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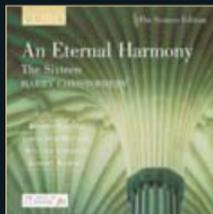
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THE VOICES OF  
CLASSIC *SM*



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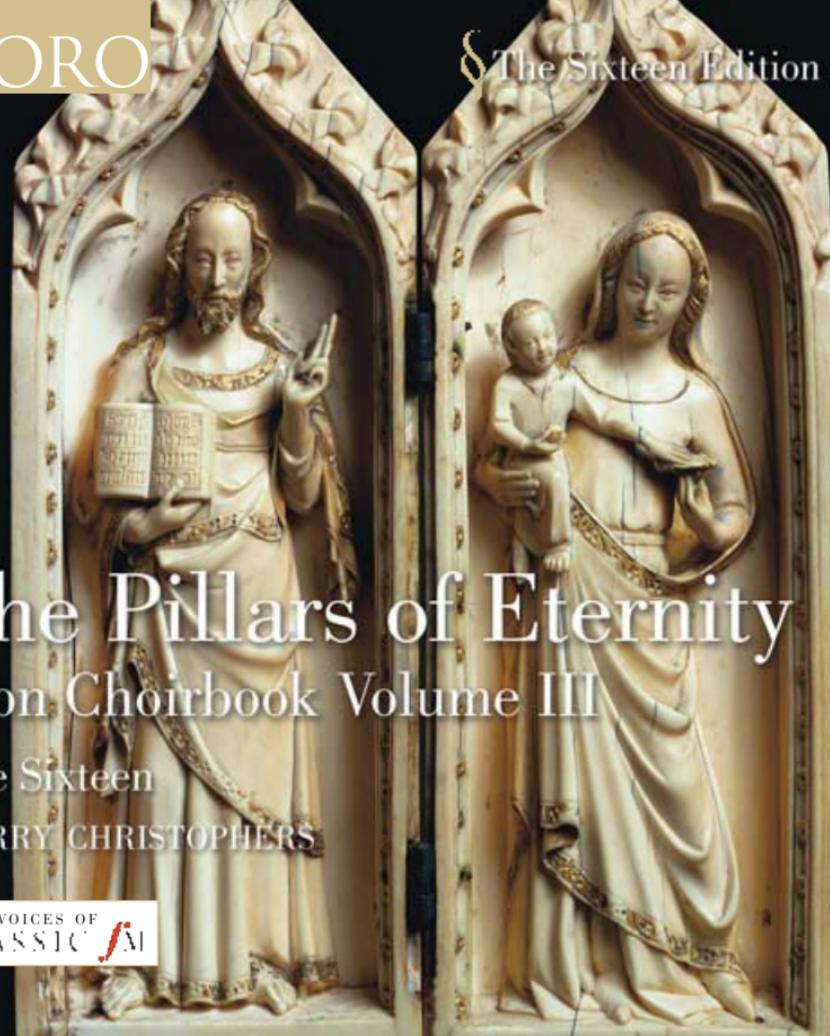
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BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE

CORO

§ The Sixteen Edition



# The Pillars of Eternity

## Eton Choirbook Volume III

The Sixteen

HARRY CHRISTOPHERS

THE VOICES OF  
CLASSIC *SM*

For further information about The Sixteen recordings on Coro or live performances and tours,  
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I remember well, some years ago, sitting in the library at Eton College with Christopher Page and recording a programme for BBC Radio 3 about the Eton Choirbook, by far the most outstanding of a handful of choirbooks to survive the Reformation. We turned the parchment pages of this vast book, admiring the vividly illuminated capitals, marvelling at some of the, obviously frequently performed, motets, the corners of which were heavily

thumbed by fingers of a past century. My abiding thought was how incredibly talented these sixteen choristers must have been to sing this highly complex music, difficult by any standard, while crowding around a lectern, straining to read by candlelight. Today we have modern editions, electricity and aids for failing sight and it still seems difficult!

Our edition represents very much the grass roots of our work and our overwhelming desire to rejoice in the survival of this great music.

*Harry  
Christopher*

RICHARD DAVY  
(c.1465-c.1507)

- ① O Domine caeli  
terraeque creator

WILLIAM CORNYSH  
(d.1523)

- ② Ave Maria, Mater Dei

RICHARD DAVY  
(c.1465-c.1507)

- ③ Ah, mine heart,  
remember thee well

WALTER LAMBE  
(c.1450/51 – d. after  
Michaelmas 1499)

- ④ Stella caeli

RICHARD DAVY  
(c.1465-c.1507)

- ⑤ Ah, blessed Jesu,  
how fortunèd this?

ROBERT WYLYNSON  
(c.1450-1515 or later)

- ⑥ Jesus autem transiens/  
Credo in Deum  
⑦ Salve Regina

THE SIXTEEN

TREBLE

Fiona Clarke  
Ruth Dean  
Carys Lane  
Caroline Ashton\*  
Suzanne Pederson\*  
Alison Smart\*

MEAN

Sally Dunkley  
Deborah Miles Johnson  
Julia White

ALTO

Andrew Giles  
Michael Lees  
Philip Newton  
Christopher Royall  
Andrew Carwood\*  
Matthew Vine\*

TENOR

Simon Berridge  
Philip Daggett  
Neil MacKenzie  
David Roy,  
Peter Burrows\*  
Angus Smith\*

BASS

Simon Birchall  
Robert Evans  
Timothy Jones  
Francis Steele  
Donald Greig\*  
Michael McCarthy\*

\*Only in Wylkynson  
(Salve Regina)

Davy: Ah, mine  
heart, remember  
thee well

TREBLE

Carys Lane  
(verse)  
Fiona Clarke  
Ruth Dean

TENOR

Simon Berridge  
(verse)  
Philip Daggett  
David Roy

BASS

Simon Birchall  
(verse)  
Robert Evans  
Timothy Jones

Wylkynson: Jesus  
autem transiens/  
Credo in Deum

TENOR

Robert Evans (1)  
Neil MacKenzie (2)  
David Roy (3)  
Andrew Carwood (4)  
Donald Greig (5)  
Peter Burrows (6)  
Simon Birchall (7)

Davy: Ah, blessed  
Jesu, how  
fortunèd this?

TREBLE

Ruth Dean  
(verse)  
Fiona Clarke  
Carys Lane

MEAN

Sally Dunkley  
(verse)  
Deborah Miles  
Johnson  
Alison Smart

TENOR

Simon Berridge  
(verse)  
Philip Daggett  
David Roy

John New (8)  
Philip Daggett (9)  
Timothy Jones (10)  
Angus Smith (11)  
Simon Berridge (12)  
Mathew Vine (13)

# The Pillars of Eternity

## Eton Choirbook Volume III

*Then `gin I think on that which Nature said  
Of that same time when no more Change shall be.  
But steadfast rest of all things, firmly stayed  
Upon the pillars of Eternity,  
That is contrare to Mutability:  
For all that moveth doth in Change delight;  
But thenceforth all shall rest eternally  
With Him that is the God of Sabaoth hight.  
O thou great Sabaoth God, grant me that  
Sabaoth's sight.*

The eloquence is Elizabethan, but in its adherence to fundamental tenets of faith, the great final stanza of Edmund Spenser's *The Fairy Queen* makes a fitting introduction to the music on this disc. By 1599, the year of Spenser's death, the magnificent hundred-year-old choirbook copied for use by the choir of Eton College had been gathering dust for forty years: the accession of Queen Elizabeth in 1558 and the passing of the Act of Uniformity in the following year had effectively silenced the book, with its rich concentration of texts that express overtly Catholic sentiments. But not everything in the choirbook would have seemed outmoded to an Elizabethan Protestant reader. Many of the Eton pieces also touch on themes that survived the Reformation. In those that address divine order, the fickleness of human existence and a longing for eternity, we can recognize the same ancient foundations as those

on which Spenser's stanza is built.

Spenser's vision of divine order makes no mention of the Blessed Virgin Mary; the Protestant reformers had taken pains to discourage Christians from focussing their faith on her person. This contrasts with late medieval thinking, which believed that the pillars of eternity could most effectively be scaled by enlisting her aid. In the Eton Choirbook she is invoked constantly; Eton had, after all, been founded by Henry VI as 'the College Roiall of Our Ladie', with statutes that laid out an elaborate sequence of services to be celebrated daily in her honour. Even a work that starts by addressing the Trinity, Richard Davy's *O Domine caeli terraeque creator*, soon turns into a plea to the Virgin: 'Grant us, your servants in peril of death, pardon by your prayers'. William Cornysh's brief *Ave Maria, mater Dei* addresses Mary as the mediatrix through whose agency the soul finds its way to its resting-place: 'Mother of God, Queen of heaven, Mistress of the World, Empress of Hell'. More alarming in its terms of reference, Walter Lambe's *Stella caeli* begs for earthly life to be protected from one of Mutability's most feared and devastating weapons: plague. Comparing the Virgin to a celestial body, it asks 'that this star now be gracious and restrain the heavens, whose attacks bring our people low with fierce and deadly wounds.'

Two songs by Richard Davy, composed around the same time as the Eton music, make their appeal for salvation through routes that the Protestant reformers would have preferred. In *Ah, mine heart, remember thee well* the poet makes a direct petition to God for mercy, imagining as he does 'the paine's that been in hell'. Its language, however, pales beside

the nightmarish imagery of *Ah, blessed Jesu*. Here Mutability is hard at work: 'serpents seemeth me to tear, Great mountains falling over me, thus sleep do I in fear'. The only recourse is to Jesus himself: 'do thou thy cure; With all good souls to cause me live in rest'.

In Robert Wylkynson's *Jesus autem transiens*, the most bizarre work in the Eton Choirbook, the central tenets of Christian belief are rehearsed through the words of the Apostles' Creed: 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth'. But this is no ordinary setting of the Creed. The text is divided into twelve segments, preceded by a thirteenth line, 'Jesus autem transiens' ('Jesus then passing through (their midst)'). This is notated as a single melodic line. To perform the piece, thirteen male voices sing the music in canon: first a solo voice intones the opening segment; then a second voice enters, while the first voice moves on to the second segment; and so on, until thirteen voices are in play and all thirteen segments sound simultaneously. The net effect is a harmonious chaos; but the sound is subservient to the work's symbolic representation of Christ surrounded by his twelve apostles. Through it the medieval listener could more vividly imagine part of the divine order that rested on those pillars of eternity.

Another part of that order, the ninefold hierarchy of the angels, is suggested by Wylkynson's nine-part setting of the *Salve Regina*. In the Eton Choirbook, the voice-parts are even labelled (in approximately descending order of range) according to their angelic rank: Seraphs, Cherubs, Thrones, Dominations, Virtues, Powers, Principalities,

Archangels and Angels. One of those parts – the tenors who act as the Powers – sings a plainchant antiphon for the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin, 'Assumpta est Maria in caelis'. Here too the symbolic representation of the divine order is easy to understand: Mary is received into heaven surrounded by the angelic host, which appeals to her on behalf of mankind: 'To you we sigh, as we mourn and weep in this valley of tears. Ah then, our advocate, turn those merciful eyes of yours upon us; and Jesus, the blessed fruit of your womb, show to us after our exile here'.

A word about the composers and the likely dates of their compositions. According to a note in the Choirbook, Davy's *O Domine caeli terraeque creator* was written in the span of a single day at Magdalen College, Oxford. This fixes it in the period 1490-1492, when Davy served as the college's organist and choirmaster. The original destination of his two songs is unknown. *Ave Maria, mater Dei*, by William Cornysh, is a younger work probably by several years. It may have come to Eton by way of the Chapel Royal repertory. Walter Lambe belonged to Eton's close neighbour, the choir of St George's Chapel, Windsor. *Stella caeli* could have been written in the summer of 1479, when two of his colleagues died of plague. Robert Wylkynson was a clerk at Eton in 1496, and master of the choristers there from 1500 until at least 1515. Both *Jesus autem transiens* and the nine-part *Salve Regina* are likely to have received their first performances in Eton College Chapel itself.

JOHN MILSOM

## ☐ O Domine Caeli Terraeque Creator

O Domine caeli terraeque creator,  
Totius humani generis redemptor,  
Nos hic tuos servulos una congregatos  
In laudem tui nominis fac tibi devotos,  
Ut Trinitatem in unitate digne venerantes,  
Mariam Deo dignissimam simul recolentes  
Quae virtutis praebuit exemplum viventibus,  
Deum Patrem et Filium unum  
esse credentibus  
Sic et Sanctum Spiritum eundem  
cum Patre docuit,  
Deum verum et unum in personis retulit:  
In deitate unitas, in personis pluralitas,  
Unum fore in essentia, sic est credenda  
Trinitas.

Nos ergo te Domine, quem in Trinitate  
Trine Deum colimus in una maiestate,  
Ut cunctis huius saeculi defendas periculis,  
Ut post huius terminum  
iungamur caelicolis.

O Maria mundi decus, ecclesiae tutamen,  
Sis pro tuis famulis continuum iuvamen,  
Ut quos apud Filium  
offensos perpendas  
Tuis piis precibus orantes defendas,  
Devotos atque servulos tibi famulantes  
Aut tui memoriam quomodo laudantes.

*O Lord the creator of heaven and earth  
and redeemer of all mankind,  
make us, your servants gathered here  
to the praise of your name,  
truly faithful to you,  
that in our rightful veneration of the One-in-Three  
we may also contemplate His most worthy Mary  
who has shown to all who live an example  
of virtue, teaching all who believe the Father  
and the Son to be one that so also the Holy Spirit  
is one with the Father, laying before us the true  
God, one in His persons:  
a unity in godhead, a plurality in persons,  
one in being, this should be our belief in the  
Trinity.*

*We therefore pray you Lord, whom in the Trinity  
we worship as threefold God but one in majesty,  
to save us from all the perils of this world,  
that when it is past we may be united with the  
saints in heaven.*

*O Mary the glory of the world and protector of  
the church, be to your servants an ever-present aid,  
that those you judge to have offended against your  
Son may receive the defence of your holy prayers  
as they beseech you, and as they strive faithfully  
to wait on you, if only in some way by giving  
praise to your memory.*

O Maria sanctissima, testis vera Christi,  
Salutante Gabriele statim accepisti  
Orthodoxe fidei summam religionem,  
Devota mente capiens sacram  
communionem.

Nobis tuis famulis in mortis periculo  
Tua prece veniam dones in hoc saeculo,  
Aut nobis morientibus non desit communio,  
Sed quae tuis meritis, quae mater pudica  
Exstitisti et sacra virgo in hac vita,  
Nos imitari condones ut tecum  
Vivamus cum gaudio in perenni gloria.

Amen.

*O most holy Mary, true witness of Christ,  
at Gabriel's greeting you at once accepted  
the most high religion of the true faith,  
receiving holy communion in the devotion  
of your heart.*

*Grant us, your servants in peril of death,  
pardon by your prayers in this world;  
and let not that communion be lacking for us  
at the hour of our death, but by your great merit,  
who stood out a chaste mother and holy virgin in  
this life, grant us grace to imitate you, that with  
you we may live joyfully in everlasting glory.*

Amen.

## ② Ave Maria, Mater Dei

Ave Maria, Mater Dei,  
Regina caeli, Domina mundi,  
Imperatrix inferni:  
Miserere mei et totius populi Christiani,  
Et ne permittas nos mortaliter peccare  
Sed tuam sanctissimam voluntatem adimplere.  
Amen.

*Hail Mary, Mother of God,  
Queen of heaven, Mistress of the world,  
Empress of hell  
have mercy on me and on all Christ's people,  
and let us not fall into mortal sin  
but let us fulfil your most holy will.  
Amen.*

## ③ Ah, Mine Heart, Remember Thee Well

*(Original sung in English)*

### Burden:

*Ah, mine heart, remember thee well,  
And think on the paines that been in hell.*

### Verse 1:

*Ah, mine heart, remember me well,  
how greatly thou art bound indeed;  
Thou thinkest on Him never a deal  
That helps thee ever at thy most need.  
Alas, for sorrow mine heart doth bleed,  
To think how grievously I have offended;  
I cry God mercy, I will amend.*

### Verse 2:

*With weeping tears most lamentable  
To God above I call and cry;  
I will axe grace while I am able,  
I have offended so grievously;  
Me to amend I will me hie, \*  
For all my life-days I have mispend:  
I cry God mercy, I will amend.*

\* hasten

## ④ Stella Caeli

Stella caeli exstirpavit  
Quae lactavit Dominum  
Mortis pestem quam plantavit  
Primus parens hominum.

Ipsa Stella nunc dignetur  
Sidera compescere,  
Quorum bella plebem caedunt  
Dirae mortis ulcere.

O gloriosa Stella Maris  
A peste succurre nobis;  
Audi nos, nam te Filius  
Nihil negans honorat.

Salva nos Jesu pro quibus  
Virgo mater te orat!

*A Star of heaven,  
she who suckled the Lord,  
rooted out the deadly plague  
which mankind's first father planted.*

*May this Star now be gracious  
and restrain the heavens,  
whose attacks bring our people low  
with fierce and deadly wounds.*

*O glorious Star of the Sea,  
come to save us from this plague:  
hear us, for your Son in respect  
will never deny your prayer.*

*Save us Jesus, for whom  
your Virgin mother pleads to you!*

## 5 Ah, Blessed Jesu, How Fortuned This?

*(Original sung in English)*

### Verse 1:

*Ah, blessed Jesu, how fortun'd this?  
My mood is chang'd in every wise,  
Nature of acquaintance is turn'd to a guest,  
So shortly am I bidden to a grievous fest,  
Whereas I am in ybid with all bodily rest;*

### Refrain:

*Thus troubled am I,  
yet I trust it shall be for the best:  
Sicut domino placuit, ita factum est. \**

### Verse 2:

*Where art thou, Nature,  
that wont were me to store  
To lusty pleasure? Now lying in the floor,  
My taste disorder'd, all reason far passing,  
My face disfigur'd, mine eyes full dazling,  
Thou, Nature, hast left me;  
by thee find I no rest:*

## 6 Credo

### Verse 3:

*My voice is so troubled, my sickness then feel I,  
My sleeps be so fearful, I think then sure to die;  
My dream is so marvellous, serpents seemeth  
me to tear,  
Great mountains falling over me,  
thus sleep do I in fear;  
So waking, ne sleeping, find I no rest:*

### Verse 4:

*Now, merciful Jesu, to thee make I my moan;  
Nature hath forsaken me, and left me thus  
alone.  
“Remember thee, my creature, thou must  
needes die, I thee ensure.”  
Alas, to die thou mak'st me sure; yet then,  
good Lord, do thou thy cure;  
With all good souls to cause me live in rest.*

*\* As it pleas'd the Lord, so it is accomplished.*

## 7 Salve Regina

*Salve Regina, mater misericordiae,  
Vita, dulcedo et spes nostra, salve.  
Ad te clamamus, exsules filii Evae.  
Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes  
in hac lacrimarum valle.  
Eia ergo, advocata nostra,  
illos tuos misericordes oculos  
ad nos converte;  
Et Jesu, benedictum fructum ventris tui,  
nobis post hoc exsilium ostende.*

*Virgo mater ecclesiae,  
Aeterna porta gloriae,  
Esto nobis refugium  
Apud Patrem et Filium.*

*O clemens!*

*Virgo clemens, virgo pia,  
Virgo dulcis o Maria,  
Exaudi preces omnium  
Ad te pie clamantium.*

*O pia!*

*Funde preces tuo nato,  
Crucifixo, vulnerato,  
Et pro nobis flagellato,  
Spinis puncto, felle potato.*

*O dulcis Maria, salve!*

*Hail O Queen, mother of mercy,  
our life, our sweetness and our hope, hail.  
To you we cry, exiled children of Eve.  
To you we sigh, as we mourn and weep  
in this valley of tears.  
Ah then, our advocate,  
turn those merciful eyes of yours  
upon us;  
and Jesus, the blessed fruit of your womb,  
show to us after our exile here.*

*Virgin mother of the church,  
everlasting gate to glory,  
be our refuge  
before the Father and the Son.*

*O gentle!*

*Gentle virgin, loving virgin  
O sweet virgin Mary,  
hear the prayers of all  
who humbly cry to you.*

*O loving!*

*Pour out prayers to your Son,  
the crucified, the wounded,  
scourged for our sake,  
pierced with thorns, given gall to drink.*

*O sweet Mary, hail!*