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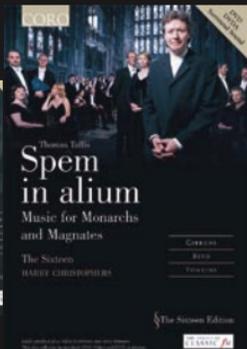
Thomas Tallis
Spem in alium

The Sixteen
HARRY CHRISTOPHERS



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CORDVD1

This disc will play in standard
DVD and DVDA machines.
Digital stereo and surround
sound. Includes video interviews
and additional features.

Newly recorded in the round and
in surround sound, Thomas Tallis' 40-
part motet, Spem in alium, forms the
centre-piece of this dazzling CD.

Under the theme, 'Music for Monarchs and Magnates', The Sixteen draws together music
by Tallis, Byrd, Gibbons and Thomas Tomkins, some of it never before recorded, some
indeed not performed since the time of its writing. Alongside the usual 40 voice setting
of Spem in alium is an English version of the same work, Sing and glorify, which was
adapted to an English text for King James I to honour his son Henry, the newly-annointed
Prince of Wales. With cornetts, sackbuts, dulcians and organs in place of some voices,
this is a glorious complement to the usual version.

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CORO

§ The Sixteen Edition

Ikon of Light

John Tavener
The Sixteen

HARRY CHRISTOPHERS

TWO HYMNS TO THE
MOTHER OF GOD

TODAY THE VIRGIN

THE TYGER

THE LAMB

EONIA

THE VOICES OF
CLASSIC *fm*



This programme was conceived back in 1994 as a 50th birthday tribute to John Tavener. It followed a performance for the City of London Festival of his *Ikon of Light* set alongside Tallis' great 40-part motet, *Spem in alium*. The venue was St Paul's Cathedral and the experience was incredible. Tavener himself was quite overwhelmed not only to hear his

sustained choral writing resounding around the dome but also to witness the lingering effect of the silences that so often characterise his music. It was a perfect setting where both audience and performers were involved in a quite unique vocal experience.

A few days later in the very different acoustic of St Jude's, Hampstead Garden Suburb in North London, I recall his immense presence at the recording sessions. He was most jovial, relishing our birthday tribute to him; his height and long greying locks cut an impressive figure combined with his ability to absorb us all in his Orthodox faith.

Almost ten years later, in May 2003, we were invited to Valery Gergiev's Moscow Easter Festival. The concert was in celebration of Tavener's works and specifically those inspired by his faith and contrasted with the work of his Russian forbears (Rachmaninov, Kalinnikov and Chesnokov) – two very different traditions and a great honour for us too because, in a way, we had completed the circle.

Harry
Christopher,

THE SIXTEEN

SOPRANO

Fiona Clarke
Ruth Dean+
Sally Dunkley+
Patricia Forbes+
Nicola Jenkin+
Carys Lane
Katie Pringle*
Alison Smart*
Libby Crabtree

ALTO

Natanya Hadda*
Deborah Miles-Johnson
Michael Lees+
Philip Newton+
Christopher Royall+
Susanna Spicer*
Caroline Trevor+

TENOR

Simon Berridge
Peter Burrows+*
Philip Daggett+
Robert Johnston
Neil MacKenzie+
David Roy+*
Matthew Vine

BARITONE

Matthew Brook
Roger Cleverdon*
Robert Evans
Michael McCarthy*
Jeremy White

BASS

David Bevan*
Jeremy Birchall*
Simon Birchall+
Robert Macdonald*
Timothy Jones+
Christopher Purves+
Francis Steele+

MEMBERS OF THE DUKE QUARTET

VIOLIN

Rick Koster

VIOLA

John Metcalfe

CELLO

Ivan McCready

*Two Hymns to the Mother
of God, The Tyger and
Ikon of Light
+The Lamb

John Tavener occupies a controversial position in Western music. His desire to create musical ikons for a time in which he believes 'man has lost his belief not only in God, but also in himself' is provocative. Such a fervent ideology questions the function of music and its relevance to society at large and brings this debate out of academic circles and into a wider, public arena. The unprecedented success of Tavener's *The Protecting Veil* perhaps testifies to the 'modern' need for a spiritual haven, away from the oppressive mechanisation of industrial capitalism.

Born in London in January 1944, Tavener showed his musical talents at an early age. He studied with Sir Lennox Berkeley and David Lumsdaine at the Royal Academy of Music and won several major prizes for composition. With the premiere of his cantata, *The Whale* (1968), Tavener revealed himself as one of the most original and independent composers of his generation.

Part of the attraction of Tavener's music must surely arise from its symbolic nature, a reflection of his Orthodox faith. In a society dominated by rational, scientific advancement, technological change, and a fetish for fact, Tavener's music depends less on explicit concepts than on simplicity, ritual and mythology. But if a composer chooses to channel his religious inspiration through his music, it does not necessarily make him a musical saint in a modern world. The effectiveness of music must always depend on its intrinsic craft, sincerity and quality: that particular debate is always between the composer and his audience.

Rhiannon Mathias

① and ② Two Hymns to the Mother of God

The Hymn to the Mother of God and *Hymn for the Dormition of the Mother of God* date from 1985 and are dedicated to the memory of the composer's mother. The first is a setting of a text from the Liturgy of St. Basil which speaks of the cosmic power of the Mother of God in whom 'all creation rejoices'. Scored for double choir and marked 'With awesome majesty and splendour' its radiant, chordal canonic textures recall the sound world of the *Ikon of Light*, of a year earlier. The second hymn, marked 'Solemn, quiet and tender' takes its text from the Vigil Service of the Dormition (or falling asleep) of the Mother of God, in which Mary bids the Apostles to travel from the ends of the earth to bury her body in Gethsemane. The text is repeated three times beginning quietly, with each repetition growing progressively more rich and complex in sound.

A Hymn to the Mother of God

In You, O Woman full of Grace,
The angelic choirs,
And the human race all creation rejoices.

In You, O Woman full of Grace,
all creation rejoices.
All praise be to you.

O sanctified Temple,
Mystical Paradise,
And glory of Virgins.

Hymn for the Dormition of the Mother of God

O ye apostles,
assembled here from the ends of the earth,
bury my body in Gethsemane:
And Thou my Son and God, receive my Spirit.

③ The Lamb and ④ The Tyger

Tavener's setting of *The Lamb*, from William Blake's *Songs of Innocence*, dates from 1982 and has since become one of Tavener's most popular and frequently performed pieces for unaccompanied choir. Its simple, haunting melodic line (characterised by a major/minor harmonic ambiguity) and its serene sense of timelessness beautifully convey the sentiments of Blake's words. *The Tyger*, from Blake's *Songs of Experience*, was composed in 1987, and captures the mystery and imagery of the text in more colourful and complex musical terms. The dense contrapuntal melodic lines and omnipresent drone (the forest?) of the first four verses are inspirationally offset in the fifth by the sudden pianissimo quotation from *The Lamb*. Thereafter, all ends in quiet, awesome mystery.

The Lamb

Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?
Gave thee life, & bid thee feed
By the stream & o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?

Little Lamb, I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb, I'll tell thee,
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb.
He is meek, & he is mild;
He became a little child.
I, a child, & thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.
Little Lamb, God bless thee!
Little Lamb, God bless thee!

William Blake (1757 - 1827)

The Tyger

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night.
What immortal hand or eye could frame
thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burned the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, and what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? And what dread feet?

William Blake (1757 - 1827)

What the hammer? What the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? What dread grasp?
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

5 to 15 Ikon of Light

The *Ikon of Light* was composed in 1984 and is a setting of the extraordinary *Mystic Prayer to the Holy Spirit* by the great mystical Orthodox poet, St. Simeon the New Theologian. It is not for nothing that this choral work has been described as one of Tavener's most mystical works, for the symbolism that it embraces is at once very simple, and yet paradoxically, very complex to understand. St. Simeon's *Mystic Prayer* speaks of the concept of 'uncreated Light', a term that refers to the uncreated energies of God, and which is neither a physical light nor a purely metaphorical light. As Father Kallistos Ware has written it is "a light that can be seen by a man through physical eyes, provided that his senses have been transformed by divine grace" and that as a concept it "lies beyond the imagination, it belongs to the infinite and the eternal where human speech can only point or hint."

In his marvellously luminous setting Tavener attempts to do just that, and asks that the work "unfold as a ritual in musical terms, attempting to express the inexpressible". The work falls into seven clearly defined movements, and is scored for double choir and strong trio, the latter of which should be heard at a distance from the singers and whose contributions can be thought of as 'the soul yearning for God', Tavener's ritual treatment of the subject matter is nowhere more clearly in evidence than in the striking first movement: six luminously harmonized repetitions of the single word FOS (Light), each progressively more intense and longer in duration, are offset by six pianissimo utterances from the string trio. The final repetition of the word FOS dissolves seamlessly into the second movement where the previously static, chordal harmonies of the choir give way to six canonic repetitions of the single word DOXA (Glory), each punctuated by six silences. Movement three (tenors and basses only) is a setting of the frequently used Byzantine hymn, Trisagion (Holy God, holy and strong) and is specified by the composer to be sung in the manner of Byzantine chant. It is repeated twice with a central response from the string trio. In the fourth and central movement of the work lies St. Simeon's *Mystic Prayer to the Holy Spirit*. It consists of five sections: 8 a simple melodic idea, (characterized by a descending five note scale) is varied, repeated and passed among the voices over an ever present vocal drone (as a device the drone is frequently used by Tavener to represent timelessness and the eternal); 9 the string trio responds from a distance; 10 the choir follow the same procedure as in section one, only here the material is inverted (i.e. the descending five note scale now becomes an ascending five note scale); 11 the string

trio responds from a distance; 12 voices and string trio combine in luminous fulmination, with the melodic material stated in *stretto* (fugue). The movement closes with a climactic statement of the theme marked *radiant with joy*. Movement five (Trisagion II) relates to movement three (Trisagion I), this time with added sopranos. Movement six (Fos II) is a varied repetition of movement one (Fos I). The work closes in a blaze of light with the movement headed EPIPHANIA (literally, shining forth), which is closely related to the second movement (DOXA), for as the composer states “without Doxa (Glory) and Fos (Light) an EPIPHANIA really cannot take place.”

Come, true light. Come, life eternal. Come, hidden mystery. Come, treasure without name. Come, reality beyond all words. Come, person beyond all understanding. Come, rejoicing without end. Come, light that knows no evening. Come, unflinching expectation of the saved. Come, the raising of the fallen. Come, the resurrection of the dead.

Come, all-powerful, for unceasingly you create, refashion and change all things by your will alone.

Come, invisible, whom none may touch and handle.

Come, for you continue always unmoved, yet at every instant you are wholly in movement; you draw near to us who lie in hell, yet you remain higher than the heavens.

Come, for your Name fills our hearts with longing and is ever on our lips; yet who you are and what your nature is, we cannot say or know. Come, eternal joy.

Come, unfading garland. Come, purple vesture of our great God and King. Come, belt of crystal set with precious stones. Come sandal that none dares to touch. Come, royal robe and right hand true sovereignty.

Come, for my wretched soul has ever longed and ever longs for you. Come, alone to the alone, for as you see I am alone: you have separated me from all things and made me to be alone upon the earth. Come for you are yourself the desire that is within me, and you have caused me to long after you, the wholly inaccessible.

Come, my breath and my life. Come, the consolation of my humble soul. Come, my joy, my glory, my endless delight.

An Invocation To The Holy Spirit – St. Simeon The New Theologian.

Today the Virgin

The Christmas carol *Today the Virgin* was composed in 1989 and is a setting of words by Mother Thekla with whom the composer has collaborated on numerous works, most notably the opera *Mary of Egypt*. It consists of six vigorously rhythmic verses with refrains; the four central verses alternate between tenors (Joseph) and sopranos (Mary). Joseph speaks of his bewilderment at his wife’s condition – *Mary, my wife. Oh Mary my wife! What do I see? You a Virgin giving birth. Strange mystery!* Mary response, explaining: *God in his mercy takes flesh in my womb for all the world to see.* The opening and closing verses joyfully proclaim the birth of Christ.

Today the Virgin comes to the cave
To give birth to the Word eternal:

*Rejoice, O World
With the Angels and the Shepherds
Give glory to the Child!
Alleluia!*

Mary my wife, O Mary my wife!
What do I see?
I took you blameless before the Lord
From the priests of the Temple
What do I see?

*Rejoice, O World
With the Angels and the Shepherds
Give glory to the Child!
Alleluia!*

Joseph the Bridegroom, O Joseph the
Bridegroom!
Do not fear.
God in his mercy has come down to earth,
He takes flesh in my womb
For all the world to see.

*Rejoice, O World
With the Angels and the Shepherds
Give glory to the Child!
Alleluia!*

Mary, my Bride, O Mary my Bride,
What do I see?
You, a virgin giving birth.
Strange mystery!

*Rejoice, O World
With the Angels and the Shepherds
Give glory to the Child!
Alleluia!*

Joseph the Bridegroom, O Joseph the
Bridegroom!
Do not fear.
God in his mercy has come down to earth,
He takes flesh in my womb
For all the world to see.

*Rejoice, O World
With the Angels and the Shepherds
Give glory to the Child!
Alleluia!*

Warned by the Angel we believe
That Mary gives birth inexplicable
To the infant, Christ, our God.

*Rejoice, O World
With the Angels and the Shepherds
Give glory to the Child!
Alleluia!*

Mother Thekla

Eonia – The Jasmine

Eonia was composed in 1989 as a memorial tribute to the composer's friend, the painter Cecil Collins. Its gentle stillness and simplicity and the composer's request that it be sung with "no expression" reflect the qualities of a perfect ikon. Tavener explains: " 'Eonia' is a 'Haiku' or 'fragrance'. I opened the Collected Poems of Seferis and found 'The Jasmine'. At the same time I was talking to Mother Thekla; I read her 'The Jasmine' and she continued in English, then in Slavonic and then in English. It was almost like dictated writing. I was mourning my dear friend, Cecil, and Eonia is a fragile tribute to the man I loved, and his fragile, beautiful and iconographical art".

Michael Stewart

*Whether it's dusk
or dawn's first light
the jasmin stays
always white.*

He asked for bread and we gave Him a
stone...

Do whatsoever He bids you

Lord, have mercy.

Remember me, the thief exclaimed...
The house where I was born...
This night in Paradise

*Whether it's dusk
or dawn's first light
the jasmin stays
always white.*

Angelos Sikelianos/Trans. P. Sherrard

Producer: Andrew Keener
Engineer: Mike Clements
Recorded at St. Judes,
Hampstead Garden Suburb

The Lamb
Producer: Peter Hayward
Engineer: Mike Hatch
Recorded at St. Michael's Church, Highgate

CD mastering: Julian Millard
Cover photograph: Greek Island Church,
Nick Rowe

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