Victoria
The Mystery of the Cross
Victoria: the most outstanding composer of the Renaissance
"Music Christophers was born to conduct."
BBC RADIO 3, CD REVIEW

J. S. Bach
Cantatas 34, 50, 147
"...a pleasure to listen to when played and sung as well as this."
The INDEPENDENT

Heinrich Schütz
Musikalische Exequien
"The sombre colours of Schütz's moving funeral music are finely brought out in this collection."
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MESSIAH 3 CDs (Special Edition)
Carolyn Sampson
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"...this inspiring new performance becomes a first choice."
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Victoria:
The most outstanding composer of the Renaissance

Dietrich Buxtehude
MEMBRA JESU NOSTRI

The Sixteen Edition

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Mark Padmore
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"...this inspiring new performance becomes a first choice."
The SUNDAY TIMES

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For some people, the cyclic title of these cantatas by Buxtehude might conjure up a rather morbid picture. However, this meditation on the Passion, in which each of the seven cantatas contemplates parts of Christ’s body on the cross (feet, knees, hands, side, breast, heart and head), is full of beauty, hope and invention.

It is very much a chamber work and requires a certain intimacy between performers. In the year 2000 I was very fortunate to have five choir members who were just about to embark on exciting solo careers. They possessed that all-too-rare quality of not only being able to deliver solo arias with great style and aplomb, but they could also perform the choruses with great sensitivity, being able to blend instinctively with each other.

However, none of this could be done without the awareness and inventiveness of the instrumentalists who shadow every nuance remarkably. From the resonant sonority of the quintet of viols, which only appears in one cantata, Ad Cor, symbolising our love for Christ as well as Christ’s love for mankind, to the delicate subtlety of the two violins and the totally inventive spontaneity of the continuo, we were able to convey Buxtehude’s work in an intimate yet overtly spiritual and prayerful manner.

JANE COE (1953–2007)

Jane Coe was principal cellist of The Sixteen for twenty years and we are fortunate enough to have recorded many CDs on which you can hear Jane’s exquisite playing. This disc, which she loved dearly, is dedicated to her memory.

The Sixteen

SOPRANO 1 Carolyn Sampson
SOPRANO 2 Libby Crabtree
COUNTER-TENOR Robin Blaze
TENOR James Gilchrist
BASS Simon Birchall

VIOLIN 1
VIOLIN 2
CELLO
CHAMBER ORGAN
THEORBO
TREBLE VIOL
TREBLE VIOL
BASS VIOL
BASS VIOL
GREAT BASS VIOL

David Woodcock
Walter Reiter
Jane Coe
Paul Nicholson
Elizabeth Kenny
Richard Campbell
Susanna Pell
Imogen Seth-Smith
Reiko Ichise
Richard Boothby
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Total running time: 61.23
to that of a parochial loft-bound organist whose achievements can be viewed principally as refining Bach's notion of *stylus phantasticus* (the free-wheeling, virtuosic toccata style) and chorale paraphrases or preludes. Such a notion was encouraged in the nineteenth century by both Johannes Brahms' and Phillip Spitta's admiration for 'Buxtehude the organist'; the only modern monograph, by Kerala Snyder, entitled 'Organist in Lübeck', hardly reflects a sophisticated command of a mesmerising range of past, current and even prescient vocal genres. Amongst Buxtehude's 130-odd surviving sacred works, there exists the fullest compass of concerto-motets, chorale settings and varied strophic arias, as well as vocal concertos employing all the textural and tonal developments of the late seventeenth century. To acknowledge Buxtehude as the outstanding German composer between Schütz and Bach, one need look no further than his cycle of seven cantatas, *Membra Jesu Nostri* (BuxWV75). This work, dating from 1680, is a sui generis example in the composer's cantata oeuvre since all his other extended pieces combining concerto and aria elements are set in the German vernacular. Such was the growing sense, as the century progressed, of the German language as the prime means for setting music. "Membra", though, was clearly a unique assignment for Buxtehude. Gustav Düben, whose collection has so miraculously survived, is the sole dedicatee as the autograph tablature reveals: 'to a foremost man…most noble and honoured friend, Director of Music to his Most Serene Majesty, the King of Sweden'. Düben was also well-placed in his kapellmeister role in Stockholm to seek out music and musicians, both from the trade-routes of the Hanseatic ports as well as from his regular travels south. His collection contains one thousand three hundred sacred works in which Buxtehude is prominent with over a hundred such pieces. It is even conceivable that Düben may have commissioned some of Buxtehude's cantatas. Düben was particularly attracted to Latin texts, no doubt forged by a special interest in Italian music and his knowledge of both the Monteverdi and Carissimi – Venetian and Roman respectively – generations of vocal music. Buxtehude, on the other hand, was no cosmopolitan. He stayed in Lübeck for over thirty years, rarely travelled and never visited Italy, thus promulgating the erroneous, if romantic, view that North German musicians were sealed in a prodigious cultural vacuum – yet more fuel for Bachian hagiography. Buxtehude's easy assimilation of Italian musical style reveals that pre-Bach North Germany was in fact well aclimatised to both southern musical languages and dialects. To support this (Düben's collection aside), Italian musicians were regularly employed in courts and ecclesiastical posts throughout the country, and many Germans, other than the famous Schütz and Rosenmüller, studied in Italy. All this, before one ventures to observe the Mediterranean breeze on the ruddy complexion of Buxtehude's scores. As Geoffrey Webber points out, the influence of the Italian strophic aria style on Buxtehude can be specifically traced in the detailed melodic figures of Giovanni Bicilli's 'Gloriosum diem colimus', unashamedly super-imposed on 'Surge amica mea', the fourth cantata in 'Membra'. ‘Membra Jesu nostri patientis sanctissima’ (Most Holy Members of our Suffering Jesus) is a Passion-meditation, contemplating seven different parts of Jesus Christ's body on the cross: feet, knees, hands, side, breast, heart and head. The majority of the Latin text is drawn from a popular medieval poem,
‘Salve mundi salutare’ which Buxtehude may have compiled himself through an edition entitled Domini Bernhardi Oratio rhythmica published in Hamburg in 1633. Despite significant internal contrast, Buxtehude's basic scheme is built on framing vocal concertos, setting free prose from the Vulgate (the Latin Bible), with several strophic arias with an instrumental sonata, setting the biblical text for a single solo voice, occasionally joined by one or two others. Each work opens with an instrumental sonata, setting the scene with Buxtehude's customary emotional penetration and clarity. The idiosyncratic power of this work is partly created by the consistent attention given to intensify the mystical poetry, launched by the more decorative biblical content. This runs counter to the concept of the extended vocal concerto, as it had been developed up to 1680 and also as described by Johann Mattheson in the later eighteenth century form, of juxtaposing aria and recitative – where the aria interprets the evocative 'figures' are pragmatically positioned for maximum effect. Buxtehude's unity of conception is an admirable antidote to any excessive emotional roller-coasting.

In terms of compositional conception, unity is a serious consideration. Buxtehude presents, in the seven works, an affecting tonal circuit from C minor via related keys, returning to the dark smouldering intensity of the opening key for the final cantata. Within this, the emotional charge comes in most concentrated doses in the framing concertos. Ad manus (To the hands) opens with a deeply interrogative rhetoric ("What are these wounds in thine hands?"), instilled at the outset from the rhythmic character of the instrumental motifs to the gradually more insistent vocal tutti. The plangent and mature dissonance upon which Buxtehude develops this quasi-erotic harmonic character foreshadows Scarlatti, Pergolesi, Lotti and others who brought extended sensuality to the bitter-sweet world of Christ's crucifixion. In the concerto of Ad pedes (To the feet) Buxtehude builds the five-part texture with supreme nobility whilst the only major-keyed work, Ad genua (To the knees), conveys a pointillist image of Isaiah's 'dandled upon her knees' with the trio-sonata doses in the framing concertos. The mysticism of the texts which so riveted Buxtehude comes in the poetry set to aria, relatively cool, gentle and objective creations, though no less fascinating for their economical and varied treatments. Strophes are often shared around the voices with different solo sopranos expected to provide timbral variety. Instrumental ritornelli provide a timely caesura between each strophe of the aria. In Ad latus (To the side), a contemplation on healing as much as sorrow, whilst Ad pectus (To the breast) demonstrates a fixed harmonic pattern for each aria. The final work, Ad faciem (To the face) brings the work to an elaborate conclusion with an Amen of delectation and unassuming gracefulness. Such is Buxtehude's genius for creating the ultimate in spiritual impact, without a note of gratuitous indulgence.

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Cantata I

Ecce super montes pedes evangelizantis et annunciantis pacem.

Salve mundi salutare Salve, salve Jesu care. Cruci tuae me aptare Vellem vere, tu scis quare; Da mihi tui copiam.

Clavos pedum, plagas duras Et tam graves impressuras Circumplector cum affectu Tuorum pavens in aspectu Tuorum memor vulnerum.

Dulcis Jesu, pie Deus Ad te clamo, licet reus Praebe mihi te benignum Ne repellas me indignum De tuis sanctis pedibus.

Ad pedes (To the feet)

Lo, upon the mountains come the feet of one bringing good tidings and speaking a message of peace.

Hail, O Saviour of the world Hail, beloved Jesu, Hail. I would truly take up Thy cross, Surely Thou knowest why; Give me then Thy mighty help.

With what ardour I embrace Those nails which pierce Thy blessed Feet. The heavy blows, the fearful stripes As mindful of Thy wounds I gaze With trembling here upon Thy face.

Sweet Jesus, Holy God, To Thee I cry, although a sinner yet; Show forth Thy mercy, Lord to me And cast me not, e’en so unworthy Away from Thy most sacred Feet.

Cantata II

Ad ubera portabimini, et super genua blandicentur vobis.

Salve Jesu, rex sanctorum, Spes Votiva peccatorum. Crucis ligno tanquam reus Pendens homo, veres Deus, Caducis nutans genibus.

Quid sum tibi responsurus; Actu vilis, corde durus? Quid rependam amatori Qui elegit pro me mori Ne dupla morte morerer?

Ut te quaram mente pura Sit hac mea prima cura Non est labor nec gravabor Sed sanabor et mundabor Cum te complexus fuero.

Ad genua (To the knees)

They will bear Thee on their breast and do Thee honour on bended knee.

Hail, O Jesus, King of Saints, earnest hope of sinful men. As now Thou hangest on the Cross Like Man condemned, yet Very God, Thy Knees bent in death’s weariness.

What answer shall I make Thee here; I, base in deed and hard of heart? How repay my dearest Love, Who chose to suffer death for me And how escape a double death?

Be this, dear Lord, my chiefest care, To seek Thee with a perfect heart For would I but embrace Thee here It were no Toil, nor burden yet, For then should I be cleansed and healed.
Cantata III  

Ad manus (To the hands)  

Quid sunt plagae istae in medio manuum tuarum?
Salve Jesu pastor bone,
Qui per lignum es distractus
Et ad lignum es compactus
Expansis sanctis manibus.

Manus sanctae, vos amplector
Et gemendo condelector
Grates ago plagis tantis
Clavis duris, guttis sanctis
Dans lacrimas cum oculis.

In cruore tuo lotum
Me commendo tibi totum.
Tuæ sanctæ manus istae
Me defendant, Jesu Christe
Extremis in periculis.

What are these wounds in the middle of Thy hands?
Hail, Jesu the Good Shepherd Thou,
As thou were tortured on Thy Cross
Thy sacred Hands were outstretched for me.
Blessed Hands, I now embrace you
Weeping, I rejoice in You
And offer thanksgiving for the blows
The cruel nails, the sacred Blood,
My kisses mingling with my tears.
Washed in the fountain of Thy Blood
I place me wholly in Thy trust.
Now may those blessed Hands of Thine
Protect me, Jesu Christ, and guard
In my last hour of need.

Cantata IV  

Ad latus (To the side)  

Surge, amica mea, speciosa mea;
et veni columba mea in foraminibus petrae,
in caverna maceriae.

Salve, latus salvatoris,
in quo latet mel dulcoris,
in quo patet vis amoris
Ex quo scatet fons cruoris
Qui corda lavat sordida.

Ecce tibi appropinquo
Parce, Jesu, si delinquo.
Verecunda quidem fronte
Ad te tamen veni sponte
Scrutari tua vulnera.

Hora mortis meus flatus
Intret, Jesu, tuum latus,
Hinc expirans in te vadat,
Ne hunc leo trux invadat
Sed apud te permaneat.

Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away;
my dove among the rocky clefts
and stony caves.
Hail, my dearest Saviour’s Side,
Wherein the sweetest honey lies,
Wherein the might of love is seen
And whence doth gush a fount of blood
To cleanse the soiled heart of man.
Lo, now approach I near to Thee
O spare me, Jesu, should I fail Thee.
Let me come with holy fear,
Gladly to fall down before Thee
To behold Thy sacred wounds.
May my spirit, Jesu, enter
At the hour of Death Thy Side,
And being thence exhaled go with Thee,
That the fierce lion may not invade me
But I may ever stay with Thee.
Ad pectus (To the breast)

You must be born again as newborn children, but with knowledge, seek your milk without guile that therein you may grow in health. And having once tasted thereof, you will see how sweet is the Lord.

Hail, my Saviour and my God,
Sweet Jesus, Lover of my life.
Hail to Thee, most noble Breast,
Thou dwelling-place of Love Divine Whither trembling we draw near.

Bestow on me a perfect heart;
Ardent, contrite, dutiful
And make me hence deny my will
And ever to Thine own conform,
Granting me succour of Thy might.

Hail, Thou temple true of God.
Have mercy on me here, I pray,
Thou resting-place of every good,
And grant a place among the chosen,
O precious treasure, God of all.

Vulnerasti cor meum, soror mea, sponsa.
Summi regis cor, aveto.
Te saluto corde laeto.
Te complecti me delectat
Et hoc meum cor affectat
Ut ad te loquar animes.

Per medullam cordis mei,
Peccatoris atque rei,
Tuus amor transferatur
Quo cor tuum rapiatur
Languens amoris vulnere.

Viva cordis voce clamo,
Dulce cor, te namque amo.
Ad cor meum inclinare
Ut se possit applicare
Devoto tibi pectore.

Ad cor (To the heart)

Thou hast smitten my heart,
my sister my bride.

Hail, Heart of the King Most High.
With a Joyful heart I greet Thee.
Ever to embrace Thee may I delight
And only this my heart’s desire
Thou make me worthy to address Thee.

To my poor heart’s very core,
Guilty sinner though I be,
May’ Thy Love be thoroughly borne
That thus Thy heart, with Love’s wound bleeding,
May be swiftly drawn to mine.

I cry with loud voice from my heart,
For so I love Thee, Sweetest Heart.
O draw Thou near to my poor heart
That to Thyself I may apply me
With wholly dedicated breast.
Cantata VII

Ad faciem (To the face)

Illustra faciem tuam super servum tuum; salvum me fac in misericordia tua.

Salve, caput cruentatum
Totum spinis coronatum,
Conquassatum, vulneratum,
Arundine verberatum,
Facie sputis illita.

Dum me mori est necesse,
Noli mihi tunc deesse
In tremenda mortis hora
Veni, Jesu, absque mora
Tuere me et libera!

Cum me jubes emigrare
Jesu care, tunc appare.
O amator amplectende;
Tetem ipsum tunc ostende
In cruce salutifera.
Amen

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 both the Granada Symphony Orchestra and the Orquesta de la Comunidad de Madrid. As well as enjoying a very special partnership with the BBC Philharmonic, with whom he won a Diapason d’Or, he is a regular guest conductor with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields and 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 conducts regularly at Buxton Opera.

Harry Christophers is an Honorary Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford as well as the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and has been awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Music from the University of Leicester.
After three decades of world-wide performance and recording, The Sixteen is recognized as one of the world’s greatest ensembles. Its special reputation for performing early English polyphony, masterpieces of the Renaissance, Baroque and early Classical periods, and a diversity of twentieth-century music, all stems from the passions of conductor and founder, Harry Christophers.

The Sixteen tours internationally giving regular performances 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.

The Sixteen’s period-instrument 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. In 2009 they won the coveted Classic FM Gramophone Artist of the Year Award and the Baroque Vocal Award for Handel’s *Coronation Anthems*. The Sixteen also feature in the highly successful BBC television series, *Sacred Music*, presented by Simon Russell Beale.

For further information about recordings on CORO or live performances and tours by The Sixteen, call: +44 (0) 20 7936 3420 or email: coro@thesixteen.org.uk

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