To find out more about The Sixteen, concert tours, and to buy CDs visit www.thesixteen.com
Monteverdi published *Selva morale e spirituale* in the final years of his life; it was to be the largest collection of sacred music he had made since his magnificent *Vespers* of 1610 and indeed it was to be the last collection of music he published. It is jam packed with brilliant works, from solo songs to thrilling eight part vocal pieces with added strings; every composition is full of luscious harmonies, beautifully constructed for all concerned.

The three days we spent recording this first volume proved to be some of the most enjoyable and evocative music making in which we have ever participated. In effect, we recorded it in the round, the harpsichord precariously placed (well it looked that way but was actually very safe) on top of the chamber organ, so that Al could move with ease from one instrument to the other, chitarone, harp and strings on either side with the singers facing them. Everyone was in eye contact so that each subtle nuance and invention could be passed aurally and visually from one to another with great ease. Not that the music is easy; Monteverdi stretches every singer’s versatility to the limit. It is demanding but so exhilarating. Just listen to the rhythmic vitality of the seven part *Gloria*

and then the evocative sensuality of the duet *Salve Regina*, everything full of contrasts not only vocally but also instrumentally. Frances, Dai and Al luxuriate in Monteverdi’s harmonic language: the variety of textures and sonorities they achieve are quite extraordinary.

Performing his sacred music is in many ways no different from performing his operas; the same principles apply. It is essential we follow Monteverdi’s dictum: *recitar cantando* (speak through singing). This allows the most amazing licence. As a result, time relationships do not become mechanical. They are intuitively felt, thus giving us the freedom to be expressive and interpret the words, just as any great actor recites Shakespeare. A set of words, often repeated many times, can have different inflections, a different gesture each time. The opening of *Laudate pueri* is just that – a series of gestures.

This is the first volume in our Monteverdi collection and I am so looking forward to the next. Thanks to Elin, Grace, Mark, Joe, Julian, Ben, Stuart and Rob for their extraordinarily versatile singing, Walter, Simon and Richard for being always intuitive and responding so instinctively in their interplay with the singers, all finally signed and sealed by our classy continuo team, Al, Dai and Frances. Simply a pleasure!
which Monteverdi, himself a member of the Milanese community, is buried. He wrote a Requiem Mass (now lost) for the service at the church of SS Giovanni e Paolo on 25 May 1621, at which the Florentine community in Venice commemorated the death of Grand Duke Cosimo II; and a year earlier that same community had employed him to provide a Vespers service, probably at the same church, to celebrate their patron saint, St. John the Baptist. This was witnessed by a foreign visitor to the city, the Dutch poet and composer Constantijn Huygens, who wrote:

On 24 June [1620], the feast of St. John the Baptist, I was taken to Vespers in the church of SS Giovanni and Lucia [sic] where I heard the most perfect music I had ever heard in my life. It was directed by the most famous Claudio Monteverdi, maestro di cappella of San Marco, who was also the composer and was on this occasion accompanied by four theorboes, two cornettos, one basso di viola of huge size, organs and other instruments all

The Selva morale e spirituale (1641) was the last collection of music that Monteverdi saw through the press before his death in 1643. Like his eighth book of madrigals, published a few years earlier in 1638, it is a huge volume intended, at one level, to sum up his achievement over many years. The music that it contains belongs almost certainly just to his years at Venice, where he had been choirmaster of St. Mark’s since 1613.

Not all Monteverdi’s Venetian sacred music, however, was written for St. Mark’s itself. As we learn from his letters and other sources, Monteverdi also wrote sacred music for, and directed its performance in, various Venetian churches and other institutions. In 1623 and 1627, for example, we read of his providing music for the Scuola Grande of San Rocco for its patronal feast day (16 August); and in November 1635 he provided music for the Milanese community at Venice to celebrate the feast of St. Carlo Borromeo at the great gothic church of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari. This is the church in which Monteverdi, himself a member of the Milanese community, is buried. He wrote a Requiem Mass (now lost) for the service at the church of SS Giovanni e Paolo on 25 May 1621, at which the Florentine community in Venice commemorated the death of Grand Duke Cosimo II; and a year earlier that same community had employed him to provide a Vespers service, probably at the same church, to celebrate their patron saint, St. John the Baptist. This was witnessed by a foreign visitor to the city, the Dutch poet and composer Constantijn Huygens, who wrote:

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equally well handled, not to speak of ten or twelve voices. I was delighted with it.

The rich diversity of instruments described by Huygens is probably misleading if we imagine that all the instruments and all the voices performed in every choral item in the service. More likely, as on this recording, the lines of the polyphony were sung by solo voices accompanied only by organ and theorbo, with other instruments drawn in for obbligatos specified by the composer, or for occasional, optional, doubling.

All this activity outside St. Mark's was very profitable for Monteverdi, generating up to half as much again as his regular salary. In a letter of 13 March 1620, contrasting his treatment at Venice with his experience at the court of Mantua, he wrote:

then there is occasional income, which consists of whatever I can easily earn outside St. Mark's of about 200 ducats a year (invited as I am again and again by the wardens of the guilds) because whoever can engage the director to look after their music – not to mention the payment of 30 ducats, and even 40, and up to 50 for two vespers and a mass – does not fail to take him on, and they also thank him afterwards with well-chosen words.

The music of the Selva morale, then, is as likely to include music written for other Venetian churches as for St. Mark's itself: there is no easy way of distinguishing which is which. Dixit Dominus, for example, is the opening psalm at most celebrations of Vespers, so the great setting recorded on this CD might have been first heard at St. Mark's, or at any of the Vespers mentioned above. One clue, though, is provided by its scoring for eight voices, the number prescribed by the customs of St. Mark's for those important feast days on which the doge attended Vespers and the magnificent golden altarpiece, the Pala d'oro, was revealed. In this setting Monteverdi reserves full eight-part textures for references to the grandeur and wrathfulness of God – God enthroned in heaven, or handing down the law, or scattering and crushing the psalmist's (or, in this case Venice's) enemies.

The Selva morale is a book in two parts. The 'Dixit Dominus' settings stand at the head of the second part, which consists almost entirely of music for the evening service of Vespers – psalms, Magnificat settings, and hymns. The hymns are not pieces for a congregation to sing, but settings for soloists or a small ensemble, as in Deus tuorum militum, a hymn which celebrates a martyr's death and is set for solo tenor and two violins. These are followed in the Selva by settings of Salve Regina, the antiphon to the Virgin Mary that, in the rite of St. Mark's, was set to be sung after Vespers or Compline during most of the church year. The setting for two sopranos included on this recording is, perhaps, the most powerful of all, mixing as it does rhetorical declamation with sensuous melody and plangent dissonances. The second voice sings, now in canon with the first, now reinforcing it in parallel, and, at the end, alternating with it in mounting expressions of adoration.

The five psalm settings on this recording together make up the group of psalms sung at Vespers for feasts of male saints. And they present an extraordinary variety of approaches. The six-part Beatus vir is one of Monteverdi's most attractive settings. Its two outer sections (verses 1 to 4 and verse 9) are based on material borrowed from a light-hearted duet, Chiome d'oro (Tresses of gold) which Monteverdi had published in his seventh book of madrigals (1619), while the second section (verses 5 to 8) uses new material, in triple time. All three sections are based on recurring patterns in the instrumental bass, and the outer sections are linked by a refrain to the words 'Beatus vir', the recurrence of which is at its most telling when Monteverdi contrasts it, in verse 9 with a vision of a wicked man, consumed with anger, gnashing his teeth.

The third Confitebor in the Selva morale can be performed either by five voices or by solo voice and four string instruments, and is headed alla francese (in the French manner). Monteverdi's brother claimed in 1607 that Monteverdi had been the first to introduce this manner to Italy when he returned from accompanying Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga from a visit to the baths at Spa in 1599. What the phrase actually means is uncertain, but it may indicate a style of performance in which the singers used a full voice in the northern manner. However, Monteverdi's 'French' pieces also feature alternation between solo voice and tutti, and a tuneful style in which syllables of the text are set to
pairs of notes. In the setting of Confitebor this style gives way at the phrase 'Sanctum et terrible nomen eius' (verse 9) to the rapid semiquavers of Monteverdi's 'warlike' manner, pioneered in his Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda of 1624.

Both Laudate Dominum and Laudate pueri depend on contrasts of material for their structuring. Laudate pueri is a quite extended setting, but its music consists mainly of just two blocks of material. The first is initially heard as the setting for two tenors of the first part of verse 1; the second is a more lyrical, triple-time, setting of verse 2 for two sopranos and two violins. Only following this do we hear the complete setting of verse 1. The setting proceeds with variations and extensions of the two basic building blocks, interrupted only at verse 6, for the vision of the poor being lifted out of their poverty, and at the beginning of the Gloria Patri, which Monteverdi sets in virtuoso lines for the tenors. At the word 'semper', however, he launches back into the opening material of the setting, reintroducing the words 'laudate pueri' to suggest that all the servants of the Lord are singing his praises.

In Laudate Dominum, Monteverdi uses text repetition and contrasts of texture to build a quite extended piece for a text that consists of only two verses and the Gloria Patri. The most striking contrast comes in verse 2, where the rhythmically lively lines of the opening give way to a descending chromatic line suggesting the bestowing of God's mercy. In the Gloria Patri Monteverdi employs a device deployed in several of his psalm settings by bringing back for 'As it was in the beginning', the music first heard at the words 'omnes gentes' in verse 1.

The second part of the Selva morale seems to have been printed some time in advance of the first and, indeed, in one surviving copy, a title-page dated 1640 was accidentally bound into the final version along with the second title-page dated 1641, which is the only one carried by all the other surviving copies. The most likely reason for this is that although Monteverdi had conceived the overall plan for the book by 1640, he had not completed all the music that he intended to include. Given that he was already in his 70s, he was probably playing safe, reckoning that if he did not live to complete the more ambitious plan, then the book could at least be issued as a conventional volume of Mass and Vespers psalms.

A Mass for four voices, a work in the a cappella style of Palestrina, is, indeed, found in the first part of the book, along with some substitute movements in a more modern style. Among these is the magnificent Gloria for seven voices with two violins and other, optional, instruments, which lasts more than 12 minutes in performance. Such is its scale that it was once thought by historians to have been the Gloria specially composed to celebrate the cessation of the plague in Venice in 1631 and the foundation of the church of Santa Maria della Salute. This idea has now been rejected. The exceptional length and size of the setting may mean that it was composed for those occasions – Christmas or Easter – when the Gloria was reintroduced into celebrations of the Mass after the periods of abstinence that were Advent and Lent.

The music that remained to be completed in 1640, possibly delayed by Monteverdi's operatic work in that year, may have included one or more of the spiritual madrigals and arias that open the Selva morale. All these pieces are vanitas settings – reflections on the transitory nature of human existence, wealth, power and achievement – and it is thought that Monteverdi included them because they reflected the religious sensibilities of Eleonora Gonzaga, widow of the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II, and dedicatee of the Selva morale. Chi vol che m'innamori, a strophic text set by Monteverdi for two tenors and bass, with ritornellos for two violins and bass between and after the stanzas, muses on the futility of loving, amassing treasure or seeking honour since death will put an end to it all. Voi ch'ascoltate is the sonnet with which Petrarch opened his Canzoniere and is an apology for his work – 'all that pleases the world is a brief dream'. Monteverdi's setting, for five voices and two violins, might have been originally intended to open the Selva morale. In fact, though, it is another Petrarch setting, O ciechi, ciechi, with text adapted probably by Monteverdi himself, which actually appears first in the book and it is one that is more directly relevant to the empress dedicatee.

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**TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS**

1. **Beatus vir (Primo) a 6**
   - **Soprano 1**: Elin Manahan Thomas
   - **Tenor 1**: Joseph Cornwell
   - **Soprano 2**: Grace Davidson
   - **Tenor 2**: Julian Stocker
   - **Alto**: Mark Dobell
   - **Bass**: Rob Macdonald

   *Beatus vir qui timet Dominum:*
   - in mandatis ejus volet nimis.
   - Potens in terra erit semen ejus:
   - generatio rectorum benedicetur.
   - Gloria et divitiae in domo ejus:
   - et justitia ejus manet in saeculum saeculi.
   - Exortum est in tenebris lumen rectis:
   - misericors, et miserator, et justus.
   - Jucundus homo qui miseretur et commodat:
   - disponet sermones suos in judicio.
   - Quia in aeternum non commovebitur.

   **Gloria a 7**
   - **Soprano 1**: Grace Davidson
   - **Tenor 1**: Joseph Cornwell
   - **Bass 1**: Rob Macdonald
   - **Soprano 2**: Elin Manahan Thomas
   - **Tenor 2**: Mark Dobell
   - **Bass 2**: Stuart Young

   *Glory to God in the highest,*
   - and on earth peace, good will to men.
   - We praise you, we bless you,
   - we worship you, we glorify you,
   - we give you thanks
   - for your great glory.
   - Lord God, heavenly King,
   - almighty God and Father.

2. **Gloria a 7**
   - **Soprano 1**: Grace Davidson
   - **Tenor 1**: Joseph Cornwell
   - **Bass 1**: Rob Macdonald
   - **Soprano 2**: Elin Manahan Thomas
   - **Tenor 2**: Mark Dobell
   - **Bass 2**: Stuart Young

   *Gloria, in excelsis Deo.*
   - Et in terra pax hominibus bona voluntatis.
   - Adoramus te. Glorificamus te.
   - Gratias agimus tibi
   - propter magnam gloriam tuam.
   - Domine Deus, Rex coelestis,
   - Deus Pater omnipotens.

   *Dispersit, dedit pauperibus:*
   - justitiae ejus manet in saeculum saeculi,
   - cornu ejus exaltabitur in gloria.
   - Peccator videbit, et irascetur,
   - dentibus suis fremet et labescet:
   - desiderium peccatorum peribit.
   - Gloria Patri, et Filio,
   - et Spiritui Sancto.
   - Sic ut in principio, et nunc, et semper,
   - et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

3. **Beatus vir qui timet Dominum:***
   - Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord
   - He hath great delight in his commandments.
   - His seed shall be mighty upon earth:
   - the generation of the faithful shall be blessed.
   - Riches and plenteousness shall be in his house:
   - and his righteousness endureth for ever.
   - Unto the godly there ariseth up light in the darkness:
   - he is merciful, loving and righteous.
   - The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance.
   - For he shall never be moved:
   - until he see his desire upon his enemies.

4. **Psalm 112**
   - He hath dispersed abroad, and given to the poor:
   - and his righteousness remaineth for ever;
   - his horn shall be exalted with honour.
   - The ungodly shall see it, and it shall grieve him:
   - he shall gnash with his teeth, and consume away;
   - the desire of the ungodly shall perish.
   - Glory be to the Father, and to the Son:
   - and to the Holy Ghost;
   - As it was in the beginning is now, and ever shall be:
   - world without end. Amen.
Only-begotten Son, Lord Jesus Christ, 
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, 
who takes away the sins of the world, 
have mercy upon us. 
You who takes away the sins of the world, 
receive our prayer. 
You who sits at the right hand of the Father, 
have mercy upon us. 
For you alone are the Holy One, 
you alone are the Lord, 
You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, 
With the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. 
Amen.

Memor erit in saeculum testamenti sui: 
virtutem operum suorum annuntiabit populo suo: 
Ut det illis haereditatem gentium: 
opera manuum eius veritas et iudicium. 
Fidelia omnia mandata eius: 
confirmata in saeculum saeculi: 
facta in veritate et aequitate. 
Redemptionem misit populo suo: 
mandavit in aeternum testamentum suum. 
Sanctum et terribile nomen eius: 
initium sapientiae timor Domini. 
Intellectus bonus omnibus facientibus eum: 
laudatio eius manet in saeculum saeculi. 
Gloria Patri, et Filio, 
et Spiritui Sancto. 
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, 
et in saecula saeculorum. Amen. 

He will ever be mindful of his covenant: 
He hath shewed his people the power of his works: 
That He may give them the heritage of the heathen: 
the works of his hands are verity and judgement. 
All his commands are sure: 
they stand fast for ever and ever: 
and are done in truth and uprightness. 
He sent redemption unto his people: 
He hath commanded his covenant for ever. 
Holy and revered is His name: 
the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. 
A good understanding have all they that do his 
commandments: His praise endureth for ever. 
Glory be to the Father and the Son, 
and to the Holy Ghost. 
As it was in the beginning, is now, and always shall be, 
for ever and ever. Amen.

Psalm 111

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Psalm 111
Del vario stil in cui pianto e raggio
fra le vane speranzes e’l van dolore
ove sia chi per prova intend’Amore,
Spero trovar pietà, non che perdono.

Ma ben vegg’ hor si com’ al popol tutto
favola fui gran tempo, onde sovente
di me medesmo meco mi vergogno;
E del mio vaneggiar vergogna é’l frutto
e’l pentirsi, e’l conoscer chiaramente
che quanto piace al mondo è breve sogno.

Translation by Alessandra Testai

Praise the Lord, ye servants:
O praise the Name of the Lord.
Blessed be the Name of the Lord:
from this time forth for evermore.
The Lord’s Name is praised: from the rising up
of the sun unto the going down of the same.
The Lord is high above all heathen:
and his glory above the heavens.

Who is like unto the Lord our God,
that hath his dwelling so high:
and yet humbleth himself to behold the things that
are in heaven and earth?
He taketh the simple out of the dust:
and lifteth the poor out of the mire;
That he may set him with the princes:
even with the princes of his people.
He maketh the barren woman to keep house:
and to be a joyful mother of children.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost:
as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.

Psalm 113
Chi vol che m’ innamori

Tenor 1: Mark Dobell  Tenor 2: Joseph Cornwell  Bass: Stuart Young

Whoever wishes me to fall in love,
let him at least tell me, with what.
If with living flowers,
a flower, what thing is it?
If with beautiful flaming eyes,
ah, they may soon be extinguished!
Death, alas, kills me
time destroys all
today we laugh
and then tomorrow we weep.
If he wishes that golden locks
should bind me, what will be!
If with cold frost
that gold will be sprinkled?
The snow of a beautiful breast
ah, like the snow it fades!
Death, alas, creates terror,
which fills my heart.
Today we are light
and then tomorrow, shadow.

Deus tuorum militum

Tenor: Mark Dobell

God, of your soldiers
the fate, crown and reward,
absolve those singing the praises
of the martyr from the bond of sin.
He passed through his hardship bravely
and endured manfully,
and pouring his blood for You
achieved his eternal reward.
Praise and eternal glory
be to God the Father and the Son
and also to the Holy Ghost
in the everlasting age. Amen.

Hymn for the Common of one Martyr
O praise the Lord, all ye nations, praise him, all ye people.
For his merciful kindness is great towards us: and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Psalm 117

The Lord said unto my Lord:
Sit thou on my right hand,
Until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

The Lord shall send the rod of thy power out of Sion:
be thou ruler, even in the midst among thine enemies.
In the day of thy power shall the people offer thee free-will offerings with an holy worship: the dew of thy birth is of the womb of the morning.
The Lord sware and will not repent. Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedech.
The Lord upon thy right hand shall wound even kings in the day of his wrath.
He shall judge among the heathen; He shall fill the plains with the dead bodies: and smite in sunder the heads over divers countries.
He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up his head.

Psalm 110
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 recognised 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