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**Padre Pio Prayer**
James MacMillan

Roxanna Panufnik

Will Todd

The Sixteen

HARRY CHRISTOPHERS

**The Sixteen Edition**

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**Sixteen Edition**

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When Pope Benedict XVI was inaugurated as head of the Roman Catholic Church in 2005, he vowed that he would seek to reform music at the Vatican and in the Catholic Church worldwide. Various comments of his have been reported in a slightly distorted fashion, as in certain tabloids, “Pope forbids guitars” and my favourite one, which appeared in the Irish Times, “Pope’s Rock Rap Hits just the Right Chord”. But this is what the Pope actually said: “Sacred polyphony constitutes a heritage that should be preserved with care, kept alive and made better known, for the benefit not only of the scholars and specialists but of the ecclesiastical community as a whole. An authentic updating of sacred music can take place only in the lineage of the great tradition of the past, of Gregorian chant and sacred polyphony.”

There is no doubt that the new Pope wishes to see a return to the great music of the sixteenth century but that it should sit alongside the music of our present day. Those of you who know our repertoire will be well acquainted with our many recordings of Renaissance works. However, it is also important that we champion music of today. This would not be possible without the support, belief and encouragement of individuals. We are so fortunate to have in John Studzinski, the architect of the whole “Padre Pio” project, through his inspired Genesis Foundation, someone who believes not only in creating spiritual experiences but also ensuring that music in the Catholic Church is upheld and, above all, injected with life.

For John, the humility of Padre Pio’s prayer is its most powerful message and on this recording we have the fruits of his intriguing commissions - three very different composers’ interpretation of the prayer that Padre Pio recited every day of his life:

Stay with me, Lord,
For You are my light
And without You I am in darkness.

It was quite fascinating for me to see the way this beautiful prayer affected James MacMillan, Roxanna Panufnik and Will Todd, the latter being the only non-Catholic of the three. All are inspired but in different ways; James by the soul’s lonely anguish at impending death, Roxanna by the introvert, ardent and passionate text and Will by the fervent, beseeching intensity of the prayer.

I sincerely hope that with this recording we can live up to John Studzinski’s passion for new music and bring this heartfelt and quite beautiful sacred music to a much wider audience.

Harry
Christiansen.
Padre Pio is the familiar name by which millions know and venerate St Pius of Pietrelcina, an Italian saint canonised in 2002 by the late Pope John Paul II. It is to his memory that this album is dedicated. On a different level, the album is also a study of the ways in which three composers treat sacred words and in the case of Padre Pio’s Prayer, the same sacred words.

Although Pio’s life was sometimes beset by controversy, and he was once banned from celebrating mass by the Vatican, large numbers of his Italian constituents remained unwaveringly devoted to him. Significantly his popularity has continued to grow since his death in 1968 and his more recent beatification, and today more people are said to pray to him than to any other saint. At the start of 2008, his tomb at San Giovanni Rotondo, now the second most visited Christian shrine in the world, was opened and Pio exhumed, as is customary with new saints, so that the Papal legate Archbishop D’Ambrosio could assess the condition of his remains.

The genial Archbishop reported that Pio’s embalmed corpse was well-preserved.
at the age of fifteen and entered a Capuchin (i.e. hooded) Franciscan friary where he had frequent mystic and ecstatic experiences, wrestling at night with the devil, and in 1918 at the age of thirty receiving the stigmata, mysterious wounds in his hands, feet and side matching Christ’s. The Vatican viewed with suspicion the accompanying notoriety and withdrew his licence to celebrate mass for a decade. At around this time, Padre Pio began to say the long post-Communion prayer Resta Con Me Signor (Stay with me Lord) which he perhaps wrote but in any case made his own by a daily recitation of it for the rest of his life.

Panufnik, who had heard the prayer for the first time at the funeral, had been deeply moved by its ‘introvert, very ardent, very passionate’ words. To her, Pio’s constant intercession was a deep expression of the fear and loneliness of one searching for reassurance and strength in the face of death. The Commission demanded a piece lasting around six minutes which is too short for the entire prayer so Panufnik subcontracted the writer Jessica Duchen to paraphrase a translation of it by Stephen Macklow-Smith. Panufnik’s setting, called Stay with me, is for double choir and organ, the opposing forces delivering the words as if in conversation across the stereo stalls. In a more complex middle section the choirs rhythmically chant the holy refrain in a babel of different tongues, Spanish, Swahili, Persian and Pio’s Italian, like the apostles at Pentecost, while soprano and tenor soloists intone like a mantra the word ‘prayer’ while the outer parts sing of the awesome power that communion with God might unleash. The build-up finally sets free the soloist who soars to Herbert’s peaceful conclusion ‘something understood’, whence the title of one of the BBC’s more thoughtful religious affairs radio programmes.

Throughout his career, composer James MacMillan has derived much inspiration from religious texts and events, and recalls the miracle of the revived Scottish girl from his youth when stories about Padre Pio were common among Glaswegian Catholics. When he read the Padre Pio Prayer he was, like Panufnik, struck by its sense of the fear of coming death and the universal concern of how each, ‘in the grip of his own conscience, will overcome that fear’. He notices similarities with Cardinal Newman’s epic poem The Dream of Gerontius which also wrestles with the terrifying loneliness of a dying man’s final moments. His setting of his own paraphrase of the Padre Pio Prayer makes a spiritual journey through different emotional states, anxiety, frailty, warmth, listeners to a service. The text is a prayer in sonnet form by the seventeenth-century clergyman-poet George Herbert. The middle voices continue rhythmically to intone like a mantra the word ‘prayer’ while the outer parts sing of the awesome power that communion with God might unleash. The build-up finally sets free the soloist who soars to Herbert’s peaceful conclusion ‘something understood’, whence the title of one of the BBC’s more thoughtful religious affairs radio programmes.

In its English version, Padre Pio’s Prayer is the favourite intercession of John Studzinski, founder of the Genesis Foundation, a charitable arts organisation which exists to further the careers of young artists. In 2006 it was read at a funeral Studzinski was attending and, moved once again by its comforting message, he began discussing the positive aspects of setting it to music with the person sitting beside him, he began discussing the positive aspects of setting it to music with the person sitting beside him who happened to be the composer Roxanna Panufnik. ‘I decided to see if we could create a spiritual experience by commissioning three composers [the three on this disc] to find their own personal responses to the prayer and set it to music to be sung by choirs nationwide,’ says Studzinski.

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Padre Pio would have insisted that a relic was worth nothing without the additional ingredient of prayer. ‘Pray, hope and don’t worry!’ was the saint’s oft quoted maxim. It reflects his cheerful disposition. Panufnik’s unaccompanied anthem Prayer for double choir and soprano soloist opens with the sopranos imitating bells as if summoning Hume in 1998. That work was the first
confidence, ecstasy and peace.

MacMillan’s setting, entitled Padre Pio’s Prayer, is for four-part choir plus organ. The choral writing is part homophonic, part polyphonic, part ‘slabs-of-sound’, but never so complex as to obscure the text. He paints the phrase ‘I may not fall’ with an all-voice descent from top to bottom of the stave while ‘darkness’ is coloured by the dark chord of E flat minor sung low by all parts. The climax is reached at a triple-forte exclamation ‘Joy of my heart’ in recognition of Christ in the broken Communion wafer. The organ of my heart’ in response of the text. He paints the phrase ‘I may not fall’ with an all-voice descent from top to bottom of the stave while ‘darkness’ is coloured by the dark chord of E flat minor sung low by all parts. The climax is reached at a triple-forte exclamation ‘Joy of my heart’ in recognition of Christ in the broken Communion wafer. The organ makes much use of anchoring drones as well as sparkling ad libitum prestissimi and a high, joyful sprite-like solo which interjects between choir entries and finishes the work with a page-long coda, climbing with its innocent jig-like rhythm towards heaven.

But for music, most poets would never be heard at all. MacMillan also brings attention to the writing of Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667), chaplain to Charles I, in his On the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin from Taylor’s manual of daily prayers, The Golden Grove, published in 1655. The text set by MacMillan is a setting of the first two and the last verses of Psalm 96, ‘O sing unto the Lord, a new song’.

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Composer Will Todd set a version of the Padre Pio Prayer paraphrased by his librettist and regular collaborator Ben Dunwell. Both were struck by the intensity of expression in the text, its beseeching quality with its repetitive pleading refrain ‘stay with me’, its resignation towards the inevitable and its recognition of the need for divine assistance in the face of the coming ordeal. Todd’s interpretation is not for organ but for piano and choir and is by general consent the work which most closely suits further performance by an average parish choir. The basses don’t have to sing that bottom C. Four parts are required though much of the time the singers are in unison or simple two parts gently and soothingly rocking between chords of A flat major and F minor. Watery keyboard triplets impart a sense of serenity to Pio’s prayer-filled night.

Todd’s Among Angels sets an original text by Dunwell. It is in three parts, the first floating on the ‘soft, wide wings’ of Todd’s static harmony, the second marked ‘like a slow folk ballad’, the third a mesmeric injunction to seize light. It is scored for two harps and a choir containing four each of sopranos, altos, tenors and basses, or sixteen singers. Indeed it was written for The Sixteen, commissioned, like the Padre Pio Prayer, by the Genesis Foundation, and first performed in Salzburg on the occasion of John Studzinski’s fiftieth birthday.

‘The stone which the builders rejected is become the headstone in the corner,’ Studzinski quotes, explaining why he and so many others have been inspired by the saint. For him, the humility of Padre Pio’s prayer is its most powerful message and the commissioning of three composers to set it to music was the surest way of spreading its appeal. First performances of each work were given by The Sixteen at a concert introduced by Cardinal Cormac Murphy O’Connor in Westminster Cathedral in June 2008. To Studzinski, that three-way world premiere served both to draw attention to a remarkable twentieth-century saint and to highlight the work of the Genesis Foundation. The terms of the Genesis brief will, it is hoped, encourage other choirs to take up the works. ‘These are pieces which are going to have life after their premiere,’ says Studzinski. Padre Pio’s work, as he himself predicted, goes on.

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Il gioviale Arcivescovo riferì che il corpo imbalzamato di Padre Pio era ben conservato. Il sommo del suo cranio era visibile, ma il mento era perfetto e le mani sembravano ‘come se fosse passato un manicure’. La richiesta popolare di vedere il Santo fu così grande che il periodo di visione venne prolungato fino al dicembre 2009. In verità lo stesso Padre Pio profetizzò che la sua opera sarebbe cominciata propriamente soltanto dopo la sua morte. Il suo più grande conseguimento, la bella Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza, che lui fondò negli anni ’50 con una donazione dell’ONU (per cui ricevette dispensa papale dal voto di povertà) continua a crescere ed è oggi considerata uno dei migliori ospedali in Europa.

Pio nacque Francesco Forgione, figlio di pastore analfabeta, nel 1887 nell’Italia del Sud. Era sicuro della sua vocazione fin dall’infanzia ed ebbe delle visioni quando era ancora bambino. Sua madre era sconcertata dalla sua non infantile predisposizione all’asceticismo –aveva deciso di dormire sul pavimento di pietra con un sasso per guanciale- ma ambedue i genitori furono irremovibili nella loro sforzo per aiutarlo a raggiungere il suo obiettivo, il padre persino andando a lavorare in America per potergli pagare gli anni di scuola persi e che la chiesa monastica richiedeva. Prese gli ordini a 15 anni e entrò a far parte di una confraternita di frati Francescani Cappuccini (cioè con il cappuccio) laddove spesso provò esperienze mistiche ed estatiche, lottando di notte con il diavolo, e nel 1918 all’età di 30 anni ricevette le stigmate, misteriose piaghe alle mani, ai piedi ed al fianco paragonabili a quelle di Cristo. Il Vaticano fu sospettoso della fama che ne conseguì e gli tolse la licenza di celebrare messa per un decennio. Circa in quel tempo Padre Pio cominciò a dire la lunga preghiera dopo la comunione “Resta con me Signore” che forse lui scrisse, ma che certamente fece sua,con la recitazione quotidiana per il resto della sua vita.

Nella versione inglese, La preghiera di Padre Pio è l’intercessione preferita di John Studzinsky, fondatore del Genesis Foundation, un’ organizzazione caritatevole per le arti,che esiste allo scopo di avanzare la carriera di giovani artisti. Nel 2006 venne letta a un funerale cui Studzinsky partecipava e, commosso ancor più dal suo messaggio consolatore, cominciò a discutere il lato positivo di metterla in musica con la persona che gli sedeva accanto, che per l’appunto era la compositrice Roxanna Panufnik. ‘Decisi di vedere se fosse possibile creare un’esperienza spirituale commissionando tre compositori [i tre su questo disco] che trovassero la loro reazione personale alla preghiera, e di metterla in musica, la quale poi verrebbe cantata da Cori per tutto il territorio nazionale.’ dice Studzinsky.

Panufnik, che aveva udito la preghiera per la prima volta al funerale,era stata molto commossa dalle sue parole ‘introverse, molto ardent, molto appassionate’. Secondo lei, l’intercessione costante di Padre Pio era profonda espressione della paura e della solitudine di chi spera essere rassicurato e reso forte davanti alla morte. La Commissione richiedeva un pezzo della durata di circa sei minuti, che sarebbe stato troppo breve per tutta la preghiera, così Panufnik impiegò la scrittrice Jessica Duchen per parafrasarne la traduzione di Stephen Macklow-Smith. La composizione di Panufnik, intitolata Stay with me, è per doppio coro e organo, le forze giustapposte presentano le parole come in una conversazione attraverso la platea, in stereo. Nella più complessa parte centrale i cori cantano ritmicamente il sacro ritornello in una Babele di lingue diverse, spagnolo, swaili, persiano e l’italiano di Padre Pio, come gli apostoli alla Pentecoste,
m prosecuted and then, as if by divine intervention, he immediately began to recover.

Lavata con un pezzo delle vesti di Padre Pio stava morendo di difterite, ebbe la fronte invocata. Nel 1970 una ragazza scozzese, che si elevava verso la calma conclusione di Herbert ‘something understood’ (qualcosa di conosciuto) . Secondo il poeta l’Angelo cercava dimora quando trovò il ventre della Vergine e con l’apparizione di Cristo quando si elevava verso la calma conclusione di Herbert ‘something understood’ (qualcosa di compreso), da cui deriva il titolo di uno dei più riflessivi programmi radio di religione della BBC.

Durante la sua carriera il compositore James MacMillan ha ricevuto molta ispirazione da fatti e testi di natura religiosa, e si ricorda del miracolo della religiosa, e si ricorda del miracolo della preghiera ‘Prema, spera, non agitarti’ era la massima del santo, citata di frequente. Ne riflette il carattere allegro. L’antifona Prayer (Preghiera) a cappella di Panufnik, per doppio coro e soprano solista si apre con la sezione dei soprani imitando le campane come se invitassero gli ascoltatori al rito. Il testo è una preghiera in forma di sonetto del prete-poeta del sec.XVII George Herbert. Le voci mediane continuano ad intonare ritmicamente il mantra ‘prayer’ (preghiera), mentre le parti esterne cantano la frase ‘I may not fall’(non posso cadere) con il suo a solo acuto e gioioso come uno strumento per doppio coro e soprano solista si apre con la sezione dei soprani imitando le campane come se invitassero gli ascoltatori al rito. Il testo è una preghiera in forma di sonetto del prete-poeta del sec.XVII George Herbert. Le voci mediane continuano ad intonare ritmicamente il mantra ‘prayer’ (preghiera), mentre le parti esterne cantano la frase ‘I may not fall’(non posso cadere) con il suo a solo acuto e gioioso come uno strumento.
Il compositore Will Todd usa una versione della Preghiera di Padre Pio parafrasata dal suo librettista e usuale collaboratore, Ben Dunwell. Ambedue furono colpiti dall'intensità espressiva del testo, la sua qualità implorante, con la ripetizione del supplichevole ritornello ‘Stay with me’ la sua rassegnazione all’inevitabile e il riconoscimento del bisogno dell’assistenza divina affrontando la dura prova in arrivo. L’interpretazione di Todd non è per organo ma per pianoforte e coro; secondo l’opinione generale è l’opera che meglio si adatta all’esecuzione in futuro di un coro di parrocchia di abilità media. I bassi non sono obbligati a cantare quel Do basso. Quattro sono le parti richieste ma per gran parte del pezzo i cantanti sono all’unisono, o a due semplici parti ondeggiando dolcemente in maniera che dà calma tra l’accordo di La bemolle maggiore e di fa minore. Terzine liquide della tastiera donano un senso di serenità alla notte colma di preghiera di Padre Pio.

Among Angels (Tra Angeli) di Todd mette in musica un testo originale di Dunwell. È in tre parti, la prima fluttuante ‘su morbide e larghe all’ (soft, wide wings) dell’armonia statica di Tod, la seconda indicata come una lenta ballata popolare (like a slow folk ballad), la terza un’ingiunzione mesmerica di ‘impadronirsi della luce’ (seize light). È orchestrata per due arpe e coro di quattro voci per sezione, quattro soprani, contralti, tenori e bassi, cioè sedici cantanti. Infatti fu scritta per The Sixteen, dietro commissione, come la Padre Pio’s Prayer, del Genesis Foundation, la cui prima esecuzione avvenne a Salisbury nell’occasione del 50esimo compleanno di John Studzinski.


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Translation by Alessandra Testai

SOPRANO ALTO
Grace Davidson Ian Aitkenhead
Julia Doyle David Clegg
Sally Dunkley Ruth Clegg
Rebecca Hickey Martha McLorinan
Alison Hill William Missin
Charlotte Mobbs Christopher Royall

TENOR BASS
Simon Berridge Alex Ashworth
Jeremy Budd Julian Empnett
Mark Dobell Robert Evans
Matthew Long William Gaunt
David Roy Timothy Jones
Julian Stocker Robert Macdonald

HARP
Helen Tunstall ORGAN & PIANO
Hugh Webb Christopher Glynn
Resta con me Signore, perché è necessario averti presente per non dimenticarti. Tu sai con quanto facilmente mi abbandono. Resta con me Signore, perché sei la mia vita e senza di te vengo meno nel fervore. Resta con me Signore, perché sei la mia luce e senza di te sono nelle tenebre. Resta con me Signore, perché desidero amarti molto ed essere sempre in tua compagnia! Resta con me Signore, perché oda la Tua voce e Ti segua. Resta con me Signore, perché Ti sia fedele.

Si fa tardi e viene la morte!... M’inquietano le tenebre, le tentazioni, le aridità, le croci, le pene, ed oh! Quanto ho bisogno di Te Gesù mio in questa notte dell’esilio! Resta Gesù con me, perché in questa notte della vita e dei pericoli ho bisogno di Te. Fa che Ti conosca come i tuoi discepoli allo spezzar del pane... cioè che l’unione Eucaristica sia luce che dissipa le tenebre, la forza che mi sostiene e l’unica beatitudine del mio cuore. Resta Signore con me, perché quando arriva la morte, voglio stare unito a Te, se non realmente per la Santa Comunione, almeno per la grazia e per l’amore. Resta Gesù con me, non Ti chiedo la tua consolazione divina, perché non la meritò, però il dono della tua santissima presenza, oh! sì Te lo chiedo! Resta Signore con me, te solo cerco, il tuo amore, la tua grazia, la tua volontà, il tuo cuore, il tuo Spirito, perché Ti amo e non chiedo altra ricompensa che aumento di amore. Amore solido, pratico. Amarti con tutto il mio cuore sulla terra, per seguire amandoti con perfezione per tutta l’eternità. Così sia.

It is getting late and death approaches. I fear the darkness, the temptations, the hard-heartedness, the cross, the sorrows. Oh, how I need You, my Jesus, in this night of exile!

Stay with me tonight, Jesus, in life with all its dangers, I need You. Let me recognize You as your disciples did at the breaking of the bread, so that the Eucharistic Communion be the light which disperses the darkness, the force which sustains me, the unique joy of my heart. Stay with me, Lord, because at the hour of my death, I want to remain united to You, if not by Communion, at least by grace and love. Stay with me, Jesus, I do not ask for divine consolation, because I do not merit it, but the gift of your presence, oh, yes, I ask this of You! Stay with me, Lord, for it is you alone I look for. Your Love, your Grace, your Will, your Heart, your Spirit, because I love You and ask no other reward but to love you more and more.

With a firm love, I will love You with all my heart while on earth and continue to love You perfectly during all eternity. So be it.
James MacMillan: Padre Pio’s Prayer

Do not leave me, Lord, even though You know how easily I abandon You. I am weak, and I need You so that I may not fall. You are my light; without You I am in darkness. Stay with me, Lord, so that I can hear your voice. Stay with me; I desire to love You and to be with You always. Come to my soul, my nest of love. Come to me, Jesu, for the day is ending. Eternity approaches. I need You. I fear the darkness and the danger. It is getting late. Let me see You in the breaking of the bread, the bread and wine that sustain me. Joy of my heart. I do not deserve You; but stay with me, Jesu. I look for You alone, your love, your grace, your heart. I love You and seek to love You more and more. I seek to love You for ever and ever.

James MacMillan:

The Lamb has come for us from the House of David

The Lamb has come for us from the House of David, The priest and pontiff from Abraham. He became for us both Lamb and pontiff, Giving His Body for sacrifice, His Blood for sprinkling. Blessed is His accomplishment.

Mary carried Him as a child, The priest carried Him as an offering. The cross carried Him as one slain! Heav’n carried Him as God! Praise to His Father. Whom have we, Lord, like You, the Great One Who became small, the wakeful who slept? The pure one who was baptized, The living one who died, The King who abased himself to ensure honour for all. Blessed is your honour.

Will Todd: Among Angels

Fear not
Fear not you the dark we carry you on soft wide wings

Find only joy
Find only joy in the golden heavens and the shining earth

Seek out light
Seek out light and bind to it your own light Fear not you the dark we carry you on soft wide wings

Words by Ben Dunwell (b.1969)
James MacMillan: On the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin

A winged harbinger, from bright heav’n flown,
Bespeaks a lodging room
For the mighty King of love,
The spotless structure of a virgin womb,
O’ershadow’d with the wings of the blest dove:
For he was travelling to earth,
But did desire to lay
By the way,
That he might shift his clothes, and be
A perfect man, as well as we.
How good a God have we, who, for our sake,
To save us from the burning lake,
Did change the order of creation;
At first He made
Man like himself in His own image; now
In the more blessed reparation
The heavens bow:
Eternity took the measure of a span,
And said,
“Let us like ourselves make man,
And not from man the woman take,
But from the woman, man.”
Allelujah! We adore
His name, whose goodness hath no store.
Allelujah!

Text by Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667)

Will Todd: Stay with me (Padre Pio’s Prayer)

Stay with me Lord, stay with me Lord, stay with me Lord
for You are my life, my strength and my faith my passion and light.
Lord stay lest I forget You,
abandon You, fall in the dark.
Oh Lord my soul is poor, but let it be a home for You,
Stay with me Lord.

Stay with me Lord, that I may see your will.
Stay with me, O my Lord, that I may hear your voice.
Stay with me that I may love You.
Stay with me Lord, that I may be true.
Oh Lord my soul is poor, but let it be a home for You,
Stay with me Lord.

Stay Jesus stay, for the day is late and night comes quickly.
Judgment and death, eternity come, Lord strengthen me.
I fear the dark, the cross,
the sorrows, Lord, temptation.
O Jesus I need You to hold me in this night of exile.
Lord stay with me.

Stay with me Lord, that I may see your will.
Stay with me, O my Lord, that I may hear your voice.
Stay with me that I may love You.
Stay with me Lord, that I may be true.
Oh Lord my soul is poor, but let it be a home for You,
Stay with me Lord.
I ask no comfort but your staying.
Your love, your will, your light, your spirit.
I ask no other consolation.
I ask no other gift but love.
Let me perceive you as your disciples in the breaking of the bread.
May your Eucharist be the breaking of the day,
The joy of my heart.
Lord end this night of exile.
And at my death, stay with me,
if not in bread, in grace and love, your grace and love,
Lord stay with me.

Stay with me Lord, that I may see your will.
Stay with me, O my Lord, that I may hear your voice.
Stay with me that I may love you.
Oh Lord my soul is poor, but let it be a home for you,
Stay with me Lord.

Words by Ben Dunwell (b. 1969)

Roxanna Panufnik: Prayer
Prayer, the Church's banquet, the Angels' age,
God's breath in man returning to his birth,
The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,
The Christian plummet sounding heaven and earth;
Engine against the Almighty, sinner's tower,
Reversed thunder, Christ-side-piercing spear,
The six-days'-world transposing in an hour,
A kind of tune, which all things hear and fear;
Softness, and peace, and joy, and love, and bliss,
Exalted manna, gladness of the best,
Heaven in ordinary, man well drest,
The milky way, the bird of Paradise,
Church bells beyond the stars heard, the soul's blood,
The land of spices, something understood.

Words by George Herbert (1593-1633)

James MacMillan: A New Song
O sing unto the Lord a new song,
Sing unto the Lord all the whole earth.
Be telling of His salvation from day to day.
For He cometh to judge the earth,
And with righteousness to judge the world
And the people with His truth.

From Psalm 96

Roxanna Panufnik: Stay with me (Padre Pio's Prayer)
Stay with me, Lord. Be present so that I do not forget You.
You know how easily I abandon You,
For I am weak and need your strength,
That I may not fall and fall again.
Stay with me, Lord, if You wish me to stay faithful to you.
Stay with me, Lord. You are my light; without You I am in darkness.
Stay with me, so that I hear your voice and follow,
For I desire to love You and to be in your presence always.
Let my soul, though poor, contain your consolation,
A refuge and safe haven for your love.

Stay with me tonight, Jesus, for day is coming to a close.
Life passes – death, judgment, eternity approach.
Renew my strength, so that I will not fail.
I fear the darkness, temptation, the cross, the pain.
I am an exile in the night.
Amid life’s dangers, oh, how I need You, my Jesus.

Stay with me, Lord. Let me know You as your disciples did,
Let Holy Communion be the light which banishes darkness,
The force sustaining me, the blessing that blazes in my heart.
I am an exile in the night.
Amid life’s dangers, oh, how I need You, my Jesus.

Stay with me, Jesus. I do not ask divine consolation; I am not worthy,
But the gift of your presence, - oh, yes! I ask this of You!
You alone I seek: your love, your grace, your will, your heart, your spirit,
Stay with me, Lord, for I love You with a firm love and ask no reward:
Only to know the perfection of your love through all eternity.
Amen!

*Persian: Aria Alagha, Swahili: Espen Sørenson Spanish
Words by Stephen Macklow-Smith, adapted by Jessica Duchen

Harry Christophers is known internationally as founder and conductor of The Sixteen as well as a regular guest conductor for many of the major symphony orchestras and opera companies worldwide. He has directed The Sixteen choir and orchestra throughout Europe, America and the Far East gaining a distinguished reputation for his work in Renaissance, Baroque and twentieth century music. In 2000 he instituted the ‘Choral Pilgrimage’, a national tour of English cathedrals from York to Canterbury in music from the pre-Reformation, as The Sixteen’s contribution to the millennium celebrations. It raised awareness of this historic repertoire so successfully that the Choral Pilgrimage in the UK is now central to The Sixteen’s annual artistic programme.

In 2008 Harry Christophers was appointed Artistic Director of Boston’s Handel and Haydn Society, he is also Principal Guest Conductor of the Granada Symphony Orchestra as well as enjoying a very special partnership with the BBC Philharmonic with whom he won a Diapason d’Or. He is also a regular guest conductor with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields and the Orquestra de la Comunidad de Madrid; he has also conducted the Hallé, the London Symphony Orchestra and the San Francisco Symphony.

Increasingly busy in opera, Harry Christophers has conducted Monteverdi’s Il ritorno d’Ulisse, Gluck’s Orfeo, Mozart’s Die Zauberflöte, Purcell’s King Arthur and Rameau’s Platée for Lisbon Opera. After an acclaimed English National Opera debut with The Coronation of Poppea he has since returned for Gluck’s Orfeo and Handel’s Ariodante, as well as conducting the UK premiere of Messager’s opera Fortunio for Grange Park Opera. He also conducts regularly at Buxton Opera.

Harry Christophers was awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Music from the University of Leicester in 2008.
After three decades of world-wide performance and recording, The Sixteen is recognised as one of the world’s greatest ensembles. Comprising both choir and period instrument orchestra, the group’s special reputation for performing early English polyphony, masterpieces of the Renaissance, Baroque and early Classical, and a diversity of twentieth century music, all stems from the passions of conductor and founder, Harry Christophers.

The Sixteen tours throughout Europe, Japan, Australia and the Americas and has given regular performances worldwide at the major concert halls and festivals. At home in the UK, The Sixteen are ‘The Voices of Classic FM’ as well as Associate Artists of Southbank Centre, London. The group also promotes The Choral Pilgrimage, an annual tour of the UK’s finest cathedrals, bringing music back to the buildings for which it was written.

The Sixteen’s period orchestra has taken part in acclaimed semi-staged performances of Purcell’s Fairy Queen in Tel Aviv and London, a fully-staged production of Purcell’s King Arthur in Lisbon’s Belem Centre, and new productions of Monteverdi’s Il ritorno d’Ulisse at Lisbon Opera House and The Coronation of Poppea at English National Opera.

Over one hundred recordings reflect The Sixteen’s quality in a range of work spanning the music of five hundred years, winning many awards. In 2008, The Sixteen featured in the highly successful BBC Four television series, Sacred Music, presented by Simon Russell Beale.

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