

CORO

§ The Sixteen Edition

The Sixteen presents its own edition of the group's acclaimed recordings, with forewords by conductor Harry Christophers.

Voices of Angels

MUSIC FROM THE ETON CHOIRBOOK
VOLUME V

"Foreigners were astonished at the quality of English choirs. Theirs were "the voices of angels", a tribute which The Sixteen deserves no less today."

CLASSIC CD
COR 16002

Producers: Peter Hayward,
Mark Brown (A Ceremony of Carols)

Engineer: Mike Hatch

Recorded at St Michael's Church
Highgate, January 1990 and September
1992 (A Ceremony of Carols)

Adviser on pronunciation:
Alison Wray (A Ceremony of Carols)

CD compilation: Julian Millard
Photography: Matthew Power
Design: Richard Boxall Design Associates

CORO.
© The Sixteen Productions Ltd 2001.
© The Sixteen Productions Ltd 2001.
www.the-sixteen.org.uk

The Flowering of Genius

GUERRERO, TALLIS,
BYRD, VICTORIA

"The Sixteen's sound is distilled, ethereal – hard to imagine a more sublime performance."

BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE
COR 16001

Iste Confessor

DOMENICO SCARLATTI –
STABAT MATER,
ISTE CONFESSOR,
MISSA BREVE "LA STELLA"

"Outstanding ... astonishing stylistic and expressive range"

BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE
COR 16003

CORO

§ The Sixteen Edition

Hodie

An English Christmas Collection

The Sixteen/Harry Christophers

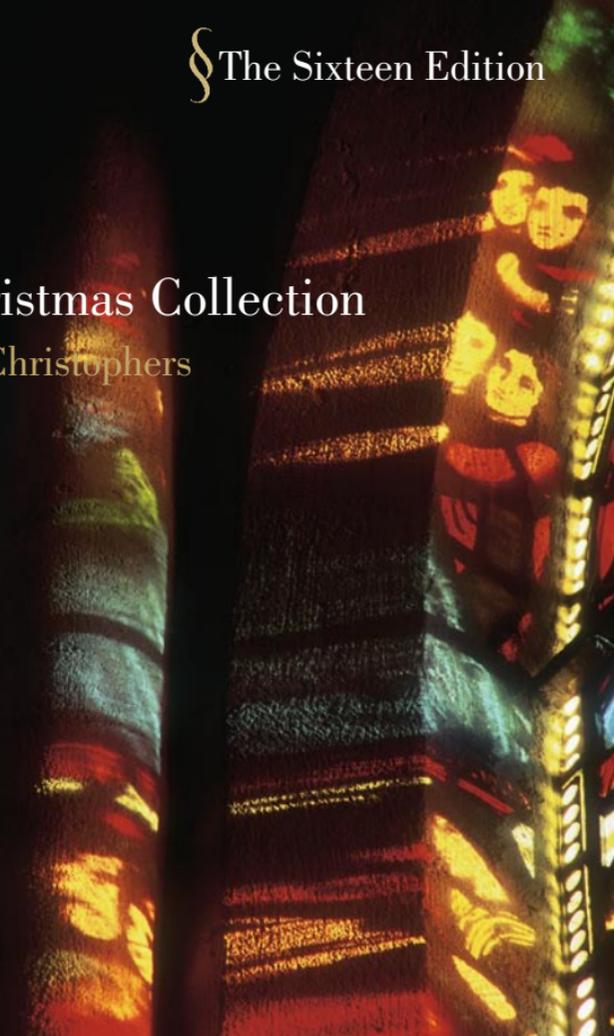
HOWELLS

BRITTEN

WARLOCK

TAVENER

LEIGHTON



§ The Sixteen

Soprano:

Ruth Dean, Sally Dunkley,
Patricia Forbes, Nicola Jenkin,
Libby Crabtree, Micaela Haslam,
Rosemary Hatrell, Fiona Clarke,
Lucinda Houghton,
Nicola-Jane Kemp

Alto:

Michael Lees, Philip Newton,
Christopher Royall,
Caroline Trevor,
Sarah Connolly, Nigel Short

Tenor:

Peter Burrows, Philip Daggett,
Neil MacKenzie, David Roy

Bass:

Simon Birchall, Timothy Jones,
Christopher Purves, Francis Steele

*This list includes singers
from all tracks*

Lute:

Robin Jeffrey

Percussion:

Benedict Hoffnung,
William Lockhart

Organ:

Margaret Phillips

Harp:

Sioned Williams

Every century can claim cultural progress and innovation but for England none more so than the twentieth. So many composers, so many styles yet many whose individual voices resulted in world-wide recognition. But for me, it is also a century that shines out in a resurgence of music for the church. I had great pleasure putting this collection together. Central to it all are the works of Benjamin Britten whose genius was apparent even as a youth composing “A Hymn to the Virgin”. I was a chorister at Canterbury Cathedral when I sang this gem of sacred music for the first time. I adored it then as I adore it now. Years later he was to write “A Ceremony of Carols”. For Britten, himself, this was the perfect voice for evocations of the boyhood he had grown out of; conversely for all old choristers it evokes a childhood we wish never to lose sight of.



*Harry
Christophers*

As the observance of saints’ days in Protestant England has declined, so has the popularity of Christmas increased. With this comes inevitably, in a wealthy capitalist economy, the much-deplored commercialism and sentimental prettification, but also a revival of sophisticated Christmas music.

Consciously allying themselves to a tradition which has its roots in medieval Christianity’s espousal of secular folk celebrations, many of the finest contemporary carol composers have employed early English or Latin texts, or indeed both macaronically combined. Walton, at a time when he was establishing his own up-to-date voice in the 1st Symphony and ‘Belshazzar’s Feast’ in the 1930s, forged for his setting of an old English carol what must be a locus classicus of the modern, archaising ‘wrong note’ technique, spicing his modal harmony with ambiguities redolent not only of medievalism but also jazz, particularly the 7th in a minor chord. The sombre side of the Christmas story appears, by contrast, in the version of the Coventry carol (so-called because the words are found in one of the 15th century Coventry cycle of mystery plays) by Kenneth Leighton, which he cast in the form of a strophic motet, combining dramatic narrative with the elegiac peace of a lullaby. Peter Racine Fricker (the second name owed to his descent from the dramatist through his great-

grandmother) wrote his carol in 1962, four years after his oratorio ‘The Vision of Judgement’ made as great a stir in the post-war musical world as had Walton a quarter of a century before. Fricker too uses a traditional text, and a musical style imaginatively recreative of the middle ages in its angular phrases and bare harmony.

Like Fricker, Edmund Rubbra is likely to be one of those now overlooked composers whose position in English music will come to be more highly valued. ‘Dormi Jesu’ was written in the (and his) 20s, before he launched his important series of symphonies, but is already assured in its modal simplicity and sensitive, because understated, response to the words, which were copied by Coleridge from a print in a German village. Britten was even younger, barely seventeen, when he wrote ‘A Hymn to the Virgin’, to a poem dated c.1300. This is the first of the carols on this recording to lean most strongly towards the mystical aspect of the Nativity, as powerful a trait in the complex iconography of Christmas as childlike charm, winter (an inescapable background, at least in the northern hemisphere), foreboding and sheer happiness. William Blake’s mysticism in ‘The Lamb’, a deliberate antidote to what he saw as the increasingly arcane savagery of a burgeoning secular technocracy, is perfectly mirrored in the music of John Tavener. Written in 1982, by which time the composer was becoming immersed in the culture of the

Orthodox church which has informed all his subsequent music, it escapes sentimentality, as does Blake, precisely because of the enormous innocence of its simplicity.

It is innocence that encapsulates Britten's masterpiece 'A Ceremony of Carols', which forms the central part of this recording. It was the first of Britten's works to be written for boys' voices and the first to incorporate plainsong: the opening and closing processionals use the antiphon 'Hodie' from the Vespers of the Nativity, and the Andante Pastorale harp interlude is also based on this chant. The use of harp to accompany the voices was a brilliantly original idea, and emphasizes the quality of strangeness that Britten brings to his narrative of Christmas and the rebirth of spring. He composed the work on his voyage back to England from America in 1942, having found the words of the medieval carols in a book he had bought when the ship had called at Halifax, Nova Scotia. As he journeyed homewards towards Suffolk, where the composition of 'Peter Grimes' awaited him, he created, in this sequence, one of the most touching evocations of the boyhood he had grown out of, but was never to lose sight of: a ceremony of innocence untroubled by the ghosts of the past.

More than the other composers represented here, Howells was immersed in church music; thus these two carol-anthems stand as typical of his art as a whole, though

again the second employs a symbolic medieval text. A cold winter's night, a newborn child: matters for sometimes anxious reflection as well as intimate calm, both implicit in the restless but opulent harmonies of Howells' music as in that of Peter Hayward's setting of the lullaby taken from William Ballet's c.1600 lute book; the lute underpins the solo and choir with a reminiscence of the rocking of a makeshift cradle. Peter Warlock, who as Philip Heseltine was one of the earliest (and most scrupulous scholars of the medieval and renaissance in our country, was described by Cecil Gray as 'the supreme carollist of modern times, possibly the greatest since the anonymous masters of the middle ages.' 'Corpus Christi', one of the masterpieces among English miniatures, combines medieval mysticism with an acutely modern sensibility (to quote Gray), to uncanny, shivering effect, quite distinct from the lilting, uncertainly melancholy lullaby 'Balulalow' and the rollicking gaiety of *Benedicamus Domino*'. After the tortured tenderness of a man whose last act, before turning on the gas, was to put the cat out, it is perhaps salutary to conclude this celebration of the modern English carol with John Gardner's whole-hearted dance, at once pagan, erotic, and symbolically Christian - the spirit of Christmas past and present.

© Copyright Nicolas Robertson. Translations into French and German are available from coro@thesixteen.org.uk

1. MAKE WE JOY NOW IN THIS FEST

*Make we joy now in this fest,
In quo Christus natus est.
Eya, eya, eya.*

*A patre Unigenitus,
Is through a maiden come to us:
Sing we of Him and say 'Welcome'
Veni redemptor gentium.*

*Agnoscat omne seculum,
A bright star made three kings to come,
Him for to seek with their presen's,
Verbum supernum prodiens.*

*A solis ortu cardine,
So mighty a lord is none as He;
And to our kind He hath Him knit,
Adam parens quod polluit.*

*Maria ventre concepit,
The Holy Ghost was aye her with,
Of her in Bethlem born He is,
Consorts paterni luminis.*

*O Lux beata Trinitas,
He lay between an ox and ass,
Beside His mother maiden free,
Gloria Tibi Domine.*

2. COVENTRY CAROL

*Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child,
By, by, lully, lullay.*

*O sisters too,
How may we do
For to preserve this day?
This poor youngling,
For whom we do sing,
By, by, lully lullay!*

*Herod, the King,
In his raging,
Charg'd he hath this day
His men of might,
In his own sight,
All children young to slay.*

*That woe is me,
Poor child, for thee!
And ever mourn and say,
For thy parting,
Nor say nor sing
By, by, lully lullay.*

3. A BABE IS BORN

*A babe is born all of a may,
To bring salvation unto us.
To him we sing both night and day
Veni Creator Spiritus.*

*At Bethlehem, that blessed place,
The child of bliss now born he was:
And him to serve God gave us grace,
O lux beata Trinitas.*

*There came three kings out of the east,
To worship the king that is so free,
With gold and myrrh and frankincense,
A solis ortus cardine.*

*The shepherds heard an angel's cry,
A merry song then sungen he.
'Why are ye so sore aghast?'
Jam ortus solis cardine.*

*The angels came down with one cry,
A merry song then sungen they
In the worship of that child:
Gloria tibi, Gloria tibi, Domine.*

4. THE VIRGIN'S CRADLE SONG

*Dormi, Jesu! Mater ridet
Quae tam dulcem somnum videt.
Dormi Jesu! Blandule.
Si non dormis, Mater plorat
Inter fila cantans orat,
Blande, veni, somnule.*

Translation:

*Sleep, sweet babe! My cares beguiling:
Mother sits beside thee smiling;
Sleep, my darling, tenderly!
If thou sleep not, mother mourneth,
Singing as her wheel she turneth:
Come, soft slumber, peacefully!*

5. A HYMN TO THE VIRGIN

*Of one that is so fair and bright
Velut maris stella
Brighter than the day is light,
Parens et puella:
I cry to thee, thou see to me,
Lady, pray thy Son for me,
Tam pia,
That I may come to thee.
Maria!*

*All this world was forlorn
Eva peccatrice,
Till our Lord was y-born
De te genetrice.
With ave it went away
Darkest night, and comes the day
Salutis;
The well springeth out of thee.
Virtutis.*

*Lady, flow'r of ev'rything,
Rosa sine spina,
Thou bare Jesu, Heaven's King,
Gratia divina:
Of all thou bear'st the prize,
Lady, queen of paradise
Electa:
Maid mild, mother es Effecta.*

6. THE LAMB

*Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?
Gave thee life, and bid thee feed
By the stream and 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, and he is mild;
He became a little child.
I, a child, and thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.
Little lamb, God bless thee!
Little lamb, God bless thee!*

A CEREMONY OF CAROLS

7. PROCESSION

*Hodie Christus natus est:
Hodie Salvator apparuit:
Hodie in terra canunt angeli:
Laetantur archangeli:
Hodie exsultant justi dicentes:
Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Alleluia!*

8. WOLCUM YOLE!

*Wolcum ,Wolcum,
Wolcum be thou hevене king,
Wolcum Yole!
Wolcum, born in one morning,
Wolcum for whom we sall sing!

Wolcum be ye, Stevene and Jon,
Wolcum, Innocentes every one,
Wolcum, Thomas marter one,
Wolcum be ye, good Newe Yere,
Wolcum, Twelfth Day both in fere,
Wolcum, seintes lefe and dere,
Wolcum Yole, Wolcum Yole, Wolcum!*

*Candelmesse, Quene of bliss,
Wolcum bothe to more and lesse.
Wolcum, Wolcum,
Wolcum be ye that are here,
Wolcum Yole,
Wolcum alle and make good cheer.
Wolcum alle another yere,
Wolcum Yole. Wolcum!*

9. THERE IS NO ROSE

*There is no rose of such vertu
As is the rose that bare Jesu,
Alleluia, Alleluia.*

*For in this rose contened was
Heaven and earth in lital space,
Res Miranda.*

*By that rose we may well see
There be one God in persons three,
Pares forma.*

*The aungels sungen the shepherds to:
Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Gaudeamus.*

*Leave we all this werldly mirth,
And follow we this joyful birth.
Transeamus*

10. THAT YONGE CHILD

*That yonge child when it gan weep
With song she lulled him asleep:
That was so sweet a melody
It passed alle minstrelsy.*

*The nightingale sang also:
Her song is hoarse and nought thereto:
Whoso attendeth to her song
and leaveth the first then doth he wrong.*

11. BALULALOW

*O my deare hert, young Jesu sweat,
Prepare thy creddil in my spreit,
And I sall rock thee to my hert,
And never mair from thee depart.
But I sall praise thee evermoir
With sanges sweet unto thy gloir;
The knees of my hert sall I bow,
And sing that richt Balulalow!*

12. AS DEW IN APRILLE

*I sing of a maiden
That is makeles;
King of all kings
To her son she ches.*

*He came al so stille
There his moder was,
As dew in Aprille
That falleth on the grass.*

*He came al so stille
To his moder's bour,
As dew in Aprille
That falleth on the flour.*

*He came al so stille
There his moder lay,
As dew in Aprille
That falleth on the spray.*

*Moder and mayden
Was never none but she;
Well may such a lady
Goddess moder be.*

13. THIS LITTLE BABE

*This little Babe so few days old,
Is come to rifle Satan's fold;
All hell doth at his presence quake,
Though he himself for cold do shake;
For in this weak unarmed wise
The gates of hell he will surprise.*

*With tears he fights and wins the field,
His naked breast stands for a shield;*

*His battering shot are babish cries,
His arrows looks of weeping eyes,
His martial ensigns Cold and Need,
And feeble Flesh his warrior's steed.*

*His camp is pitched in a stall,
His bulwark but a broken wall;
The crib his trench, haystalks his stakes;
Of shepherds he his muster makes;
And thus, as sure his foe to wound,
The angels' trumps alarum sound.*

*My soul, with Christ join thou in fight;
Stick to the tents that he hath pight.
Within his creib is surest ward;
This little Babe will be thy guard.
If thou wilt foil thy foes with joy,
Then flit not from this heavenly Boy.*

14. INTERLUDE

15. IN FREEZING WINTER NIGHT

*Behold, a silly tender babe,
In freezing winter night,
In homely manger trembling lies
Alas, a piteous sight!*

*The inns are full; no man will yield
This little pilgrim bed.
But forced he is with silly beasts
In crib to shroud his head.*

*This stable is a Prince's court,
This crib his chair of State;
The beasts are parcel of his pomp,
The wooden dish his plate.*

*The persons in that poor attire
His royal liveries wear;
The Prince himself is come from heav'n;
This pomp is prized there.*

*With joy approach, O Christian wight,
Do homage to thy King.
And highly praise his humble pomp,
Which he from Heav'n doth bring.*

16. SPRING CAROL

*Pleasure it is to hear iwis,
the Birdes sing,
The deer in the dale,
the sheep in the vale,
The corn springing.*

*God's purvayance
For sustenance,
It is for man.
Then we always to him give praise,
And thank him than.*

17. DEO GRACIAS

*Deo gracias! Deo gracias!
Adam lay ibounden, bounden in a bond;
Four thousand winter thought he not to long.*

*And all was for an appil, an appil that he tok,
As clerkes finden written in their book.*

*Ne had the appil take ben, the appil take ben,
Ne hadde never our lady a ben hevene quene.*

*Blessed be the time that appil take was.
Therefore we moun singen.
Deo gracias!*

18. RECESSION

See Procession

19. SING LULLABY

*Sing lullaby,
While snow doth gently fall,
Sing lullaby to Jesus,
Born in an oxen stall.*

*Sing lullaby to Jesus
Born now in Bethlehem,
The naked blackthorn's growing
To weave his diadem.*

*Sing lullaby,
While thickly snow doth fall,
Sing lullaby to Jesus
The Saviour of all.*

20. LUTE BOOK LULLABY

*Sweet was the song the Virgin sang,
When she to Bethlem Judah came.
And was delivered of a son,
That blessed Jesus hath to name:*

*Sweet babe, sang she, my son
And eke a saviour born,
Who hast vouchsafed from on high
To visit us that were forlorn:*

*Lalulla, lalullaby,
Lulla, lullaby
Sweet babe sang she
And rock'd him gently on her knee.*

21. A SPOTLESS ROSE

*A Spotless Rose is blowing,
Sprung from a tender root,
Of ancient seers' foreshowing,
Of Jesse promised fruit;
Its fairest bud unfolds to light
Amid the cold, cold winter,
And in the dark midnight.*

*The Rose which I am singing,
Whereof Isaiah said,
Is from its sweet root springing
In Mary, purest Maid;
For through our God's great love and might,
The Blessed Babe she bare us
In a cold, cold winter's night.*

22. CORPUS CHRISTI

*Lully, lullay, lully, lullay,
The faucon hath borne my make away.*

*He bare him up, he bare him down,
He bare him into an orchard brown.*

*In that orchard there was a hall,
That was hanged with purple and pall.
And in that hall there was a bed:
It was hanged with gold so red.*

*And in that bed there lithe a knight,
His woundes bleeding day and night.
By that bedside there kneeleth a may,
And she weepeth night and day.
By that bedside there standeth a stone:
CORPUS CHRISTI written thereon.*

23. BALULALOW

*O my dear hert, young Jesus sweet,
Prepare thy creddil in my spreit,
And I sall rock thee in my hert
And never mair from thee depert.*

*But I sall praise thee evermore
With sangis sweet unto thy glor:
The knees of my hert sall I bow,
And sing that richt Balulalow.*

24. BENEDICAMUS DOMINO

*Procedenti puero
Eya, nobis annus est!
Virginis ex utero
Gloria! Laudes!
Deus homo factus est et immortalis.*

*Sine viri semine
Eya, nobis annus est!
Natus est de virgine*

*Sine viri copia
Eya, nobis annus est!
Natus est ex Maria*

*In hoc festo determino
Eya, nobis annus est!
Benedicamus Domino!*

Translation:

*A son is born
Of a virgin's womb,
Eia! Our day has dawned!
Glory and praise!
God is made man and yet immortal.*

*Without the seed of man
He is born of a virgin
Eia! Our day has dawned!*

*Without the might of man
He is born of Mary
Eia! Our day has dawned!*

*In this endless joy
Lord we bless you.
Eia! Our day has dawned!*

25. TOMORROW SHALL BE MY DANCING DAY

*Tomorrow shall be my dancing day:
I would my true love did so chance
To see the legend of my play,
To call my true love to my dance:
Sing O my love, my love, my love;
This have I done for my true love.*

*Then was I born of a virgin pure,
Of her I took fleshly substance;
Thus was I knit to man's nature,
To call my true love to my dance:*

*In a manger laid and wrapped I was,
So very poor this was my chance,
Betwixt an ox and a silly poor ass,
To call my true love to my dance:*

*Then afterwards baptized I was;
The Holy Ghost on me did glance,
My Father's voice heard from above,
To call my true love to my dance.*