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THE TIMES

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On this recording, I have returned to our grass roots to focus on some of the finest music by three exceptional Tudor composers: Richard Davy, John Sheppard and William Mundy.

I am delighted to revisit a work we last performed at our first ever concert back in May 1979. I remember the concert as if it was yesterday and I also recall the amazing review we had for it, which said “not only was the sound of the choir a revelation but so too was the music itself”. The critic was referring to William Mundy’s monumental work *Vox patris caelestis*, the text of which is from the Song of Songs. It is full of pictorial imagery with such phrases as “Arise, my dove, my fair one”, “your lips are as a honeycomb” and “the voice of the turtle dove” to revel in.

Mundy is very much the youngest of our composers; he died in 1591 whilst John Sheppard, although born early on in Henry VIII’s reign, only just managed to see in Queen Elizabeth I by a month or so: at least that’s what we think – biographical evidence of Sheppard’s life is unfortunately pretty sketchy. His setting of the “Inviolata” prose, *Gaude, gaude, gaude Maria* is simply glorious, only bettered by one of the gems of Tudor music, *Libera nos*. I cannot think of a more sublime piece.

But the most extraordinary music of all comes from the earliest of our trio, Richard Davy. He probably died in 1521 and the fact that his music survived the Reformation is nothing short of a miracle. His setting of a very elegant Latin prose-poem, *O Domine caeli terraeque creator*, most probably the work of a university theologian, is quite remarkable, doubly so because, according to the Eton copyist, the work was written in one day at Magdalen College, Oxford (*hanc antiphonam composuit Ricardus Davy uno die Collegio Magdalene Oxoniis*).

Once again it is Sally Dunkley who has spent hours researching and, indeed, editing much of the music and I am indebted to her for her tireless work. Each one of these works is a real gem just waiting to be discovered by a wider audience. This music is part of our great heritage and I look forward to you revelling in its monumental beauty and sheer magnificence.
Richard Davy · John Sheppard · William Mundy

1. Sheppard (c.1515-58/9)  
Sheppard  
Gaude, gaude, gaude Maria  
14.08

2. Mundy (c.1530-before1591)  
Mundy  
Adolescentulus sum ego  
5.35

3. Davy (c.1465-c.1521)  
Davy  
O Domine caeli terraeque creator  
14.41

4. Sheppard  
Sheppard  
Libera nos I & II  
6.28

5. Sheppard  
Sheppard  
In manus tuas I  
3.46

6. Davy  
Davy  
Ah, mine heart, remember thee well  
4.57

7. Sheppard  
Sheppard  
In manus tuas III  
3.40

8. Mundy  
Mundy  
Vox patris caelestis  
17.37
Total running time 70.58

As Harry Christophers points out in his Foreword, The Sixteen is returning to its roots with this programme, for the ensemble's early recordings focused very much on this repertoire. They included two compilations of music from the Eton Choirbook (Salve Regina and Stabat Mater, respectively in 1980 and 1982), Missa Albanus by Fayrfax (1982), then five CDs devoted to the music of John Sheppard, and five more to the Eton Choirbook. Since those long-distant days the group has, of course, matured and evolved into something quite different, but the musical world around us has changed too, fundamentally. Music that was once the preserve of a few brave enthusiasts has now become widely accepted concert fare, and is well represented in the recording catalogue. And that is in no small part due to enterprises like The Sixteen, who have worked over several decades to bring this precious music to the attention of a wider audience.

The programme features an interesting link through Magdalen College, Oxford, where Richard Davy in the 1490s then John Sheppard in the 1540s held the post of Informator choristarum (director of the choristers). In more recent times, The Sixteen too acknowledges historic connections with Magdalen, as Harry Christophers himself, and many of the original Sixteen men, sang and studied there in their student days. Magdalen Antechapel was also the scene of pioneering concerts by the Clerkes of Oxenford (director David Wulstan) in the late 1960s and the 70s, when many people heard and sang Sheppard's music for the first time; both Gaude, gaude, gaude Maria and Libera nos were brought to public notice here, very possibly for the first time in the 20th century.
The medieval practice of royalty or nobility setting up a foundation or a chantry in perpetuity was doubtless motivated primarily by religious aspirations, but it also produced a legacy of some of the finest architecture and music of its time. Foremost among the 15th-century foundations in England were those of Henry VI, Eton College and King’s College, Cambridge, set up in 1440 as ‘two colleges royal, one called the College Royal of our Lady of Eton beside Windsor and the other called the College Royal of our Lady and St Nicholas of Cambridge’. Distinguished not only by the finest and most ornate architecture but also by the statutory provision of a choir of men and boys to sing services and devotions in elaborate polyphonic music, these and similar institutions offered many composers their early musical training and literacy, and their significance can hardly be overestimated.

The most important musical source to have survived from this time is the Eton Choirbook, a beautifully written collection compiled at the very end of the 15th century for use at the College. This large choirbook contains votive antiphons by the leading composers of the time, including Cornysh, Browne and Davy; many of the texts are addressed to the Virgin, and were sung in front of her image as part of a devotional service. The choirbook was placed on a large lectern which the singers gathered round, and each double page contains a few lines of music for each of the separate voice-parts, with the page turns perfectly synchronised. The skill of the singers must have been exceptional, for the music is full of complex and intricate rhythms, requiring fine coordination as well as understanding. In its musical idiom the writing is quite different from that being composed on the continent, perhaps more so than at any other time; the florid and decorative ‘verse’ sections of Davy’s music, for example, would hardly have been recognisable to Josquin, active at this very same time.

The index to the Eton Choirbook lists 10 pieces by Richard Davy, though not all have survived. The unique text O Domine caeli terraeque creator, a prayer for grace addressed to the Virgin, is constructed in rhyming couplets, and is divided into distinct musical sections, differentiated by their vocal scoring. It is prefaced by a long ‘O’, perhaps a musical counterpart to an illuminated capital letter, then, as was usual in this style, verses for two, three or four voices stand in contrast with the full five-voice texture. A particularly lovely sonority is introduced at the words ‘O Maria mundi decus’, where the treble part is divided into two, with only the mean singing below. Imitative writing is most commonly found in the verse sections, and the full texture is underpinned by a plainchant cantus firmus in the baritone part. Most remarkable, and highly unusual, is the note at the foot of the page to the effect that Davy composed the music in a single day, at Magdalen College – an extraordinary achievement.

In part because Davy’s name was not uncommon, it has proved difficult to trace his career after Magdalen with certainty. He may be identified as the vicar choral at Exeter Cathedral who died in 1521, or alternatively perhaps the one who sang at Fotheringhay and lived until 1538.

A different aspect of Davy’s writing is seen in Ah, mine heart, one of a collection of vernacular devotional songs preserved in the Fayrfax Book (British Library Ms.Add.5465). Scored for just three voices, the refrain ‘Ah, mine heart’ alternates with solo sections whose poetic language strikes an unusually personal note in its cries for mercy and its articulation of penitence.

The reason that John Sheppard’s music remained unknown for so long lies mainly in the vagaries of manuscript survival: so much was destroyed or lost in the intervening centuries. By the mid-16th century choirbooks had generally been superseded by sets of partbooks, and one of the main sources, compiled in the late 1570s by John Baldwin, lacks its tenor partbook, thus necessitating editorial reconstruction. This delayed the ambitious plans to publish one or more volumes of Sheppard’s music in the great Tudor Church Music series in the 1920s, and that scheme was then curtailed through lack of money. Consequently much of the music only appeared in print in the 1970s, and the remainder just last year.
Like Tallis and his colleagues, Sheppard lived and worked during turbulent years of religious strife in England, having to adapt his musical style according to the abruptly changing requirements of the church. Thus he came to write some miniature English anthems during the reign of Edward VI, two large-scale services which are difficult to date, and a substantial quantity of Latin-texted polyphony for the Sarum rite: Masses, responses and hymns, most of which are assumed to date from the reign of Mary. His is surely one of the most characterful and distinctive voices of the time, his music speaking with rare individuality, and presenting moments of bold dissonance that lie far outside the conventional vocabulary of the time as well as savouring a particular delight in texture and vocal scoring (irrespective of the performing pitch chosen).

All the works by Sheppard on this recording recall the fundamental role of plainchant in liturgical music at this time: studying it was a primary part of a musician’s training, and singing it an everyday experience. The two settings of the serene Compline text *In manus tuas*, for three and four voices, alternate chanted passages with polyphonic ones; in both of these Sheppard writes rather restrained music that perfectly brings to mind a gentle ending to the day, and the hope of a peaceful and quiet night.

*Gaude, gaude, gaude Maria* described by the scholar Frank Harrison as ‘one of the masterpieces of the last years of the Sarum rite’, inhabits a very different sound-world: scored for six voices, its overall range extends over more than three octaves. Its text is proper to Candlemas, also known as Purification (2 February), when candles were blessed and elaborate music performed (Tallis’s *Videte miraculum* is proper to this feast too). Substantial in length because of the repeats required by the liturgical text, the music is built on plainchant which runs through the baritone part in regular note values while the other voices pursue their imitative motifs around it, propelled along by the ebb and flow of harmonic tension and resolution. The music takes a conspicuously bold turn flatwards towards the end of the section ‘inviolata permansisti’, then for much of the central prosa text from the words ‘O mater alma’, the upper two voice-parts are divided, creating a lovely ethereal texture around the chant, still present and emerging on its own between each section to the vowel ‘Ah’, perhaps an echo of the final syllable of this rhyming passage.

*Libera nos, salva nos* has become one of Sheppard’s deservedly best-loved pieces, and nowhere is the composer’s mastery of vocal scoring more exquisitely displayed. In the first setting, six upper voices weave a filigree texture over a slow-moving bass plainchant, and in the second one they introduce rising phrases over another version of the chant. Writing in as many as seven parts was rare at this time, and Sheppard was able to use the voices to remarkable effect. Mention is made of the text ‘Libera nos’ together with the blessing ‘Benedicamus Patrem’ in the statutes of Magdalen College, a likely origin for the music, though it is unclear whether these pieces were conceived as two separate settings or two sections of one composition.

William Mundy was born about 15 years after Sheppard, but lived considerably longer, until c.1591. His London-based career began as a boy chorister at Westminster Abbey in 1543, and by 1559 he had become a bass singer at St Paul’s Cathedral, then in 1564 he was appointed a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal. In the 1580s the musical anthropologist, calligrapher and poet Robert Dow paid tribute to him thus:

*Dies lunae*

*Ut lucem solis sequitur lux proxima lunae*

*Sic tu post Birdum Munde secunde venis.*

**Monday**

As the moon’s light follows next after the sun’s light,

So you, Mundy, come second after Byrd.

Mundy is represented here by two contrasting pieces: *Vox patris caelestis*, whose text is derived from the Song of Songs via the antiphon *Tota pulchra es*, and *Adolescentulus sum ego*, a psalm motet in a very different style. Two scholars have recently set out convincing but different ideas for the original context of *Vox*.
ShEppard Gaude, gaude, gaude Maria

Rejoice, rejoice, rejoice, Virgin Mary;
for you alone abolished all false belief when you
believed the words of the archangel Gabriel.
Since you gave birth to Him who is both God and man
and after the birth remained a pure virgin.
We know that Gabriel the archangel
spoke to you in words given by God himself:
we believe that in your womb you conceived
by the Holy Spirit:
let the unhappy Jew be ashamed, who says
that Christ was born of the seed of Joseph.
Since you gave birth to Him who is both God and man
and after the birth remained a pure virgin,
whole and chaste are you, Mary. A…
Who have been made the shining gate of heaven. A…
O dear and most loving mother of Christ. A…
Receive our dutiful offering of praise. A…
That both our souls and our bodies may be pure. A…
Which our dedicated hearts and voices
here request. A…
Grant, at the sweet sound of our prayers. A…
That we may enjoy eternal life. A…
O kindly one who alone remained a pure virgin.
Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit.
And after the birth remained a pure virgin.

Sally Dunkley ©2014
MUNDY  Adolescentulus sum ego


Tribulatio et angustia invenerunt me: mandata tua meditatio mea est. Dignitas testimonia tua in aeternum: intellectum da mihi et vivam.

I am but young and of no account: I do not forget your judgements. Your justice stands as justice for ever: And your law is the truth.

Tribulation and distress have come upon me: but your commands are ever in my mind. Your witness is worthy for eternity: let me understand that and I shall have life.

DAVY  O Domine caeli terraeque creator

O Domine caeli terraeque creator, Totius humani generis redemptor, Nos hic tuos servulos una congregatos, In laudem tuae nominis fac tibi devotos, Ut Trinitatem in unitate digna venerantes, Mariam Deo dignissimam sinum recolentes, Quae virtutis praebuit exemplum viventibus Deum Patrem et Filium unum esse credentibus Sicut Sanctum Spiritum eundem cum Patre docuit, Deum verum et unum in personis retulit: In deitate unitas, in personis pluralitas, Unum fore in essentia, sic est credenda Trinitas.

O Lord the creator of heaven and earth and redeemer of all mankind, make us, your servants gathered here to the praise of your name, truly faithful to you, that in our rightful veneration of the One-in-Three we may also contemplate His most worthy Mary who has shown to all who live an example of virtue, teaching all who believe the Father and the Son to be one that so also the Holy Spirit is one with the Father, laying before us the true God, one in His persons: a unity in godhead, a plurality in persons, one in being, this should be our belief in the Trinity.

Nos ergo te Domine, quem in Trinitate Trine Deum colimus in una maiestate, Ut cunctis huius saeculi defendas periculos, Ut post huius terminum iungamur caelicolis.

O Maria mundi decus, ecclesiae tutamen, Sis pro tuis famulis continuum iuvamen, Ut quos apud Filium ofensos perendas Tuis piis precibus orantes defendas, Devotos atque servulos tibi famulantes Aut tui memoriam quomodo laudantes, O Maria sanctissima, testis vera Christi, Salutante Gabriele statim accepisti Orthodoxe fidei summam religionem, Devota mente capiens sacram communionem. Nobis tuis famulis in mortis periculo Tua prece veniam dones in hoc saeculo, Aut nobis morientibus non desit communio, Sed quae tuis meritis, quae mater pudica Exsiliti et sacra virgo in hac vita, Nos imitari condones ut tecum Vivamus cum gaudio in perenni gloria. Amen.

We therefore pray you Lord, whom in the Trinity we worship as threelfold God but one in majesty, to save us from all the perils of this world, that when it is past we may be united with the saints in heaven.

O Mary the glory of the world and protector of the church, be to your servants an ever-present aid, that those you judge to have offended against your Son may receive the defence of your holy prayers as they beseech you, and as they strive faithfully to wait on you, if only in some way by giving praise to your memory.

O most holy Mary, true witness of Christ, at Gabriel’s greeting you at once accepted the most high religion of the true faith, receiving holy communion in the devotion of your heart. Grant us, your servants in peril of death, pardon by your prayers in this world; and let not that communion be lacking for us at the hour of our death, but by your great merit, who stood out a chaste mother and holy virgin in this life, grant us grace to imitate you, that with you we may live joyfully in everlasting glory. Amen.
**Libera nos I & II**

**Libera nos, salva nos,**
**justifica nos,** O beata Trinitas.

**Benedicamus Patrem et Filium**
cum Sancto Spiritu,
et laudabilis et gloriosus
et superexaltatus in saecula.

**Benedictus es Domine**
in firmamento caeli,
et laudabilis et gloriosus
et superexaltatus in saecula.

**Benedicat et custodiat nos**
onnipotens et misericors Dominus.

**Libera nos, salva nos,**
**justifica nos,** O beata Trinitas.

**Set us free, save us,**
be our defence, O blessed Trinity.

Let us bless the Father and the Son
with the Holy Spirit,
soworthy of praise, so glorious
and so high above all for ever.

**Blessed are you, Lord**
in the firmament of heaven,
soworthy of praise, so glorious
and so high above all for ever.

May He bless and keep us,
the almighty and merciful Lord.

**Ah, mine heart, remember thee well,**
And think on the pains that been in hell.

Ah, mine heart, remember thee well,
How greatly thou art bound indeed;
That helps thee ever at thy most need.
Alas, for sorrow mine heart doth bleed.
To think how grievously I have offended;
I cry God mercy, I will amend.

**In manus tuas I**

**Into your hands, Lord,**
I entrust my spirit.

You have redeemed me Lord,
who are the God of truth.

I entrust my spirit.

**Ah, mine heart, remember thee well**

Kirsty Hopkins *soprano*  Jeremy Budd *tenor*  Eamonn Dougan *bass*

**Refrain:**

**In manus tuas, Domine,**
**commendo spiritum meum.**

**Redemisti me Domine,**
**Deus veritatis.**

**Commendo spiritum meum.**

**Into your hands, Lord,**
I entrust my spirit.

You have redeemed me Lord,
who are the God of truth.

I entrust my spirit.
Vox Patris caelestis

The voice of the heavenly Father to the holy Virgin Mary, the mother of His Son, as she was translated from her mortal body broke forth in these words:

'All lovely are you, my love, my dearest child of Anna, most sacred of virgins, Mary, and from the very moment of your conception neither now or ever has any stain been found in you.

Your lips are as a honeycomb, distilling from your most pure heart words wonderful in spiritual sweetness.

Lo, now the winter of earthly cold and wretchedness is past; flowers of eternal bliss and happiness which have awaited you here with me from everlasting now appear, beautiful of sight and scent.

The fruitful vines give their perfume of ambrosia, heavenly in sweetness, and the voice of the turtle dove, the song of your dearest lover’s only desire to embrace you, is heard in our land with graceful notes.

Surge, propera, amica mea, columba mea, formosa mea, de terra longinqua miseris plena, et veni in terram quam monstravero tibi.

Veni de corpore mortali, et induante, mea corcula, vestitu deaurato circumdata varietate caelestis gloriae.

Veni ad me, dilectissimum amatorum tuarum prae omnibus adamatam, et ponam in te thronum meum quia concupivi speciem tuam.

Veni de Libano monte mundano quaquam altissimo humanae contemplationis, ad montem Sion, ubi innocentes manibus et corde ascendere debent.

Veni ad me, Assuerum verum, Esther, mea nobilissima, pro populo tuo oratura mecum in aeternum manere et detactare.

Te omnes caeli cives summum desiderio exspectant videre. Veni, veni, veni: caelesti gloria coronaberis.’ Amen.

Translators Jeremy White © 2014

Arise and make haste my beloved, my dove, my fair one, from that far land full of sorrow, and come to this land which I will show to you.

Come forth from your mortal body, my dear-heart, clothed in raiment of gold and surrounded by the rainbow of heavenly glory.

Come to me, your most dear lover, for I have loved you above all others, and I will bestow upon you my kingdom, for I have long desired your beauty.

Come from that earthly Mount Lebanon, however lofty, of human contemplation, to Mount Sion, whither the pure of hand and heart must ever ascend.

Come to me, your true Ahasuerus, my Esther, my most high-born, to pray for your people and ever to stay and take your delight with me.

All the host of heaven with great desire are longing to look upon you; Come, come, come and be crowned with heavenly glory.

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 Asia Pacific gaining a distinguished reputation for his work in Renaissance, Baroque and 20th- and 21st-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. The 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 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. With The Sixteen he is an Associate Artist at The Bridgewater Hall in Manchester and features in the highly successful BBC television series, Sacred Music, presented by Simon Russell Beale.

Harry has conducted numerous productions for Lisbon Opera and English National Opera as well as conducting the UK premiere of Messager’s opera Fortunio for Grange Park Opera. He is a regular conductor at Buxton Opera where he initiated a very successful cycle of Handel’s operas and oratorios including Semele, Samson, Saul and Jephtha.

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. He was awarded a CBE in the 2012 Queen’s Birthday Honours.

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 The Bridgewater Hall, Manchester. 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 The 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 100 recordings reflect The Sixteen’s quality in a range of work spanning the music of 500 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 features in the highly successful BBC television series, Sacred Music, presented by Simon Russell Beale.

In 2011 the group launched a new training programme for young singers called Genesis Sixteen. Aimed at 18 to 23 year-olds, this is the UK’s first fully-funded choral programme for young singers designed specifically to bridge the gap from student to professional practitioner.