

*Miserere nostri, Domine. Miserere nostri.  
Have mercy on us, Lord. Have mercy on us.*

# Miserere nostri

THOMAS TALLIS (1505-1585)  
*Transcription by Keith Harmel*

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 33\text{--}38 (\text{♩} = 66\text{--}76)$

Superius  
Superius Secundus  
Discantus  
Contra Tenor  
Tenor  
Bassus  
Bassus Secundus

Soprano 1  
Soprano 2  
Alto  
Tenor 1  
Tenor 2  
Bass 1  
Bass 2

Mi - se - re - no - stri, Do mi - ne, mi - se -  
Mi - se - re - re no - stri, Do mi - ne, mi - se -  
Mi - se - re - re no - stri, Do mi - ne, mi - se -  
Mi - se - re - re no - stri, Do mi - ne, mi - se -  
Mi - se - re - re no - stri, Do mi - ne, mi - se -  
Mi - se - re - re no - stri, Do mi - ne, mi - se -  
Mi - se - re - re no - stri, Do mi - ne, mi - se -

4

S1.  
stri, Do mi - ne,  
S2.  
no - stri, Do mi - ne,  
A.  
re - re no -  
T1.  
re - re no -  
T2.  
stri, mi - se - re - re no -  
B1.  
re - no -  
B2.  
re - no - stri,

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S1. mi - se - re - re no - stri,  
S2. mi - se - re - re no - stri,  
A. mi - se - re - re no - stri, Do -  
T1. stri Do - - - - mi -  
T2. stri, Do - mi - ne, mi - se - re -  
B1. stri, Do - - - - mi -  
B2. Do - - - - mi - ne, mi - se -

II

S1. mi - se - re - re no - stri,  
S2. mi - se - re - re no - stri,  
A. mi - se - re - re ne, mi - se - re -  
T1. ne, mi - se - re - re  
T2. re no - stri, mi - se - re - re  
B1. ne, mi - se - re - re  
B2. re - - - - re no -

15

S1. mi - se - re - - - - re, mi - - se -  
S2. mi - se - re - - - - re, mi -  
A. re no - - stri, mi - se - re - re  
T1. 8 re no - - - -  
T2. no - - - - stri, mi -  
B1. no - - - -  
B2. - - - - stri, mi - se - re - re - - no -

19

S1. re - - - re no - - - stri.  
S2. - - - se - re - - re no - - - stri.  
A. 8 no - - - stri.  
T1. 8 - - - stri.  
T2. se - re - - re, no - - - stri.  
B1. - - - stri.  
B2. - - - stri.

Tallis's *Miserere nostri* is the 34th and final motet in *Cantiones Sacrae* of 1575, Britain's first music publication and a joint project between Tallis and William Byrd. The music gains its structure from ingenious canonic writing. The most obvious canon is between the two Soprano voices, half a bar apart. Beneath this is a four-voice proportion canon derived from the Discantus: the Contra Tenor's note values four times longer, and the two Bass voices inverted (and durations 4x and 8x longer). The remaining Tenor was freely written to fill in the polyphony. Another technical feat is the use of the number 17, referring to Queen Elizabeth I's 17th year on the throne; this is Tallis's 17th contribution to the *Cantiones Sacrae*, there are 17 notes in the Bassus, and 7 voices are utilized. Because the voicing sits rather low, potential voicings might include SSATTBB or SSSTTBarBB.