Victoria - perhaps the most outstanding composer of the Spanish Renaissance tradition

Victoria Requiem
SACD-CD-hybrid, surround sound corSACD16033

This brand new recording from The Sixteen features the celebrated Requiem of 1605, Victoria’s final composition, a work of beguiling beauty and sumptuous simplicity.

It can be seen as the summation of both his art and the Spanish Renaissance tradition. The beautiful plainsong on which it is structured can be heard arching through the texture, forming a delicate and sinuous line throughout. Subtly accompanied by a chamber organ and bajón, it is recorded here with the same forces as may well have performed it originally in the Monasterio de las Descalzas Reales.

The Requiem is preceded by Marian Antiphons interspersed with three motets setting texts from the Song of Songs.

The Mystery of the Cross
Victoria Volume II cor16021

"Music Christophers was born to conduct." BBC Radio 3, CD review

Call of the Beloved
Victoria Volume III cor16007

"...this is a beautifully prepared and rewarding recording that deepens our appreciation of one of the greatest masters of the Renaissance." Gramophone

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Cor16035 Devotion Booklet AW.ind2-3   2-3   2/8/05   15:43:27

Devotion to our Lady
Tomás Luis de Victoria

The Sixteen
HARRY CHRISTOPHERS
Scholar, mystic, priest, singer, organist and composer – six persons all rolled into one and that is, quite simply, why Victoria is the most outstanding composer of the Renaissance.

He devoted his life to the church, and his works reveal such heartfelt passion that there are times, in performance, when we are almost overwhelmed by their intensity. Our Victoria series aims to show not only the deeply felt emotion of the Lenten settings but also his ability to be joyously inventive and highly sensual, as in his treatment of texts from 'The Song of Songs'.

On one of our more recent tours to the USA, I was determined to take a choral programme which would be a supremely moving experience; I remember saying to the choir that this would be very demanding but so rewarding. That programme was devoted solely to the music of Victoria, and proved inspirational to singers and listeners alike. The result was breathtaking.

If one can ever achieve complete emotional expression through the power of music, then here it is.
Tomás Luis de Victoria
1548 – 1611

In Spain and Portugal from Mediaeval times there had been a long-established and great tradition of devotion to the Virgin Mary. By the close of the 15th century the composers (Pétalosa, Ancheta, Escobar, De Alva, Rivafrecha and others) working in the Royal Chapels of Aragon and Castile, at the courts of Ferdinand and Isabella, los Reyes Católicos, all showed a great preference for setting music not only the Salve Regina (which had already been sung after the Marian Mass on Saturdays since at least the 14th century), but also a wide variety of Marian texts, often non-liturgical, commonly from the Song of Songs or depicting the scene at the foot of the Cross as seen through the eyes of the weeping Virgin Mother. However, from the time of the liturgical reforms of the Council of Trent in the 1560s, by Victoria’s lifetime, such graphic, sometimes gory, often highly subjective and ecstatic Marian texts in favour at the turn of the century had been largely swept away. Nevertheless the standard Marian texts continued to be of outstanding importance in the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church, in Spain as elsewhere: Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548 - 1611), Spaniard, priest, organist, choirmaster, and above all, composer, wrote no fewer than four settings of Salve Regina and two each of Ave Regina caelorum, Regina caeli, Alma Redemptoris Mater and Ave Maria, as well as a set of Magnificats, and other Marian music: Masses and motets, and hymns.

Victoria was born in Avila, where he learnt his art at the Cathedral as a chorister. So promising was he that he was sent to Rome in 1565, patronised by the Church and by Philip II, that most austere of Catholic monarchs, to study at the Jesuit Collegium Germanicum. He lived and worked in Rome for twenty years, becoming more so than any other Spaniard of his or the previous generation, a composer of international stature and of international technique (much as did Lassus, although in contrast to him Victoria wrote nothing but church music). His music is very much a blend of Spanish tradition and passion, (Victoria was, after all, a younger contemporary of St Teresa of Avila and of St John of the Cross), and of Roman influence (perhaps fortuitously he was in that city at the very time when Catholicism was regaining its virality and confidence with disciplined reform). Once thought of as the final figure of an Age, his music a monument to a classical style best exemplified by the ‘perfection’ of Palestrina, Victoria can in truth be seen as a colossus in his own right: his mature polyphony and late polychoralism not only sum up the 16th century but remain archetypes of Hispanic music to follow.

The 8-voice double-choir Antiphon Salve Regina, and the Mass of the same name based upon it \(1\) – \(4\) are typical examples of Victoria’s greatest music. It is probable that he planned Masses based on all four of his 8-voice Marian Antiphons, but only this one, first published in 1592, on Salve Regina, and those on Alma Redemptoris Mater and Ave Regina caelorum, were completed before his death in 1611. There is an additional twist to Victoria’s use of borrowed material, of parody technique: all these Masses are not only reworkings of his 8-voice settings of the Antiphons, but they also use passages of music from one composition to the next – does not mean that Victoria simply copied music from one composition to the next - there is always a very considerable element of genuine recreation and re-invention, of extension, of addition (for example, of joyful triple-time passages, such as at Gloria Dei Patris in the Gloria).

The Salve Regina \(1\) and the Magnificat \(5\), and the hymn Ave maris stella \(6\), all reflect the verse structure of their texts; Alma Redemptoris Mater \(\text{bl}\) Regina caeli \(\text{bm}\) (particularly notable for its joyful triple-time alleluias), and the prayer, Ave Maria \(\text{bn}\), lend themselves more naturally to a continuous flowing polyphony. All are perfectly constructed and balanced, entirely appropriate to the texts, fervent and yet smooth and flowing, with the sweetest and most magnificent sonorities. The Magnificat \(6\), at first sight a completely new composition published for the first time in 1600, turns out, however, to be an extensive through-composed reworking of the 4-voice first Magnificat from the set of alternatim settings published in 1576. This, the Mass and the Salve are performed here with organ accompanying Choir 1, and bass dulcian (bajón), Choir 2 (as was often the practice in Spain during the latter part of the sixteenth century). Alma Redemptoris

4

5
Mater and Regina caeli have one choir accompanied by organ; Ave Maria and the hymn are performed a cappella.

An intimate interlude is provided by this hymn for four voices, Ave maris stella. One of the more famous of hymn texts, it was set twice by Victoria, this earlier version published in Rome in 1581 in his Hymni totius anni, secundum Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae consuetudinem. The huge 16th century Spanish repertoire of polyphonic hymns is still totally unknown in our time - those by masters such as Navarro or Guerrero, both contemporaries of Victoria, have regrettably remained unperformable and unperformed for lack of availability of the appropriate Spanish chants (for there were major regional variants both in text and in plainsong melody even until well after 1600). However, Victoria’s hymns are all based on the Roman use (except for the two subtitled more hispano, Vexilla regis and Pange lingua) and are printed with the chant for the alternate verses. For these reasons they continue to be performed occasionally, but they still remain unjustifiably neglected in general and in relation to the rest of Victoria’s output.

© Martyn Imrie

## Salve Regina


## Kyrie


## Gloria

Gloria in excelsis Deo. Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis. Laudamus te, benedictimus te, adoramus te, glorificamus te.
Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam.
Domine Deus, Rex caelestis,
Deus Pater omnipotens.
Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe.
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris.
Qui tollis peccata mundi,
 miserere nobis.
Qui tollis peccata mundi,
suscipe deprecationem nostram.
Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris,
miserere nobis.
Quoniam tu solus Sanctus,
tu solus Dominus,
tu solus Altissimus Jesu Christe.
Cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

We give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory.
Lord God, heavenly King,
God the Father almighty.
O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesu Christ.
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father.
Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.
Thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer.
Thou that sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy upon us.
For Thou only art holy,
Thou only art the Lord,
Thou only art the most high, Jesu Christ.
With the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Credo

Credo in unum Deum Patrem omnipotentem, factorem caeli et terrae, visibilium omnium et invisibilium. Et in unum Dominum, Jesum Christum, Filium Dei unigenitum, et ex Patre natum ante omnia saecula. Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine, Deum verum de Deo vero, genitum, non factum, consubstantialem Patri, per quem omnia facta sunt. Qui, propter nos homines, et propter nostram salutem, descendit de caelis. Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria virginie, et homo factus est. Crucifixus etiam pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato; passus et sepultus est. Et resurrexit tertia die, secundum scripturas, et ascendit in caelum, sedet ad dexteram Patris. Et iterum venturus est cum gloria iudicare vivos et mortuos, cuibus regni non erit finis. Et in Spiritum Sanctum Dominum et vivificantem, qui ex Patre Filioque procedit; qui cum Patre et Filio simul adoratur et conglorificatur; qui locutus est per Prophetas. Et unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam. Confiteor unum baptisma in remissionem peccatorum. Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum et vitam venturi saeculi. Amen.

I believe in God the Father almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth,
and of all things visible and invisible.
And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only begotten Son of God,
begotten of his Father before all worlds.
God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God,
begotten, not made,
being of one substance with the Father,
by Whom all things were made.
Who for us men,
and for our salvation,
came down from heaven.
And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary and was made man.
And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.
He suffered and was buried.
And the third day He rose again according to the scriptures;
and ascended into heaven,
and sitteth at the right hand of the Father.
And He shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead;
Whose kingdom shall have no end.
And I believe in the Holy Ghost the Lord and giver of life,
Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son;
Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified;
Who spake by the prophets.
And I believe in one holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.
I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins.
And I look for the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.
Sanctus

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.

Holy, Holy, Holy
Lord God of hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.
Hosanna in the highest.

Benedictus

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.
Hosanna in excelsis.

Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

Agnus Dei

Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi:
miserere nobis.

Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,
have mercy upon us.

Ave maris stella

Ave maris stella, Dei Mater alma,
atque semper Virgo, felix caeli porta.
Summens illud Ave Gabrieliis ore,
fiunda nos in pace, mutans Hevae nomen.
Salve vincula reis, profer lumen caecis:
mala nostra pelle, bona cuncta posce.

Hail, star of the sea, bountiful Mother of God and eternal Virgin, happy gateway to heaven.
By that ‘Ave’ from the mouth of Gabriel, establish us in peace, changing Eve’s name around.
Throw off the bonds, bring light to the blind, banish our ills, intercede for all good things.

Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi:
miserere nobis.

Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,
have mercy upon us.

Alma Redemptoris Mater

Alma Redemptoris Mater,
quaer pervia caeli porta manes,
et stella maris,
succurre cadenti surgere qui curat populo.
Tu quaer genuisti, natura mirante,
tuum sanctum Genitorem:
Virgo prius ac posterius,
Gabrieliis ab ore sumens illud Ave,
pecatorum miserere.

Gracious Mother of the Redeemer,
you who remain the ever-open gate of Heaven,
and star of the sea,
succour thy people who, falling, strive to rise again.
You who gave birth, while Nature marvelled,
to your Holy Creator,
virgin before and after,
who heard that ‘Ave’ from the mouth of Gabriel,
have mercy on sinners.

Regina caeli, laetare

Regina caeli, laetare, alleluia:
quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia.
Resurrexit, sicut dixit, alleluia.
Ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia.

O Queen of Heaven, rejoice, alleluia.
For Him whom you were chosen to bear, alleluia.
He hath risen, as He said, alleluia.
Pray for us to God, alleluia.
Ave Maria

Ave Maria, gratia Plena, Dominus tecum. 
Benedicta in mulieribus, 
et benedictus fructus ventris tui Iesus. 
Sancta Maria, Regina caeli, dulcis et pia, 
O Mater Dei; ora pro nobis peccatoribus, 
ut cum electis te videamus.

Magnificat

Magnificat anima mea Dominum 
et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo. 
Quia respetit humilitatem ancillae suae: 
ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent 
onnes generationes. 
Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est: et 
sanctum nomen ejus. Et misericordia ejus a 
progenie in progenies timentibus eum. 
Fecit potentiam in bracchio suo: dispersit 
superbos mentes cordis sui. 
Deposit potentes de sede, et exaltavit 
humiles. Esurientes implevit bonis: et 
divites dimisit inanes. 
Suscepit Israel puerum suum, recordatus 
misericordiae suae. Sicut locutus est ad patres 
nostros, Abraham et semini ejus in saecula. 
Gloria Patri, et Filio et Spiritui Sancto. Sicut 
erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in 
saecula saeculorum. Amen.

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Sixteen has become the finest choral 
group in existence, [these discs] will 
serve as conclusive proof."
GRAMOPHONE, December 2004
The Sixteen
Harry Christophers

After twenty-five years of world-wide performance and recording, The Sixteen is recognised as one of the world’s greatest vocal ensembles. Its special reputation for performing early English polyphony, masterpieces of the Renaissance and a diversity of 20th century music is drawn from the passions of conductor and founder, Harry Christophers. Over eighty recordings, many prize-winning, reflect The Sixteen’s quality in a range of work spanning the music of six hundred years.

The Sixteen has toured throughout Europe, Japan, Australia and the Americas and has given regular performances at major concert halls and festivals worldwide, including the Barbican Centre, Sydney Opera House, and Vienna Musikverein; also the BBC Proms, and the festivals of Salzburg, Granada, Lucerne and Istanbul. The vigour and passion of its performance win new fans wherever it performs. At home in the UK, the group promotes A Choral Pilgrimage, a tour of our finest cathedrals bringing music back to the buildings for which it was written.

The choir is enhanced by the existence of its own period instrument orchestra, The Symphony of Harmony and Invention, and through it Harry Christophers brings fresh insights to music including that of Purcell, Monteverdi, JS Bach and Handel. 2004 witnessed the launch of the group’s annual Handel in Oxford Festival, a weekend of concerts and events dedicated to the life of this great composer.

CORO is the lively and successful record label of The Sixteen, The Symphony of Harmony and Invention and Harry Christophers. Formed in 2001, CORO is re-mastering, re-packaging and re-issuing recordings of The Sixteen that were for a short time available on Collins Classics, and making brand new recordings every year prompting such accolades as …

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BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE

Spem in alium CORSACD16016
Music for Monarchs and Magnates
Music by Tallis, Byrd, Tomkins and Gibbons
The Sixteen
Harry Christophers

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BBC RADIO 3, CD REVIEW

Heroes and Heroines, Handel Arias COR16025
Sarah Connolly
The Symphony of Harmony and Invention
Harry Christophers

BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE
Performance ***** Sound *****

Recording Producer: Mark Brown
Recording Engineer: Mike Hatch (Floating Earth)
Recorded at St Jude’s on the Hill, Hampstead Garden Suburb, London, 5-7 February, 1997
Cover image: V&A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum
Design: Richard Boxall Design Associates

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