G.F. Handel Coronation Anthems

Music from the Chapel Royal

17th-century anthems written for the Chapel Royal by Cooke, Blow and Humfrey, including several first recordings of pieces probably not heard since the time of their writing.

Winner of the Classic FM Gramophone Baroque Vocal Award

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The Sixteen

HARRY CHRISTOPHERS
I have bookended Music of the Kingdom with two of Handel’s Coronation Anthems. The first of them is a work known, in most cases I suspect unknowingly, to millions. Zadok the Priest has been played at every coronation of a British monarch since its composition for King George II and Queen Caroline’s coronation in Westminster Abbey on 11 October 1727, but today it also forms the basis of the theme tune played before every Champions League football game across Europe.

I am greatly indebted to Robin Tyson for trawling through The Sixteen’s extensive catalogue and devising a sequence of works not only reviewing six centuries of British history but also demonstrating The Sixteen’s versatility. From Edmund Turges’ 15th century song for 3 voices, From stormy windes, which prays for the safety of Prince Arthur, elder brother of King Henry VIII and heir to the throne, as he sets out on a sea journey, to the extraordinarily complex 40 part motet by Thomas Tallis with its English text, Sing and glorify, for the investiture of Henry, King James I’s eldest son, as Prince of Wales on 4 June 1610, and to the Final Dance of Homage from Benjamin Britten’s Gloriana Dances taken from his opera Gloriana, composed in honour of Queen Elizabeth II’s coronation in 1953.

(continued overleaf)
This compilation includes music associated with English, Scottish and then British royalty stretching over a period of 500 years, from composers Robert Carver to Benjamin Britten, and from monarchs James IV to Elizabeth II. Included here are pieces for celebration, for prayer and for commemoration. The music ranges in scale from private devotion to full state Coronation. There are politically motivated pieces adding commentary on national history. Moreover it puts on display centuries of superb compositions recorded across a number of discs on the CORO label. There is also one specially recorded track on this compilation: William Byrd’s fabulous O Lord, make thy servant Elizabeth our Queen to rejoice in thy strength.

**Robert Carver** is the best known of the 16th-century Scottish composers. He was a canon at the Scottish Chapel Royal in Stirling, the institution founded in 1501 by James IV. Carver’s surviving music exists in a medieval Scottish choirbook which includes the *Missa Dum Sacrum Mysterium* as well as the celebrated *O Bone Jesu* (recorded on COR16051). Carver’s music shows stylistic similarities with the late medieval English composers gathered together in the Eton Choirbook, and certainly leads us to assume the quality of the singers in Scotland at the time was every bit as good as in England. James IV, who was married to Margaret Tudor (daughter of England’s Henry VII), was the last monarch to be killed in a battle between the kingdoms of England and Scotland – the Battle of Flodden in 1513. It is supposed that the *Missa Dum Sacrum Mysterium* was sung at the coronation of the 18 month old James V, an event planned in haste and so without a specially composed Mass.

CORO’s five CD set of music from the Eton Choirbook is justly praised. Some of the pieces in the superb collection make reference to individual members of the Tudor Royal family, leading scholars to believe that they were performed not only at Eton but also at the royal court. The first CD in the set is called The Rose and the...
Ostrich Feather, a reference to the Tudor Rose and the emblem of the Prince of Wales. From stormy windes and grievous wethir by Edmund Turges is a prayer for the protection of Prince Arthur, heir to Henry VII's throne, as he sets out on a journey. Arthur died in 1502 aged 15, thereby paving the way for his younger brother, Henry, to become King.

In his long 80-year life Thomas Tallis wrote for no fewer than four monarchs (Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary Tudor and Elizabeth I) who collectively took England on a swirling religious journey. He skilfully steered a path as musical civil servant to the Crown writing musical classics on both catholic and protestant sides. The two pieces by Tallis on this disc demonstrate this. The Missa Puer natus est is thought to have been performed at the Christmas Day Mass in St. Paul's Cathedral in 1554, and in an atmosphere of great excitement. Not only was it Christmas, but the news was that Mary - who had married Prince Philip of Spain the same year - was pregnant. Some months later it was obvious that she had suffered a phantom pregnancy, but at that high Mass Spanish and English musicians came together and sang music by Tallis at his most 'catholic'.

Sing and glorify, the English contrafactum of Spem in Alium, wasn't performed until 25 years after Tallis's death. New words were applied to his celebrated 40-part piece for the investiture of Henry, James I's eldest son, as Prince of Wales in 1610, and performed with instruments at the state celebration banquet. The last two lines of text give a powerful endorsement of the young Prince: 'Live Henry, princely and mighty! / Henry live in thy creation happy!' Yet only two years later Henry succumbed to typhoid and died. The public grief was immense, and poets and composers rushed to pen their tributes to the young Prince who had displayed so many of the qualities of kingship which his younger brother Charles seemed to lack. Many composers used the text When David heard in their settings, such as Weelkes, Tomkins, and the one by Robert Ramsey which is included here.

Tallis's star pupil William Byrd took over from his 'Master' as composer of the Chapel Royal. A known Catholic in Elizabeth I's court, he composed using both English and Latin texts. Byrd and his family were left largely unmolested from religious persecution, possibly because he was a much respected composer, but it also certainly helped Byrd's case that he wrote prayers such as O Lord make thy servant, in which we can imagine Elizabeth's personal satisfaction. The 'Amen' at the end of the piece is surely one of the most loving musical tributes to the Queen.

Byrd may have had a hand in his former pupil Thomas Tomkins, organist at Worcester Cathedral, being called upon to write the seven-part anthem Be strong and of a good courage for King James's Coronation in 1603. Tomkins was an exceptional church composer, particularly as a contrapuntalist, and when circumstances allowed he wrote for large forces. Compared with much of his other music this anthem seems solid and safe, yet still finds a celebratory atmosphere.

Great King of Gods by Orlando Gibbons was one of the pieces sung at the newly refurbished chapel of Holyrood House in Edinburgh during James I's 'progress' back to Scotland in 1617. Here we find another setting of a prayer for the Monarch, in this case beginning with reference to the journey north: 'Great King of Gods, whose gracious hand hath led / Our sacred sovereign head unto the place where first our bliss was bred: There is no record as to whether Gibbons was part of the entourage accompanying the King, but certainly the English chapel royal singers and musicians (cornetts and sackbutts included) travelled, with contemporary sources recording how the Scots were appalled by the 'dregs of popery' they brought with them by way of ceremony during services.

1660 saw Charles Stuart reclaim the throne 11 years after his father had been executed by Puritan idealists. Charles quickly set to work restoring the monarchy and its institutions. Rebuilding the royal music was one of his priorities, including...
reassembling the Chapel Royal choir. Henry Cooke was appointed to lead the choir of men and boys, and he gathered a set of choristers from around the country and brought them to London. The Cromwell years had done great damage to the musical life of the nation, and we can read in Samuel Pepys’s diaries that the choir dispensed its duties with varying degrees of success. Cooke composed plenty of new music for performance in the Chapel which included the new genre of ‘Restoration anthem’ – music for voices and strings. I will always give thanks unto the Lord is one such anthem. Also known as the ‘Club Anthem’, it has three composers: Pelham Humfrey, John Blow and William Turner. Each of them contributes a section to this setting of psalm texts, with the eclectic whole coming together very happily.

John Blow taught one of England’s greatest royal composers, Henry Purcell. Purcell was a chorister and subsequently organist at Westminster Abbey. During his all-too-short life he composed a huge amount of music for the court, for the church and for the stage, ranging from the bawdiest of songs to divine sacred music, from music to plays to opera, and much else. Drama and theatre is evident in all of his output. Beati omnes qui timent Dominum is one of only three Latin motets he composed, perhaps written for the private devotions of Catherine of Braganza, wife of Charles II for performance in the Queen’s chapel at Somerset House. A line from the text, taken from Psalm 128, prays that ‘Thy wife shall be as the fruitful vine’, before moving into a superb Alleluia section to end. The prayer was, however, left unanswered as this union was to remain a childless one. Of all the royal music recorded by The Sixteen it is the Coronation Music by George Frederic Handel which is most instantly recognisable to us today as being connected with royalty. After all, Zadok the Priest has been performed at every coronation since 1727, its opening orchestral passage never failing to thrill. Handel, composer of the Chapel Royal since 1723, became a naturalised British subject in February 1727. Handel was technically outranked in 1727 at the Chapel Royal by composer Maurice Greene who became senior composer. However, King George III insisted that Handel should write the anthems. Each movement of Let thy hand be strengthened, with brief text taken from Psalm 89, is as wonderful to sing as it is to hear. We skip from Handel all the way to Benjamin Britten, whose opera ‘Gloriana’ was premiered at the Royal Opera in Covent Garden in 1953, written to celebrate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Britten makes the easy link of setting the opera in the first Elizabethan age. The six Choral Dances, which are more frequently performed as a stand-alone set than the whole opera itself is staged, describe scenes during Elizabeth I’s visit to Norwich, during which she is entertained to a Masque by locals taking the characters of Time, Concord, Country girls, Rustics and Fishermen. The final movement, heard here, is the Final dance of homage in which the Queen is asked to keep the memory of her visit close as she leaves.
1. G. F. HANDEL  Coronation Anthem: Zadok the Priest  HWV 258
   Zadok the Priest and Nathan the Prophet anointed Solomon King.
   And all the people rejoiced, and said:
   God save the King, long live the King, God save the King!
   May the King live for ever, Amen, Alleluia.
   After 1 Kings 1: verses 39–40

2. THOMAS TOMKINS  Be strong and of a good courage
   Be strong and of a good courage,
   and observe the commandments of our God
to walk in his ways and keep his ceremonies,
testimonies and judgments;
and Almighty God prosper thee
whithersoever thou goest.
The Lord is thy ruler,
therefore thou shalt want nothing.

3. THOMAS TALLIS  Sing and glorify
   Sing and glorify heaven's high majesty,
   Author of this blessed harmony.
   Sound divine praises with melodious graces.
   This is the day, holy day, happy day;
   for ever give it greeting, love and joy,
   heart and voice meeting.
   Live Henry, princely and mighty!
   Henry live in thy creation happy!

4. WILLIAM BYRD  O Lord, make thy servant Elizabeth
   O Lord, make thy servant Elizabeth our Queen to rejoice in thy strength:
give her her heart's desire, and deny not the request of her lips;
but prevent her with thine everlasting blessing,
and give her a long life, even for ever and ever. Amen.

5. BENJAMIN BRITTEN  Sixth Dance: Final dance of homage
   (from Gloriana)
   These tokens of our love receiving,
   O take them, Princess great and dear,
   From Norwich city you are leaving,
   That you afar may feel us near.

6. HENRY PURCELL  May her best example chase
   (from Ode for Queen Mary's Birthday, 1692: Love's Goddess Sure was Blind)
   Neil MacKenzie  tenor
   May her blest example chase
   Vice in troops out of the land,
   Flying from her awful face,
   Like pale ghosts when day's at hand.
HENRY PURCELL  May she to Heaven late return
(from Ode for Queen Mary’s Birthday, 1692: Love’s Goddess Sure was Blind)

May she to Heaven late return,
And choirs of angels there rejoice
As much as we below shall mourn
Our short, but their eternal choice.

EDMUND TURGES  From stormy windes


From stormy windes and grievous weather,
Good Lord, preserve the Estridge Feather!

O blessed Lord of heaven celestial,
Which formed hast of thy most special grace
Arthur, our prince, to us here terrestrial
In honour to reign, Lord,
grant him time and space,
Which of alliance Our prince of pleasance
By inheritance of England and France
Right heir for to be;
Wherefore now sing we: From stormy windes...

Wherefore, good Lord, sith of thy creation
Is this noble prince of royal lineage,
In every case be his preservation,

ROBERT RAMSEY  When David heard

When David heard that Absalon was slain,
he went up to his chamber over the gate,
and wept, and as he went thus he said:

O my son Absalon, Absalon,
would to God I had died for thee,
O Absalon my son, my son.
HENRY PURCELL  Beati omnes qui timent Dominum

Elin Manahan Thomas soprano, Eamonn Dougan bass

Beati omnes qui timent Dominum: Blessed are all they that fear the Lord: Qui ambulant in viis eius. And walk in his ways. Labores manuum tuarum For thou shalt eat the labour quia manducabis: of thine hands: Beatus es, et bene tibi erit. O well is thee, and happy shalt thou be. Uxor tua sicut vitis abundans, Thy wife shall be as the fruitful vine In lateribus domus tuae: Upon the walls of thine house. Filii tui sicut novellae olivarum, Thy children like the olive branches In circuitu mensae tuae. Round about thy table. Ecce, sic benedicetur homo Lo, thus shall the man be blessed Qui timet Dominum. That feareth the Lord. Alleluia. Amen.

Psalm 128: verses 1-5

ORLANDO GIBBONS  Great King of Gods

Verse: David Clegg alto, Angus Davidson alto, Jonathan Arnold bass

Great King of Gods, whose gracious hand hath led Our sacred sovereign head Unto the place where first our bliss was bred: O send thine angels to his blessed side, And bid them there abide, To be at once his guardian and his guide. Dear be his life, all glorious be his days, And prospering all his ways. Late add thy last crown to his peace and praise, And when he hath outlived the world’s long date, Let thy last change translate His living flesh to thy celestial state. Amen.

THOMAS TALLIS  Sanctus (from Missa Puer natus)


ROBERT CARVER  Sanctus (from Missa Dum sacrum mysterium)

(For text see track II above)

PELHAM HUMFREY, JOHN BLOW & WILLIAM TURNER

I will always give thanks (The ‘Club’ Anthem)

Verse: Simon Berridge tenor, Mark Dobell tenor, Jonathan Arnold bass

I will always give thanks unto the Lord: his praise shall be ever in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.
O praise the Lord with me:  
and let us magnify his Name together.

I sought the Lord, and he heard me:  
yea, he delivered me out of all my fear.

Lo, the poor crieth, and the Lord heareth him:  
yea, and saveth him out of all his trouble.

Let thy merciful kindness, O Lord, be upon us:  
like as we do put our trust in thee.

Psalms 34: verses 1-4; 6: verses 23, 21

HENRY PURCELL  Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts  
(from The Complete Funeral Music for Queen Mary, 1695, Order of Service  
at The Burial of the Dead)

Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts;  
Shut not thy merciful ears unto our prayer;  
But spare us, Lord most holy,  
O God most mighty,  
O holy and most merciful Saviour,  
Thou most worthy Judge eternal,  
Suffer us not, at our last hour,  
For any pains of death, to fall from thee.  
Amen.

G. F. HANDEL  
Coronation Anthem: Let thy hand be strengthened  HWV 259

Let thy hand be strengthened  
Let thy hand be strengthened and thy right hand be exalted.

Let justice and judgement be the preparation of thy seat!  
Let justice and judgment be the preparation of thy seat!  
Let mercy and truth go before thy face.

Alleluia

Music of the Kingdom tracks are taken from these CORO recordings by The Sixteen

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Psalm 89: vv 13-14
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 20th- and 21st-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 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.