

CORO

§ The Sixteen Edition

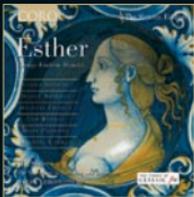


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FINANCIAL TIMES

CORO

§ The Sixteen Edition

Christus Natus Est

An Early English Christmas

The Sixteen

HARRY CHRISTOPHERS





Having already released a disc of 20th century Christmas music as well as one of traditional carols, my initial reaction when asked to do yet another Christmas disc was, “Oh no, not again!”

However, I dug out volume four of Musica Britannica, entitled Mediaeval Carols and expertly edited by John Stevens, and started to browse through it. For those of you with access to a music library, it is well worth looking at. As you will read in Nicolas Robertson’s notes, one of the original meanings of the word ‘carol’ was ‘round-dance’ and later ‘joyous song’. The carol, both in church and out of it, was associated with physical

movement; when it was not danced to, it was for procession. This volume contains popular carols of the time, popular by origin and popular by destination; there are carols for the festive season (Nowells and Lullays) alongside Alleluias and carols in honour of St Thomas à Becket and indeed the ever-popular Agincourt Song.

Of course, it is earlier music than we had ever performed but it serves as a marvellous starting point to see how Christmas music evolved in England from the late 14th century to the early 17th century. It also allowed me to use the triptych of instruments which are always depicted on nativity Christmas cards, played by smiling angels – namely, the lute, harp and rebec (an early bowed string instrument similar to the violin). Subsequently, it seemed appropriate to use their secular counterparts in the more rustic songs contained in the Playford manuscript.

Mix this all up with a smattering of Sheppard, Pygott and Byrd and the result is a mouth-watering mull of very festive music.

Harry
Christophers,

Christus Natus Est An Early English Christmas

The Sixteen

HARRY CHRISTOPHERS

1	<i>Verbum caro</i> (chant)	3.57
2	<i>Salutation Carol</i>	2.09
3	<i>Nowell sing we, both all and some</i>	2.31
4	<i>Gaudete</i>	1.22
5	<i>Hail Mary full of grace</i>	5.18
6	<i>Gloria in excelsis</i>	3.50
7	<i>There is no rose</i>	4.02
8	<i>Nowell, nowell: Out of your sleep</i>	2.03
9	<i>Remember O thou man</i>	3.24
10	<i>Quid petis, O fili?</i>	8.25
11	<i>Sweet was the song</i>	2.07
12	<i>Lullaby my sweet little baby</i>	6.28
13	<i>Ave rex angelorum</i>	2.07
14	<i>Drive the cold winter away</i>	2.04
15	<i>Nowell, nowell: The boares head</i>	3.33

16	<i>The old year now has passed away</i>	1.44
17	<i>Angelus ad Virginem</i>	2.41
18	<i>Nowell, nowell: Dieu vous garde</i>	3.50
19	<i>Make we joy</i>	2.34
20	<i>Verbum caro</i>	6.52
Total playing time		72.05

THE SIXTEEN

SOPRANO	BASS
Ruth Dean	Simon Birchall
Sally Dunkley	Robert Evans
Carys Lane	Timothy Jones
Rebecca Outram	Michael McCarthy
Katie Pringle*	
Carolyn Sampson	*only in Sheppard
ALTO	
Andrew Giles	Giles Lewin
Michael Lees	(rebec, mediaeval fiddle, renaissance violin)
Philip Newton	Frances Kelly
Richard Wyn-Roberts	(mediaeval harp, Gothic harp, drum)
TENOR	
Andrew Carwood	Robin Jeffrey
Neil MacKenzie	(mediaeval lute, guitar, drum)
David Roy	Robin Barda (drum)
Matthew Vine	

Christus Natus Est

‘The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us: And we beheld its glory...’ So begins *Verbum caro* [1], plainsong Respond at Matins and processional Respond at Mass on Christmas Day. There could hardly be a better epitaph for this selection of Christmas music from the 14th to the 17th centuries. During this period, before the iron hand of Puritanism grasped the European psyche, sacred and secular made up a continuum. Dances and processions formed part of both popular and ecclesiastical celebrations, naturally accompanied by singing, and by instruments such as rebec (a bowed string instrument), medieval fiddles, lute and harp – as we see in sculptures such as the St Mary’s, Beverley ‘Minstrel’s Pillar’, or Grünewald’s Isenheim altarpiece now in Colmar, its angels beautifully smiling as they play their instruments to accompany the divine birth.

‘Round dance’ is one of the original meanings of the word ‘carol’; later, a joyous song, specifically in the form exemplified here, consisting of a burden (‘chorus’) alternating with verses sung by one or more solo voices. Such division of labour gave the dancers a chance to pause for breath, but they were impatient to continue, crying ‘Quid stamus? cur non imus?’ (Why stand we? Why go we noight?), as an early translation of a story recorded by the 11th century monk Goscelin goes. He is relating the legend of the carol dancers of Kölbigk in Saxony, who, when called by their priest to stop

dancing in the churchyard and come to the service, refused. The priest invoked a curse upon them, and they found themselves unable to break the circle or stop dancing for a year. And so ‘We danced and leapt and clapped, mocking our own pain with the refrain of our song, “Quid stamus? cur non imus?...”’

On the whole the Christian church found it less effective to attempt to prohibit such survivals of pagan rituals and better to write new songs usurping their function, thus ‘Taking some of the Devil’s best tunes and giving them back to God’. The authorities of Sens Cathedral in the 13th century specifically licensed their clergy to dance as long as they didn’t actually *leap* (‘non tamen saliendo’).

The medieval carols in this selection all show the dance structure, though coming from a variety of manuscript sources. *The Salutation Carol* [2] is the only monophonic carol representing the most popular line in carol-making, perhaps using existing folk-song melodies. *Noell sing we* [3], *Hail Mary* [5], *Nowell, out of your sleep* [8] and *Make we joy* [9] are from a manuscript attributed to John Alcock, Bishop of Worcester in the mid 15th century: his rebus of a cock is sketched next to a stanza of *Hail Mary*. Carols were much encouraged and enjoyed at Worcester; one Richard Skryvenar was paid 6s 8d ‘rewarded for carralls’ which he wrote out in 1518, on Christmas Day itself. (‘Nowell’, incidentally, is an exclamation of joy not necessarily confined to Christmas: it is reported that ‘companies of virgins singing Nowell’

greeted Henry V’s return from Agincourt.) *Ave Rex angelorum* [13], the only carol in three voices throughout, comes from a manuscript perhaps originating in Meaux Abbey in Yorkshire, a Cistercian house with ‘a reputation for good living and rather too free hospitality to women guests’. *The boares head* [15] and *Dieu vous garde* [18], from another manuscript, are ascribed to Richard Smart, who was Rector of Plymtree, near Exeter, 1435-1477. *There is no rose* [7] mingles chivalrous imagery with lines from Bernard of Clairvaux’s *Laetabundus*, while *Angelus ad Virginem* [17] comes from a yet earlier tradition (it is mentioned by Chaucer). *Gaudete* [4], on the other hand, is a bit of an interloper, coming from a northern European collection which only found its way to England in 1853; but it demonstrates perfectly the spirit of the carol in its dancing refrain/verse form.

The carol fell into disuse after Tudor times, but certain popular forms survived, adapting existing tunes such as *Greensleeves*, the words printed in 1642 as the Wait’s Carol for the New Year, the melody transmogrified to the version met in Playford’s 1686 *The Dancing Master* (and 40 years later in *The Beggar’s Opera*). Also in Playford’s compilation is *All hail to the days*, a fantastically lithe tune to go with a poem which appears in part in Thomas D’Urfey’s 1681 collection *An Antidote to Melancholy: Made up in Pills* (later, the famous *Pills to Purge Melancholy*). Halfway between folk-song and art-song is Ballet’s *Lullaby*, more intimate precisely because of the more refined milieu for

which it was destined. *Remember O thou man* [9] survived long enough in popular usage to be quoted by Thomas Hardy in *Under the Greenwood Tree*, and one can understand why, in Ravenscroft’s haunting, sombre setting, its twist from minor to major at the end of each verse like a glimpse of light in winter darkness.

Meanwhile however the medieval mingling of sacred and profane, Latin and vernacular, burden and verse, had found an echo in the high art of the Christmas music of the great renaissance English polyphonists, represented here by Pygott, Master of the Children in Wolsey’s household chapel by 1516 and later Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, and Byrd; and, most of all, Sheppard, all of whose music here is based upon plainsong melodies (*Gloria in excelsis* [6], so dramatic a setting, the polyphony being for high voices only, that it required special extra payments for the boy singers, from the first Respond at Matins on Christmas Day; *Verbum caro* [20] from the ninth Respond at Matins) and thus has no secular foundation. An echo nevertheless: as Wittgenstein said, ‘Never mind the meaning, look at the use’. A letter from the Earl of Worcester dated 19 September 1602 reads, ‘We are frolic here at Court, much dancing in the Privy Chamber of Country Dances before the Queen’s Majesty, who is exceedingly pleased therewith. Irish tunes are at this time most liked; but in winter *Lullaby* [12], an old song of Mr. Byrd’s will be more in request I think’.

The dance goes on.
NICOLAS ROBERTSON

① PLAINCHANT *Verbum caro*

*Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis.
Et vidimus gloriam ejus, gloriam quasi
Unigeniti a Patre plenum gratiae et veritatis.
Omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum
est nihil. Et vidimus...*

*Gloria Patri et Filio et
Spiritui Sancto. Et vidimus...*

② 15TH CENTURY MS *Salutation Carol*

Refrain:
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell!
This is the salutation of th'angel Gabriel.

Tidings true there become new, sent from
the Trinity
By Gabriel to Nazareth, city of Galilee;
A clean maiden and pure virgin, thoro'
her humility
Hath conceived the person second in deity.

When he first presented was before her
fair visage,
In the most demure and goodly wise
he did to her homage
And said "Lady from heaven so high,
that lorde's heritage,

The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us;
and we beheld his glory as of the only Son of
the Father, full of grace and truth.
All things were made through him and without
him was nothing made. And we beheld...

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to
the Holy Spirit. And we beheld...

The which of thee born would be,
I am sent on message.

Hail virgin celestial, the meekest that ever was
Hail temple of the deity! Hail, mirror of
all grace!
Hail virgin pure, I thee ensure within
full little space
Thou shalt receive and him conceive,
that shall bring great solace."

Then again to the angel she answered womanly,
"Whate'er my Lord command me do I
will obey meekly.
Ecce sum humilima ancilla Domini,
Secundum verbum tuum," she said, "fiat mihi."

③ C.1450 SELDON MS *Nowell sing we, both all and some*

Refrain:
Nowell sing we, both all and some,
Now Rex pacificus is ycome.

Exortum est in love and liss.
Now Christ his grace he gan us giss.
And with his body us bought to bliss,
Both all and some.

De fructu ventris of Mary bright,
Both God and man in her alight,
Out of disease he did us dight:
Both all and some.

Puer natus to us was sent,
To bliss us bought, fro bale us blent,
And else to woe we had ywent:
Both all and some.

Lux fulgebit with love and light,
In Mary mild his pennon pight,
In her took kind with manly might:
Both all and some.

Gloria tibi, ay, and bliss,
God unto his grace he us wiss,
The rent of heaven that we not miss:
Both all and some.

4] PIAE CANTIONES (1582) *Gaudete*

Refrain:

Gaudete, gaudete!

*Christus est natus ex Maria Virgine,
Gaudete!*

*Tempus ad est gratiae
hoc quod optabamus,
Carmina laetitiae
devote reddamus.*

*Deus homo factus est
natura mirante,
Mundus renovatus est
a Christo regnante.*

*Ezecheelis porta
clausa per transitur,
Unde lux est orta
salus invenitur*

*Ergo nostra contio
psallat iam in lustris,
Benedicat Domino
salus regi nostro.*

Refrain:

Rejoice, rejoice!

Christ is born of the Virgin Mary,
Rejoice!

At this time of grace
and longed-for blessing,
We offer love
and praise in return.

God is made man
in this wonderful birth:
The world is cleansed
through the kingship of Christ.

The closed gate of Ezechieel
is now open;
And sends forth transforming light
with salvation.

Let us now therefore
sing purifying psalms;
Let us bless our Lord,
King of Salvation.

5] C.1420 MS *Hail Mary full of grace*

Refrain:

Hail, Mary, full of grace, mother in virginity.

The Holy Ghost is to thee sent
From the Father omnipotent;
Now is God within thee went,
when the angel said Ave.

When the angel Ave began,
Flesh and blood together ran;
Mary bore both God and man
Through virtue and through dignity.

So saith the gospel of Saint John:
God and man is made but one,
In flesh and blood, body and bone,
One God in person's three.

And the prophet Jeremy
Told in his prophecy
That the Son of Mary
Should die for us on roodë-tree.

Muchë joy to us was grant
And in earthë peace y-plant
When that born was this 'fant
In the land of Galilee.

Mary, grant us the bliss
There thy Sonnës woning is;
Of that we han done amiss
Pray for us pour charité. Amen.

6] JOHN SHEPPARD (C1515-1560) *Gloria in excelsis*

*Hodie nobis coelorum rex de Virgine nasci
dignatus est ut hominem perditum ad regna
coelestia revocaret gaudet exercitus angelorum.
Quia salus aeterna humano generi apparuit.*

*Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax
hominibus bonae voluntatis.
Quia salus aeterna humano generi apparuit.*

Today the king of heaven deigned to be born
of a virgin, that he might call back lost mankind to
the heavenly kingdom; the army of angels rejoices.
Because eternal salvation has appeared in human
form.

Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace
to men of goodwill. Because eternal salvation has
appeared in human form.

7 C.1420 MS *There is no rose*

Refrain:

There is no rose of such virtue
As is the rose that bare Jesu.

There is no rose of such virtue
As is the rose that bare Jesu;
Alleluia.

For in this rose contained was
Heaven and earth in little space;
Res miranda.

By that rose we may well see
That he is God in persons three,
Pari forma.

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

Leave we all this worldly mirth,
And follow we this joyful birth;
Transeamus.

8 C.1450 SELDON MS *Nowell, nowell: Out of your sleep*

Burden:

Nowell, nowell, nowell, etc.

Out of your sleep arise and wake,
For God mankind now hath ytake,
All of a maid without any make,
Of all women she bear'th the bell: Nowell.

Now man is brighter than the sun;
Now man in heaven on high shall wone;
Blessed be God this game is begun;
And his mother empress of hell:
Nowell!

Now, blessed brother, grant us grace
At Domesday to see thy face
And in thy court to have a place,
That we mow therë sing nowell,
Nowell!

9 THOMAS RAVENSCROFT (C.1590-C1633) *Remember O thou man*

Remember O thou man,
O thou man, O thou man,
Remember O thou man
Thy time is spent,
Remember O thou man,
How thou art dead and gone,
And I did what I can,
Therefore repent.

Remember God's goodness,
O thou man, O thou man,
Remember God's goodness,
And his promise made.
Remember God's goodness
How he sent his Son doubtless
Our sins for to redress,
Be not afraid.

The angels all did sing,
O thou man, O thou man,
The angels all did sing
Upon the shepherds' hill,
The angels all did sing
Praises to our heav'nly king,
And peace to man living
With a good will.

To Bethlem did they go,
O thou man, O thou man,
To Bethlem did they go,
The shepherds three,
The Bethlem did they go,
To see where it were so or no,
Whether Christ were born or no
To set man free.

In Bethlem he was born,
O thou man, O thou man,
In Bethlem he was born,
For mankind sake,
In Bethlem he was born
For us that were forlorn,
And therefore took no scorn,
Our flesh to take.

Give thanks to God alway,
O thou man, O thou man,
Give thanks to God alway,
Most joyfully.
Give thanks to God alway,
For this our happy day,
Let all men sing and say,
Holy, holy.

10 RICHARD PYGOTT (FL.1530) *Quid petis, O fili?*

Refrain

Quid petis, O fili?
Mater dulcissima ba, ba.
O Pater, O fili,
Michi plausus oscula da, da.

The mother, full mannerly,
and meekly as a maid,
Looking on her little son,
so laughing in lap laid,
So prettily, so pertly,
so passingly well apay'd;
Full softly and full soberly
unto her sweet son she said:
Quid petis, O fili?...

I mean this by Mary,
our Maker's mother of might
Full lovely looking on our Lord,
the lantern of light,
Thus saying to our Saviour;
this saw I in my sight;
This reason that I rede you now,
I rede it full right.
Quid petis, O fili?...

Musing on her manners
so nigh marr'd was my main,
Save it pleased me so passingly
that past was my pain;
Yet softly to her sweet son
me thought I heard her sain:
Now gracious God and good sweet babe,
yet once this game again.
Quid petis, O fili?...

11 C.1600 BALLETT MS, TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN *Sweet was the song*

Sweet was the song the Virgin sang,
When she to Bethlem Juda came,
And was delivered of a Son,
That blessed Jesus hath to name.

Lulla, lulla, lulla, lullaby,
Lulla, lulla, lulla, lullaby,
Sweet Babe, sang she.

My Son and eke a Saviour born,
Who hast vouchsafed from on high
To visit us that were forlorn.

Lalula, lalula, lalullaby,
Sweet Babe, sang she,
And rocked him sweetly on her knee.

12 WILLIAM BYRD (1543-1623) *Lullaby my sweet little baby*

Lulla, lullaby, lullaby,
My sweet little baby:
What meanest thou to cry,
Lulla, lullaby, lullaby,
My sweet little baby.

Be still my blessed babe,
Though cause thou hast to mourn,
Whose blood most innocent to shed,
The cruel king has sworn:

And lo, alas, behold
What slaughter he doth make,
Shedding the blood of infants all,
Sweet saviour for thy sake.

A king is born, they say:
Which king this king would kill:
O woe, and woeful heavy day,
When wretches have their will.

Lulla, lullaby, lullaby,
My sweet little baby;
What meanest thou to cry,
Lulla, lullaby, lullaby,
My sweet little baby.

13 C.1450 EGERTON MS *Ave rex angelorum*

Burden:
Ave rex angelorum, ave rexque celorum,
ave princepsque polorum.

Hail, most mighty in thy working,
Hail, thou Lord of allē thing;
I offer thee gold as to a king;
Ave rex angelorum...

14 C.1600 PLAYFORD MS *Drive the cold winter away*

All hail to the days
That merrit more praise,
Than all the rest of the year,
And welcome the night,
The double delight,
As well for the poor as the peer.
Good fortune attend,
Each merry man's friend,
That doth but the best that he may.
Forgetting all wrongs
With carols and songs
To drive the cold winter away.

Each other in love to greet
All grudges forgot
Our pud in the pot
All sorrows aside they lay
The old and the young
Doth carol his song
To drive the cold winter away.

To us and to mum
Kind neighbours will come
With wassails of nut-brown ale
To drink and carouse
To all in the house
As merry bucks as in the dale,
Where cake, bread and cheese
Is brought for your fees
To make you a longer stay
And the fire to warm
Will do you no harm
To drive the cold winter away.

This time of the year
Is spent in good cheer
And neighbours together do meet
Who sit by the fire
With friendly desire

15 C.1500 RITSON MS *Nowell, nowell: The boares head*

Burden:
Nowell, nowell, nowell,
Tidingēs good I think to tell.

The boarēs head that we bring here
Betokeneth a Prince without peer
Is born this day to buy us dear;
Nowell.

A boar is a sovereign beast
And acceptable in every feast;
So mote this Lord be to most and least;
Nowell, nowell.

This boarēs head we bring with song
In worship of him that thus sprang
Of a virgin to redress all wrong;
Nowell, nowell.

16 C.1600 PLAYFORD MS *The old year now away is fled*

The old year now away is fled
The new year it is entered,
Then let us now our sins down tread,
And joyfully all appear.
Let's merry be this holiday,
And let us run with sport and play,
Hang sorrow, let's cast care away,
God send you a happy new year.

Come give us more liquor when I do call,
I'll drink to each one in this hall,
I hope that so loud I must not bawl,
But unto me lend an ear,
Good fortune to my master send,
And to my dame, which is our friend,
God bless us all, and so I end,
And God send us a happy new year.

Come lads and lasses every one,
Jack, Tom, Dick, Bess, Mary and Joan,
Let's cut the meat unto the bone,
For welcome you need not fear,
And here for good liquor we shall not lack,
T'will whet my brains and strengthen my back,
This jolly good cheer it must go to wrack,
God send us a merry new year.

17 14TH CENTURY DUBLIN TROPER MS *Angelus ad Virginem*

*Angelus ad Virginem subintrans in conclave,
Virginis formidinem demulcens, inquit, 'Ave!
Ave, regina virginum;
Coeli terraeque Dominum
Concipies et paries intacta salutem hominum;
Tu porta coeli facta
Medela criminum.'*

*'Quomodo conciperem, quae virum non cognovi?
Qualiter infringerem quod firmamente vovi?'
'Spiritus sancti gratia
Perficiet haec omnia
Ne timeas, sed gaudeas, secura quod castimonia
Manebit intepura
Dei potentia.'*

The angel, entering the Virgin's chamber,
Soothed her maidenly fear and said 'Hail!
Hail, queen of virgins:
You will conceive the Lord of heaven and earth,
And bear without stain the Saviour of mankind.
You have become the gateway to heaven,
The remedy for sin.'

'How shall I conceive, who have known no man?
In what way shall I break my steadfast vow?'
'The grace of the Holy Spirit
Will bring all this to pass.
Do not be afraid, but rejoice,
Certain that your chastity
Will remain pure by the power of God.'

*Ad haec Virgo nobilis respondens inquit ei:
'Ancilla sum humilis omnipotentis Dei
Tibi coelesti nuntio,
Tanti secreti conscio,
Consentiens, et cupiens videre factum quod audio;
Parata sum parere,
Dei consilio.'*

*Eia mater Domini, quae pacem reddidisti
Angelis et homini, cum Christum genuisti;
Tuum exora filium
Ut se nobis propitium
Exhibeat, et deleat peccata; praestans auxilium
Vita fruibea
Post hoc exilium.*

At this the noble Virgin replying, saying to him:
'I am the lowly handmaid of almighty God.
I perceive that you are the heavenly messenger
Of this great secret, and I consent,
And desire to see what I have heard come to pass.
I am ready to give birth,
By the word of God.'

Hail, Mother of the Lord, who gave back peace
To angels and men in giving birth to Christ.
Now pray your son
That he may be our ransom
And take away our sins; and may give us his aid
To attain the life of the blessed
After this exile.

18 C.1500 RITSON MS *Nowell, nowell, Dieu vous garde*

Burden:
Nowell, nowell, nowell,
Who is there that singeth so:
Nowell nowell?
I am here, Sire Christësma.
Welcome, my lord, Sire Christësma!
Welcome to us all, both more and less!
Come near, Nowell.

Dieu vous garde, beau sire, tidingës I you bring:
A maid hath born a child full young,
The which causeth you for to sing:

Nowell, nowell.
Christ is now born of a pure maid;
In an ox-stall he is laid;
Wherefore sing we all at-a-braid:
Nowell.

Buvez bien par toute la compagnie,
Make good cheer and be right merry,
And sing with us now joyfully:
Nowell.

19 C.1450 SELDON MS *Make we joy*

Burden:
Make we joy now in this fest,
In quo Christus natus est; Eya.

A patre unigenitus
thro' a maiden is come to us;
Sing we to her and say: Welcome,
Veni, redemptor gentium.

Agnoscat omne seculum:
A bright star three kings made come
For to seek with their presence
Verum supernum prodians.

A solis ortus cardine,
So mightly a lord was none as he,
For to our kind he hath give gryth,
Adam parens quod polluit.

Maria ventre concepit;
The Holy Ghost was ay her with.
In Bethlehem y-born he is,
Consorts paterni luminis.

O lux beata Trinitas!
He lay between an ox and ass,
Thou mother and maiden free;
Gloria tibi, Domine.

20 JOHN SHEPPARD (C1515-1560) *Verbum caro*

*Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis.
Cujus gloriam vidimus quasi Unigeniti a Patre
plenum gratiae et veritatis.*

*In principio erat verbum et verbum erat apud
Deum et Deus erat verbum.*

*Gloria Patri et Filio
et Spiritui Sancto.*

The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us;
and we beheld his glory as of the only Son of
the Father, full of grace and truth.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word
was with God, and the Word was God.
Glory be to the Father and to the Son
And to the Holy Spirit.

Recording Producer: Stephen Johns
Recording Engineer: Mike Hatch
CD mastering: Julian Millard
Recorded at All Hallows, Gospel Oak, London
Originally released on the Collins label

Text translations: Jeremy White
Cover artwork: Bodleian Library, University of Oxford,
MS. Bodl. 264, fol. 180v
Design: Richard Boxall Design Associates

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Coro or live performances and tours, call +44 (0) 1865
793 999 or email coro@thesixteen.org.uk
www.thesixteen.com

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