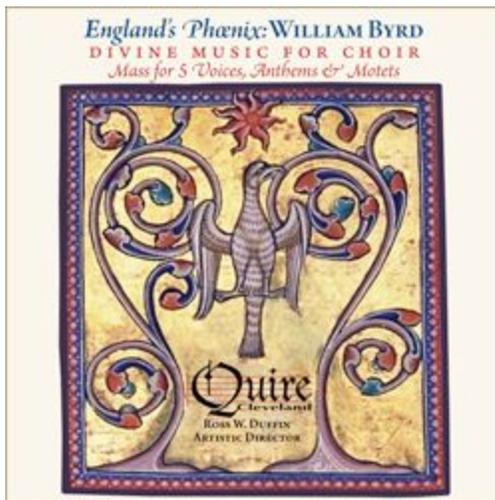


CD Review**Quire Cleveland — *England's Phoenix:*
*William Byrd, Divine Music for Choir***

by Daniel Hathaway



Quire Cleveland's live recording from its May 2016 concerts featuring the sacred music of William Byrd is distinguished by any measure, but it also comes with more than a little nostalgia. This is one of the last recordings to be engineered under the sure hand of Tom Knab, who died in August. The album is dedicated to his memory. (Read an appreciation [here](#).)

Having [reviewed](#) the May 22 performance at Historic St. Peter's in downtown Cleveland, it would be redundant to repeat those remarks here. Suffice to say that Quire's recently-released disc gives a fine account of what the audience heard in the church. But which church? The concert was given twice, once at St. Bernard's in Akron, then the next afternoon at St. Peter's. Though the two spaces are vastly different in size, they share super-live acoustics that resemble English cathedrals, and it's difficult to tell between them on this album.

If the ears of the live audience found Quire's diction to be splendid, it's even more so on this recording. Knab was able to preserve the halo of reverberation that surrounded the singing while bringing us a bit closer to the words being sung.

As you'd expect from Quire and its musicologist-director Ross Duffin, liner notes feature the full texts of the Byrd motets and a wealth of other information. Guest lecturer Kerry McCarthy, author of a recent monograph about the composer, contributes an accessible, three-page essay placing the sometimes enigmatic figure of Byrd in his historical context.

A nice touch is an image of one of Byrd's motets from the Blossom Partbooks, three of which reside in the Special Collections at Case Western Reserve University.

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