- - ba, re - ges A - ra - bum et Sa - ba do - na
re - ges A - ra - bum et Sa - ba do - na Do - mi - no De - o, Do -

28

- no De - - - o, Do - mi - no De - - - o, Do - mi - no De -
do - na Do - mi - no De - - - o, Do - mi - no De - - - -
Sa - ba - - - - do - - - - -
Do - mi - no De - - - - o, Do - mi - no De - - - o, De -
- mi - no De - - - - o, Do - mi -

32

- o, Do - mi - no De - - - - - o,
- o, Do - mi - no De - - - - o, Do - mi - no De -
- - - - na - - - - Do - mi -
- o, De - - - - o, Do - mi - no De -
- no De - - - - - o, Do - mi - no De -

36

Do - mi-no De - o, De - - - - o,
 - - - - o, Do - mi-no De - - - - o,
 - no De - - - - - o
 - o, ad - du - - - - cent, ad - du - - - - cent,
 - o, Do - mi-no [De] - - - - o, De - - - - o,

40

do - na Do - mi-no De - o ad-du - - - - -
 do - na Do - mi-no
 ad - - - - - du - - - - -
 do - na Do - mi-no De - o ad-du - - - -
 do - na Do-mi-no De - o ad - du - - cent, do - na

44

- cent, ad-du - - - - cent, ad-du - - - - cent.
 De - o ad - du - - cent, ad - du - - cent.
 - - - - cent.
 - - cent, ad - du - - cent.
 Do - mi-no De - o ad - du - - cent.

Translation

The kings of Tharsis and of the isles shall give presents: the kings of Arabia and Saba shall bring gifts to the Lord God. (*Book of Common Prayer: Psalm 72, v.10*)

The Music

This motet is a setting of a plainsong that, in the Catholic services of the Use of Sarum, had been a respond for First Vespers and Matins on the feast of the Epiphany. In the liturgy the choral part of the respond was followed by two verses, *Et adorabunt eum* and the *Gloria Patri*. The first verse was followed by a repeat of the respond from *Reges Arabum* and the second by a repeat from *Domino Deo*. Since the composer makes no allowance for these repeats, there is no question of his setting having been intended for liturgical performance. Composition upon a plainsong cantus firmus remained an expected compositional skill long after the abolition of plainsong from the church and presumably the composer was undertaking such an exercise. Assuming that any performance will have been in a secular environment, it is rather unlikely that the plainsong incipit would have been sung.

Although the motet is attributed to Byrd, its authenticity is often regarded as doubtful. Certainly it is a wretched affair, full of incompetencies not readily attributable to simple scribal errors. Its crude, dissonance-ridden counterpoint and poorly controlled harmonic structure are quite unworthy of Byrd. Yet the scribe who copied it, John Baldwin, rarely made mistakes in his attributions (contrary to some claims in the literature) and had access to several unpublished motets by Byrd, which he may have obtained from the composer himself. Also, in a computer analysis which tested Byrd's unpublished motets of doubtful authenticity against a stylistic model of his known compositions, *Reges Tharsis* scored better than most.¹ If the work really is by Byrd, one can only suppose that it is one of his very earliest works. In the interests of performability, a couple of amendments have been made in this edition, albeit without any assurance that the surviving text is inaccurate. Giving the composer the benefit of the doubt, it would appear that he did not always treat the missing cantus firmus strictly monorhythmically in the customary fashion. Perhaps this is not wholly out of character for Byrd, who would sometimes manipulate cantus firmi for his convenience.

Editorial Conventions

The nomenclature of the voice-parts follows the Tudor convention.

The original clef, staff signature, mensuration symbol and first note of each part are shown on the prefatory staves.

Editorial accidentals are placed above the notes concerned and remain operative throughout the bar.

Spelling of the text has been modernised.

Source

Oxford, Christ Church, Mus. 979–83 (c.1575–1581 with later additions).

979	(Tr)	no.70	at end:	m ^f : w: birde:.
980	(M)	no.70	at end:	m ^f : w: birde:.
981	(T)	no.70	at end:	m ^f : w: birde:.
982	—	—		
983	(B)	no.70	index heading:	m ^f : w: birde: 5: voc:.
			at end:	m ^f : w: birde:.

The missing Countertenor part has been supplied from *Antiphonarij ad usum Sarum volumen primum vulgo pars hyemalis nuncupata* (Paris: Wolfgang Hopyl for Franz Birckman, 1519), f.73^v of the Temporale.

Notes on the Readings of the Source

The references below are in the order: 1) bar number; 2) voice; 3) reading of the source. Pitches are in capital letters, preceded by a number if necessary, e.g. ¹C = first note C in the bar. Note values are abbreviated in italics.

3	Tr	# for ¹ C	35	M	b for B
6–7	T	slur for ² E ¹ G, slur for ² GA	43	M	slur for ¹ G ¹ A
7	T	¹ G is F	44	M	# for C
12–13	M	slur for <i>crA sbG</i>	46	M	slur for ² AG (only)
13	Tr	C is F (altered by analogy with B)			
14	M	slur for GE			
33	M	b for B			

¹ John Morehen, 'Byrd's manuscript motets: a new perspective', in Alan Brown and Richard Turbet (eds), *Byrd Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp.51–62.