

William Byrd – Catholic Masses for three voices, four voices, and five voices in Protestant England

Marius BAHNEAN¹

Abstract: *The Catholic Masses of William Byrd are a problematic entity in the context of Protestant England. Byrd's affiliation with the underground Catholic movement during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I is evident through his compositional approach, and his hosting of Catholic Mass. The three masses are conceived for such a secret meeting of the faithful Catholics. The Masses are originally designed for one-to-a-part singing, due to the limited number of musicians available at the meetings. The compositional style is that of the previous generation of English Catholic composers, and the contemporary Continental practices of setting the Ordinary of the Mass.*

Key-words: *William Byrd, Catholic Masses, English Catholic Composers*

¹Tennessee Wesleyan University, mbahnean@tnwesleyan.edu