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Palestrina’s legacy and impact on sacred music worldwide is second to none. Composers through the centuries have studied and learnt from his gift for writing exquisite polyphony. Small wonder then that he has been called not only “the prince and father of music” but also “the saviour of church music”. At the final session of the Council of Trent, there were many discussions about the use of polyphony and whether or not it should be banned. In 1607, the composer Agostino Agazzari wrote “music of the older kind is no longer in use because of the confusion and Babel of the words.” And he went on to say that this music would have come very near to being banished from the holy church by a sovereign pontiff had not Giovanni Palestrina found the remedy. The price of fame for Palestrina was that his legacy was to contain as many myths as facts.

Over the next few years, we are going to undertake a series honouring his great art, recording much unfamiliar but outstanding music from every part of his life, giving a more accurate picture of his great achievements in music. I hasten to add that we are not endeavouring to record every note Palestrina penned – that would be more than a lifetime’s work considering he wrote 104 masses! But what we will do is present each volume based around a single mass and theme relevant to that mass, in this case the Feast of Pentecost, alongside some of his settings of The Song of Songs. Palestrina published 29 such settings, which he dedicated to Pope Gregory XIII. In that dedication, he apologised, and indeed ‘blushed and grieved’; for possessing light and vain ideas in the past (presumably referring to such music as his hugely popular madrigals on profane texts); and he asserts that he has changed his purpose now by choosing ‘those poems which have been written of the praises of our Lord Jesus Christ and his Most Holy Mother the Virgin Mary’. Remember that The Song of Songs comes from that part of the Old Testament which was often considered too sensual and erotic to be read. It was originally Hebrew love poetry, written down possibly 300 years or so before the birth of Christ, but these are texts which in renaissance times were used in praise of the Virgin Mary.

I have always regarded Palestrina as the master craftsman whose music composers of all ages have attempted to emulate. He shapes his music in a beautifully sonorous way using a lot of suspensions but always coming back into the line of the music. However it is this perfect craftsmanship that can sometimes make Palestrina’s music sound all too perfect and occasionally academic. We have attempted to achieve real ebb and flow in his music, not clipping the ends of phrases but allowing the music to breathe, to convey the real meaning of the words and making our breaths part of the music as a whole. There is a wealth of word painting in which to indulge especially in his Song of Songs motets. Our aim has been to be sensitive to this wonderful poetry and inject an energy and beauty to our performances that I hope goes some way to honour Palestrina as “the celebrated light of music”.

**Photograph: Marco Bargonzi**
Palestrina (1525-1594) is perhaps the only Renaissance composer who has not needed revival in modern times. By the end of his life his reputation outshone all others: to some extent it must be said because he spent his life in Rome as a servant of the Roman Catholic Church, at the centre of power, providing music for the Pope himself and the most prestigious group of singers in the world, the Papal Choir. His musical language derives from Josquin and his contemporaries, and more directly from Cristóbal de Morales (1500-1553), and he refined and polished his technique to join words and music with a perfection of expression that was never surpassed, at least within the restrictions of his chosen style. After 1600 there were huge changes in musical fashions and forms, with the rise of secular music, instrumental music and opera. It is surprising that Palestrina's music was not forgotten, swept away in the flood of new harmonies and ideas. Yet it continued to be used in churches throughout Europe and the New World right up to our own time, still retaining a great power to move us spiritually, even in concert and recording, when divorced from the context for which Palestrina originally wrote it.

Palestrina’s musical legacy is prodigious – he wrote over 100 masses and numerous motets, magnificats, hymns and other pieces for all the main feasts in the church year, as well as for general use. He was fortunate in being able to have much of this music printed in his own lifetime, and also to be the first Renaissance composer to have a complete edition of almost his whole output published in modern notation. Today some pieces are quite familiar, but much superb music still awaits a proper place in the repertoire, in church or in concert.

The Feast of Pentecost, the fiftieth day after the Resurrection, celebrates perhaps the most inspirational events during the birth of Christianity. The vividness of the images described in the Acts of the Apostles, the descent

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Dum complerentur 5.02
Loquebantur variis linguis 3.14
Veni Creator Spiritus 7.25
Iam Christus astra ascenderat 3.43

MISSA IAM CHRISTUS ASTRA ASCENDERAT
Kyrie 3.03
Gloria 4.51
Credo 6.45
Sanctus 3.03
Benedictus 1.58
Agnus Dei 4.02
Veni sancte Spiritus 4.05

SONG OF SONGS: nos. 13, 14 & 15
Laeva eius sub capite meo 2.37
Vox dilecti mei 2.15
Surge, propera, amica mea 2.27
Magnificat quarti toni 9.10
Total Running Time 63.52
of the Holy Spirit and the speaking in many tongues, (Acts II:1-16), inspired much great music in the setting of the Liturgical texts. Both Palestrina and Victoria composed stunning music on the text *Dum complerentur dies Pentecost*, as fine as anything else they wrote; and both reworked this music in large-scale masses of superb quality. Palestrina went further with a second Pentecost mass, a masterly paraphrase on the well-known and memorably-tuneful hymn, *Iam Christus astra ascenderat*.

Palestrina’s motet *Dum complerentur* is for six voices, which he uses with great skill. The scene is set with two declamatory passages, a trio of upper voices answered by a quartet of lower. We are in no doubt that a great and strange event is taking place when the music bursts into ecstatic alleluias in all voices, the rushing scales suggestive of the sound of the Holy Spirit filling the house. Palestrina certainly captures the sense of the occasion for the Apostles, with no fewer than three extended alleluias in the first part of the motet. In the second part, he continues the story in varied and elegant polyphony, repeating the Alleluia only for the jubilant conclusion after the repeat of “*Tamquam spiritus ... domum*”.

In his music for *Loquebantur variis linguis*, Palestrina eschews polyphonic show and splendour, such as that of the opulent eight-voice polytonal setting by the Spaniard, Don Fernando de las Infantas: Palestrina relies here instead on the subtleties of his own inventiveness within a four-voice texture. He was not only writing music for the magnificent services in the great cathedrals with their rich endowments, but also repertoire for the average provincial church and its small choir. The motet books published by Palestrina are testament to his great success in this: for example, the Motecta festorum totius anni of 1564, all four-voice motets, including *Loquebantur*, were reprinted no less than ten times in his lifetime and after, up to 1622. Likewise those containing *Dum complerentur* and other such pieces in grander style were reissued many times too, well into the 17th century.

It seems that hymns enriched Christian worship from the earliest period: thus Matthew 26:30 (also Mark 14:26) after the Last Supper: “When they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives”. Early Christian examples include the Magnificat and the prophecy of Zachariah, the Benedictus (Luke 1: 46-55 and 57-59). Ambrose (334-397) was the great writer of hymns and innovator in that he fixed the form of the standard 4-line verses we know today. Of course, by Palestrina’s lifetime, the repertoire of monophonic hymns and other chant had acquired many variants in both music and texts. The mid-century Council of Trent considerably rationalised and standardised this repertoire and Palestrina’s lifetime neatly straddled the period of these reforms. He must have been familiar with earlier versions of chants as well as with those printed in the new, approved chant books of the latter part of the century.

Palestrina published a set of hymns for the church year (4, 5 & 6 voices) in 1589, simultaneously in Rome (choirbook) and in Venice (partbooks). They were reprinted immediately in 1590 (Venice), in 1625 (Rome), with a *basso continuo* part, and in Antwerp as late as 1644. Polyphonic hymns, alternatim with chant, such as these, were basic repertoire for churches large and small at the time, and there was a substantial demand for new settings with the standardised texts of Trent.

Palestrina sets the odd verses of *Veni Creator Spiritus*. He paraphrases and decorates the well-known chant in every voice, often quoting phrases exactly. The even plainchant verses are taken from a manuscript hymnary in the Cappella Giulia, dating from about 1550, for this recording; they seem to accord well with the chant Palestrina uses in as far as that can be deduced from the polyphony. This hymn shares an obvious kinship in various ways with both *Iam Christus astra ascenderat* and *Veni Sancte Spiritus*. The number seven
crops up in each of them, for example: it was of great significance because of the number of days of the Creation, the seven by seven days between the Resurrection and Pentecost and the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit listed in Isaiah XI:2 (Vulgate).

Thomas Tallis and Robert Parsons both wrote polyphonic settings of the Pentecost Hymn *Iam Christus astra ascenderat* – these of course are based on a Sarum version of the tune and text. It was not the practice, however, to set this hymn in the Roman Rite. But a composer was still free to use such melodies in a Mass setting, perhaps unchanged as a *cantus firmus*, or paraphrased, or even for constructing canons. Palestrina indeed does all these things: eight of his 104 masses use hymn tunes specifically. The earliest is a canonic setting of *Ad coenam agni*, published in his first mass book of 1554; then paraphrases on *Iesu nostra redemptio* (1582), *Aeterna Christi munera*, *Iam Christus astra ascenderat* and *Iste confessor* (1590), *Sanctorum meritis* (1594) and *Te Deum laudamus* (1599). Finally, only published in 1888, the Missa *Veni Creator Spiritus*, uses the tune as a *cantus firmus*.

There was much variation by 16th-century composers in the prominence they gave to borrowed music, polyphony or chant, used in their compositions. Sometimes even the source material was hardly recognisable at all, most of the music seemingly free-composed. Palestrina however must have enjoyed the tune of *Iam Christus astra ascenderat* immensely, for he features it prominently throughout his mass setting. He clearly sets out his theme in the Kyrie. Thereafter the opening phrase is sung in imitation in several voices, as a head motif, at the beginning of main sections, and other parts of the chant are reworked throughout the polyphony.

We do not know when the Missa *Iam Christus astra ascenderat* was written. It was not published until 1590, and it seems there are no manuscript copies extant today indicating that it was in circulation before then. One imagines that it could have been particularly popular in Palestrina’s lifetime, since the chant is so attractive and memorable, as is alsoPalestrina’s musical treatment of it.

The authorship of *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, the “Golden Sequence”, has been ascribed variously to Stephen Langton, onetime Archbishop of Canterbury, (d.1228), and Pope Innocent III (d.1216); more likely it is anonymous. Palestrina employs two choirs, high and low, for his setting, the choirs alternating but also combining at key moments (O lux beatissima... and the final verses). Palestrina maintains full harmonies throughout, giving a richness of texture, a splendid sonority, without obscuring the words. The text is in the usual three-line stanza form of the Sequence.

The twenty-nine short pieces on texts from The Song of Songs that Palestrina published in 1583/84 as his fourth book of motets proved enormously popular in his lifetime, and after, for there were no less than eleven reprints up to 1613. Undoubtedly they were not intended to be performed all at once or in sequence as a narrative; and the best way to enjoy them, to receive spiritual refreshment from them, was, and is, to make selections of three or four at a time. Here The Sixteen share with us in their ongoing complete series the musical delights of three more. These motets are full of little musical touches by Palestrina that consciously or unconsciously draw us into the scenes painted by these evocative texts: for example, the subtle control of pacing in the first few bars of *Vox dilecti mei*: the pause on *Vox* and the little acceleration at the words *dilecti mei*; likewise at *ecce* and *iste venit*; and the injection of rhythmic energy at *saliens* and *transiliens*. Palestrina remarks in the dedication of this fourth book of motets that he has composed these pieces in a style rather more lively than he would normally have done with church music: “... for I understood this to be demanded.
by the subject itself". Indeed they are nonliturgical, devotional music, suited to private and public expressions of faith, spiritual exercises, as encouraged principally by St Philip Neri in Rome at the time.

**Magnificat quarti toni**
The Magnificat is perhaps the best known Christian hymn: the joyous text is from Luke’s Gospel (I: 46-55) where Mary declaims it in response to the praises of her cousin Elisabeth, pregnant with the child who is to become John the Baptist. It is central to the Christian liturgy, thus there are many musical settings of it by composers from the Renaissance right up to our own time. Palestrina set the text thirty-five or more times, alternatim with the chant verses, even or odd verses. Many of these remained unpublished in his lifetime, copied in manuscripts in the Vatican libraries, though he had printed a set of sixteen for the eight tones in 1591, shortly before his death. The present example is an even-verse setting for four voices, from a Julian Chapel manuscript. Palestrina adds an extra tenor for the final verse. Palestrina might well be surprised that his music is still used today, in church and on the concert platform, and recorded. He might be more surprised by the variety of approaches to performance. Even allowing for the differing characteristics of vocal groups and acoustics of churches and concert halls, there is often huge variation in speed alone. For example, current performances and recordings of the famous *Stabat Mater* can run from about eight minutes through to nearly eleven; there is even one (accompanied by cornets!) broadcast recently, taking under seven minutes! Fashions change, loss of religious conviction is a feature of our time. Yet Palestrina’s music continues to exercise a power over us, an ability to move us, the essence of humanity in it reaching out to us, despite the archaic language and the long years that separate us from him.

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Palestrina (1525 - 1594) is forse l’unico compositore del Rinascimento che non ha avuto bisogno di revival in tempi moderni. All’epoca della sua morte la sua reputazione aveva già eclissato quella dei suoi contemparanei, grazie anche all’avere trascorso la sua vita a Roma come servitore della Chiesa cattolica romana, vicino al centro del potere, creando musica per il Papa stesso e per il più prestigioso gruppo vocale del mondo, il Coro papale. Palestrina assunse il suo linguaggio musicale da Josquin e dai suoi contemporanei, e più direttamente da Cristóbal de Morales (1500 - 1553), e affinò la sua tecnica per unire parole e musica in una perfezione espressiva mai più superata, almeno entro i limiti imposti dalle sue scelte stilistiche. Dopo il 1600 mode e forme musicali subirono enormi cambiamenti, con l’affermarsi della musica profana, strumentale e lirica. È sorprendente che la musica di Palestrina non sia stata dimenticata, spazzata via dal diluvio di nuove armonie e idee. Al contrario continuò ad essere eseguita nelle chiese di tutta Europa e del nuovo mondo fino ai nostri giorni, mantenendo la sua forza e capacità di toccarci spiritualmente, sia dal vivo che registrata, anche se rimossa dal contesto per il quale Palestrina l’aveva originariamente composta.

L’eredità musicale di Palestrina è prodigiosa: ha scritto oltre 100 messe e numerosi mottetti, magnificat, inni e altri brani per tutte le principali ricorrenze dell’anno ecclesiastico, nonché per un uso più diffuso e non liturgico. Ebbe la fortuna di poter pubblicare gran parte della sua opera nel corso della sua vita, e anche di essere il primo compositore rinascimentale ad avere un’edizione completa di quasi tutto il suo lavoro in notazione moderna. Oggi alcuni pezzi sono piuttosto conosciuti, ma molti altri brani eccellenti attendono ancora di trovare un posto adeguato nel repertorio, sia nella liturgia che in concerto.

La ricorrenza della Pentecoste, il cinquantesimo giorno dopo la risurrezione, celebra quello che forse è l’evento più suggestivo della nascita del
Cristianesimo. La vividezza delle immagini descritte negli Atti degli Apostoli, la discesa dello Spirito Santo e il suo parlare in molte lingue (Atti II:1-16), ha ispirato molta grande musica nella cornice dei testi liturgici. Sia Palestrina che Victoria composero musiche incantevoli sul testo di *Dum complerentur dies Pentecost*, eccellenti quanto qualsiasi altra musica da essi composta, ed entrambi rielaborarono questo materiale in una superba versione da messa di grande ampiezza. Palestrina andò oltre con una seconda messa di Pentecoste, una parafrasi magistrale sul noto inno *Iam Christus astra ascenderat*, memorabilmente pieno di melodie.

Il mottetto *Dum complerentur* di Palestrina è per sei voci, che egli utilizza con grande maestria. La scena è approntata con due passaggi declamatori, un trio di voci acute al quale risponde un quartetto più grave. È fuor di dubbio che un grande e insolito evento si stia verificando quando la musica esplode in alleluia estatici declamati da tutte le voci e le scale corrono di qua e di là a suggerire il suono dello Spirito Santo che riempie l’ambiente. Palestrina coglie di certo il significato che l’occasione ebbe per gli Apostoli, con non meno di tre prolungati Alleluia nella prima parte del mottetto. Nella seconda parte Palestrina prosegue la narrazione in una variegata ed elegante polifonia, ripetendo l’Alleluia solo per la giubilante conclusione dopo la reiterazione di *Tamquam spiritus ... domum*.

Nella sua musica per *Loquebantur variis linguis*, Palestrina evita lo splendore spettacolare della polifonia, come quella delle opulente otto voci di impostazione politonale dello spagnolo Don Fernando de las Infantas: Palestrina si basa qui invece sulle sottigliezze della propria inventiva all’interno di una trama a quattro voci. Egli non scriveva esclusivamente musica per le magnifiche funzioni nelle grandi cattedrali che godevano di ricche donazioni, ma anche repertorio per la tipica chiesa provinciale e il suo piccolo coro. Le collezioni di mottetti pubblicate da Palestrina sono testimonianza del suo grande successo in questo campo: ad esempio, i *Motecta festerum totius anni* del 1564, che contiene mottetti tutti per quattro voci, tra i quali *Loquebantur*, furono ristampati non meno di dieci volte nella sua vita e anche in seguito, fino a 1622. Allo stesso modo quelli contenenti *Dum complerentur* e altri pezzi simili in stile grandioso, vennero ripetutamente ristampati, anche nel diciassettesimo secolo.

Pare certo che il canto di inni arricchì il culto cristiano fin dal primo periodo: così dice Matteo 26:30 (anche Marco 14:26) dopo l’Ultima Cena: “Quando ebbero cantato l’inno, essi uscirono verso il monte degli Ulivi”. Esempi degli albori della cristianità includono il *Magnificat* e la profezia di Zaccaria, il Benedictus (Luca 1:46-55 e 57-59). Ambrogio (334-397) fu il grande compositore di inni e l’innovatore che ha codificato la formula delle strofe a quartine che conosciamo oggi. Sappiamo che ai tempi di Palestrina il repertorio di inni monofonici e altri tipi di canto aveva acquisito molte varianti sia nella musica che nel testo. Il Concilio di Trento di metà del secolo razionalizzò e uniformò notevolmente questo repertorio, e la vita e carriera di Palestrina si svolsero a cavallo del periodo di queste riforme. Egli doveva avere familiarità sia con le versioni precedenti che con quelle stampate nelle nuove edizioni approvate nell’ultima parte del secolo. Palestrina pubblicò una serie di inni per l’anno liturgico (4 , 5 e 6 voci ) nel 1589, contemporaneamente a Roma (libro dei cori) e Venezia (libri delle parti). Essi furono ristampati ben presto, nel 1590 a Venezia e nel 1625 a Roma, con una parte per basso continuo, e ad Anversa più tardi, fino al 1644. Polifonie e alternatim con canti come questi erano parte del repertorio di base per le chiese grandi e piccole del tempo, e c’era una forte domanda di nuovi arrangiamenti contenenti i testi codificati dal Concilio di Trento.

Palestrina arrangia i versi dispari del *Veni Creator Spiritus*, parafrasandolo e adorando il ben noto canto in ogni voce, spesso con la citazione letterale delle frasi. In questa registrazioni i versi pari in
canto piano sono tratti da un manoscritto di inni della Cappella Giulia risalente al 1550 circa; questi sembrano accordarsi bene con il canto che Palestrina ha scelto di utilizzare, per quanto si può desumere dalla polifonia. Questo inno condivide un’evidente parentela sia con *Iam Christus astra ascenderat* che con *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, per diversi motivi. Il numero sette, ad esempio, che ricompare in ciascuno, era significativo per il numero di giorni della Creazione, per i sette giorni per sette tra la r isurrezione e la p entecoste, e per i sette doni dello Spirito menzionati in Isaia XI:2 (vulgata). Thomas Tallis e Robert Parsons scrissero arrangiamenti polifonici dell’inno pentecostale *Iam Christus astra ascenderat*, basate ovviamente su una versione Sarum (*una variante del rito romano in uso in Gran Bretagna prima della Riforma protestante*) del motivo e del testo. non era consuetudine, tuttavia, arrangiare questo inno secondo il rito cattolico romano, ma un compositore era libero di predisporre tali melodie a un'ambientazione liturgica, invariate come *cantus firmus* oppure parafrasate, o anche attraverso la costruzione di canoni. Palestrina infatti utilizza tutti questi espedienti: otto delle sue 104 messe usano specificamente motivi tratti da inni. La prima è un arrangiamento canonico di *Ad coenam agni*, pubblicato nel suo primo volume di messe del 1554; poi troviamo parafraisi in *Iesu Nostra redemptio* (1582), *Aeterna Christi munera, lam Christus astra ascenderat* e *Iste confessor* (1590), *Sanctorum Meritis* (1594) e *Te Deum laudamus* (1599). Infine, pubblicata solo nel 1888, la *Missa Veni Creator Spiritus*, che impiega la melodia come *cantus firmus*. Ci sono grandi variazioni nell’importanza che i compositori del sedicesimo secolo diedero alla musica “presa a prestito” dalla polifonia e dal canto, nelle loro composizioni. Qualche volta perfino il materiale di partenza era difficilmente riconoscibile, cosicché gran parte della musica sembrava composta liberamente. Palestrina però deve aver apprezzato particolarmente la melodia di *lam Christus astra ascenderat*, poiché la mette visibilmente in rilievo in tutto l’arrangiamento della messa. Egli definisce chiaramente il suo tema nel Kyrie. Successivamente la frase di apertura è imitata da più voci, come motivo portante, all’inizio delle sezioni principali, e altre parti del canto sono rielaborate nel corso di tutta la polifonia.

Non sappiamo quando la *Missa lam Christus astra ascenderat* fu scritta. Non fu pubblicata fino al 1590, e sembra che non ci siano copie manoscritte esistenti oggi che possano indicarci che fosse in circolazione prima di allora. Possiamo immaginare che avrebbe potuto essere particolarmente popolare ai tempi di Palestrina, dal momento che il canto è così attraente e memorabile, così come l’arrangiamento che Palestrina ne fa.

La paternità di *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, la “Sequenza d’oro”, è stata attribuita variamente a Stephen Langton, un tempo Arcivescovo di Canterbury, (morto nel 1228), e Papa Innocenzo III (morto nel 1216), ma è più probabilmente anonima. Per il suo arrangiamento Palestrina utilizza due cori alternati, gravi e acuti, ma anche riuniti nei momenti chiave (O lux beatissima ... e i versi finali). Palestrina mantiene armonie intense in tutto lo svolgimento, ottenendo una splendida sonorità e ricchezza di tessitura senza oscurare le parole, col testo strutturato nella consueta forma di strofa in terzine.

I ventine brevi brani su testi dal Cantico dei Cantici, che Palestrina pubblicò nel 1583-84 come suo quarto libro di motetti, si dimostrarono estremamente popolari, sia ai suoi tempi che più tardi, e lo dimostrano non meno di undici ristampe fino al 1613. Indubbiamente questi non erano pensati per essere eseguiti tutti in una volta o in sequenza come un narrativo, e il modo migliore per godere e ricavarne ristoro spirituale era, e rimane, scegliere tre o quattro alla volta. In questa registrazione The Sixteen condividono con noi la delizia musicale di altri tre, tratti dalle loro sempre più numerose esecuzioni dell’opera completa.
Questi mottetti sono pieni di minuti tocchi musicali con i quali Palestrina, consciamente o meno, ci trasporta nelle scene dipinte da questi testi evocativi: il sottile controllo del ritmo, per esempio, nelle prime battute di *Vox Dilecti mei*, la pausa sul *Vox* e la lieve accelerazione alle parole *Dilecti mei* e allo stesso modo a *ecce e iste venit*, e poi l’iniezione di energia ritmica a *saliens* e *transiliens*. Nella dedica di questo quarto libro di mottetti, Palestrina dichiarò di aver composto questi brani in uno stile un po’ più vivace di quello che avrebbe normalmente utilizzato per musica da chiesa: “… poiché ho capito come il soggetto stesso lo richiedesse”. In effetti questi brani non sono liturgici; è musica devozionale, adatta alle espressioni di fede pubbliche e private, agli esercizi spirituali, come consigliato principalmente da San Filippo Neri a Roma in quel periodo.

**Magnificat Quarti toni**
Il Magnificat è forse il più noto inno cristiano: il gioioso testo proviene dal Vangelo di Luca (1:46-55) dove Maria declama in risposta alle lodi di sua cugina Elisabetta, incinta con il bambino che derrà Giovanni Battista. È parte fondamentale della Liturgia cristiana, quindi ne esistono molte versioni musicali ad opera di compositori dal Rinascimento fino ai nostri giorni. Palestrina interpreta il testo trentacinque o più volte, alternatim con i versi del canto, pari e dispari. Molti di questi rimasero inediti durante la vita di Palestrina, copiati in manoscritti nelle biblioteche Vaticane, anche se egli ne aveva stampata una scelta di sedici per gli otto toni nel 1591, poco prima della sua morte. Il presente esempio è un versi pari a quattro voci da un manoscritto della Cappella Giuliana. Palestrina vi aggiunge un tenore in più per il verso finale. Palestrina potrebbe sicuramente essere sorpreso nello scoprire che la sua musica è ancora oggi interpretata e registrata, in chiesa e sul palcoscenico. Potrebbe essere ancor più stupito della varietà di approcci dell’esecuzione. Pur tenendo conto delle diverse caratteristiche dei gruppi vocali e dell’acustica di chiese e sale da concerto, vi sono spesso notevoli variazioni, anche solo di tempo. Ad esempio, le esecuzioni e registrazioni correnti del celebre *Stabat Mater* variano da circa otto minuti fino a quasi undici; C’è n’è persino una (accompagnata da trombe!) trasmessa di recente, di meno di sette minuti! Le mode cambiano, la perdita di convinzione religiosa è una caratteristica del nostro tempo. Eppure la musica di Palestrina continua ad esercitare un potere su di noi, conserva la capacità di commuoverci, e l’essenza dell’umanità in essa espressa ci raggiunge, nonostante il linguaggio arcaico e i lunghi anni che ci separano.

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Italian translation:

Roberto Battista © 2014

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**TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS**

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1. Dum complerentur

*Dum compleverunt dies Pentecostes, erant omnes pariter dicentes: Alleluia.*


*Dum ergo essent in unum discipuli congregati proper metum Iudaeorum, sonus repente de caelo venit super eos. Tamquam spiritus vehementis, et replevit totam domum. Alleluia.*

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord saying: Alleluia.

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven. Alleluia. As of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house. Alleluia.

When therefore the disciples were gathered together, for fear of the Jewish people, suddenly a sound came upon them from heaven. As of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house. Alleluia.
3 Loquebantur variis linguis

Loquebantur variis linguis Apostoli magnalia Dei, prout Spiritus Sanctus habat eloquii illis. Alleluia.

Repleti sunt omnes Spiritu Sancto et coeperunt loqui, prout Spiritus Sanctus habat eloquii illis. Alleluia.

The Apostles spoke in many tongues of the great works of God, according as the Holy Spirit gave them to speak. Alleluia.

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak, according as the Holy Spirit gave them to speak. Alleluia.

3 Hymn: Veni Creator Spiritus

1. Veni Creator Spiritus, Mentes tuorum visita: Imple superna gratia Quae tu creasti pectora.

2. Qui Paraclitus diceris, Donum Dei altissimi, Fons vivus, ignis, caritas, Et spiritualis unctio.

3. Tu septiformis munere, Dextrae Dei tu digitus, Tu rite promissum Patris, Sermone ditans guttura.

1. Come, Creator Spirit, Visit the minds of your people; Fill with grace from Heaven The hearts which you have created.

2. You who are called the Paraclete, Gift of God most high, Living source, fire, love, And spiritual unction.

3. You, sevenfold in your gifts, You, the finger of God’s right hand, You, promise of the Father, duly made, Enriching throats with speech.

4 Plainchant Hymn: Iam Christus astra ascenderat

1. Iam Christus astra ascenderat, Regressus unde venerat: Promissum Patris munere Sanctum daturus Spiritum.

1. Now Christ had mounted to the stars, returning from whence he came, as promised by the Father’s gift the Holy Spirit to bestow.


5. Hostem repellas longius, Pacemque dones protinus: Ducitore sic te praevio, Vitemus omne noxium.


2. That solemn day was fully come on which the circle seven times rolling in its mystic number seven, denoted now the blessed time.

3. When that third hour had come, the world in sudden thunder broke, according to the Apostles' prayers announcing God would come.

4. Thus downward from the Father's light the divine, gentle fire descends, the hearts that trust in Christ with the burning word to fill.

5. Men rejoice with hearts overflowing inspired by the Holy Spirit their diverse voices resound with God's glorious deeds.

6. From every race is gathered there, the Greek, Latin, Barbarian, and to the astonishment of all, the Apostles speak in every tongue.

7. Then the incredulous Jews, savage in their insane spirit, together shout: "Christ's advocates are belching, drunk with new wine!"

8. But with signs and powers, Peter confronts and teaches them, that they are false and faithless, with Joel's prophecy as proof.

9. Glory be to the Lord, our Father, and to the Son who from death has risen, and to the Paraclete: For now and for evermore. Amen.

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**MISSA IAM CHRISTUS ASTRA ASCENDERAT**

### Kyrie

**Lord have mercy on us.**  
**Christ have mercy on us.**  
**Lord have mercy on us.**

**Gloria**

### Gloria

**Glory be to God on high.**  
**And on earth peace to men of good will.**  
**We praise Thee, we bless Thee,**  
**we worship Thee, we glorify Thee.**
Credo in unum Deum
Patrem omnipotentem,
factorem caeli et terrae,
visibilium omnium et invisibilium.
Et in unum Dominum, Iesum Christum,
Filium Dei unigenitum,
et ex Patre naturam ante omnia saecula.

I believe in God
the Father almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth,
and of all things visible and invisible.
And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only begotten Son of God,
begotten of His Father before all worlds.

Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine,
Deum verum de Deo vero,
genitum, non factum,
consubstantiam Patri,
per quem omnia facta sunt.
Qui, propter nos homines,
et propter nostram salutem,
descendit de caelis.

Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto
ex Maria virginis, et homo factus est.
Crucifixus etiam pro nobis
sub Pontio Pilato;
passus et sepultus est.
Et resurrexit tertia die,
secundum scripturas;
et ascendit in caelum,
sedet ad dexteram Patris.

Et iterum venturus est cum gloria
iudicare vivos et mortuos,
cuius regni non erit finis.

Et in Spiritum Sanctum
Dominum et vivificantem,
qui ex Patre Filioque procedit;
cuius et Patre et Filio simul
adoratur et conglorificatur;
qui locutus est per Prophetas.

Et in unam sanctam catholicam
et apostolicam ecclesiam.
Confiteor unum baptismam

God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God,
begotten, not made,
being of one substance with the Father,
by Whom all things were made.
Who for us men,
and for our salvation,
came down from heaven.
And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost
of the Virgin Mary and was made man.
And was crucified also for us
under Pontius Pilate.
He suffered and was buried.
And the third day He rose again
according to the scriptures;
and ascended into heaven,
and sitteth at the right hand of the Father.
And He shall come again with glory
to judge both the quick and the dead;
Whose kingdom shall have no end.
And I believe in the Holy Ghost
the Lord and giver of life,
Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son;
Who with the Father and the Son together
is worshipped and glorified;
Who spake by the prophets.
And I believe in one holy, Catholic
and Apostolic Church.
I acknowledge one Baptism.
in remissionem peccatorum.
Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum
et vitam venturi saeculi. Amen.

Sanctus
Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua.
Osanna in excelsis.

Benedictus
Benedictus qui venit
in nomine Domini.
Osanna in excelsis.

Agnus Dei
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi:
miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi:
dona nobis pacem.

Veni Sancte Spiritus
Veni Sancte Spiritus,
Et emitte caelitus
Lucis tuae radium.
Veni pater pauperum,
Veni dator munera,
Veni lumen cordium.
Consolator optime,
Dulcis hospes animae,
Dulce refrigerium.
In labore requies,
In aestu temperies,
In fletu solatium.
O lux beatissima,
Reple cordis intima
Tuorum fidelium.
Sine tuo numine,
Nihil est in homine,
Nihil est innoxium.
Lava quod est sordidum,
Riga quod est aridum,
Sana quod est saucium.

Come, Holy Spirit,
and give out the heavenly
radiance of thy light;
Come, father of the poor,
come, giver of gifts,
come, light of all hearts;
best of comforters,
sweet guest of the soul,
refreshingly sweet;
in labour, rest,
in agitation, temperance,
in grief, solace.
O most blessed light,
fill the inmost heart
of thy faithful.
Without your presence,
there is nothing of man,
nothing of any good.
Wash what is soiled,
water what is parched,
heal what is wounded;
**SONG OF SONGS ~ nos. 13, 14, & 15**

**Laeva eius sub capite meo**

Laeva eius sub capite meo, et dextera illius amplexabitur me. Adiuro vos, filiae Hierusalem, per capreas cervosque camporum, ne suscitetis, neque evigilare faciatis dilectam, quoadusque ipsa velit.

His left hand is under my head, and his right hand shall embrace me.

I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and the harts of the fields, that ye do not arouse nor awaken the beloved, until she herself shall please.

Canticum Canticorum II, 6-7

**Vox dilecti mei**

Vox, vox dilecti mei; ecce iste venit, saliens in montibus, transiliens colles. Similis est dilectus meus caprae, hinnulque cervorum. En ipse stat post parietem nostrum, respiciens per fenestram, prospienci per cancellos. En dilectus meus loquitur mihi.

The voice, the voice of my beloved! Behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping over the hills.

My beloved is like a roe, or as a young fawn.

Lo, he standeth at our parapet; he looketh through the window, gazing through the lattices.

Behold, my beloved speaketh to me.

Canticum Canticorum II, 8-10

**Surge, propera, amica mea**

Surge, propera, amica mea, columba mea, formosa mea, et veni. Iam enim hiems transiit; imber abit et recessit. Flores apparuerunt in terra nostra. Tempus putationis advenit; Vox turturis audita est in terra nostra; Ficus protulit grossos suos; Vineae florentes dederunt odorem suum.

Rise up, make haste, my love, my dove, my fair one, and come.

For lo, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone.

The flowers have appeared in our fields; the time of pruning is come; the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land.

The fig tree hath put forth its fruit, and the flowering of the vine gives out its scent.

Canticum Canticorum II, 10-13
Magnificat anima mea Dominum.
Et exultavit spiritus meus
in Deo salutari meo.
Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae:
Ecce enim ex hoc
beatam me dicent omnes generationes.
Quia fecit mihi magna, qui potens est:
et sanctum nomen eius.
Et misericordiae eius, a progenie in
progenies: timentibus eum.
Fecit potentiam in bracchio suo:
dispersit superbos,
mente cordis sui.
Deposuit potentes de sede:
et exaltavit humiles.
Esurientes implevit bonis:
et divites dimisit inanes.
Suscepit Israel puerum suum:
recordatus misericordiae suae.
Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros:
Abraham et semini eius in saecula.
Gloria Patri et Filio,
et Spiritui Sancto.
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc,

My soul doth magnify the Lord.
And my spirit hath rejoiced
in God my Saviour.
For He hath regarded the lowliness of His
handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth
all generations shall call me blessed.
For He that is mighty hath done great things
to me: and holy is His name.
And His mercy is from generation unto
generation, unto them that fear Him.
He hath showed strength with His arm;
He hath scattered the proud
in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seat
and exalted the humble.
He hath filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich He hath sent empty away.
He hath received Israel, His servant,
being mindful of His mercy.
As He spoke to our forefathers,
to Abraham and His seed for ever.
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.

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.
After more than 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 *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 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.

### Cast

**Soprano**: Julie Cooper, Grace Davidson, Sally Dunkley, Kirsty Hopkins, Alexandra Kidgell, Charlotte Mobbs  
**Alto**: Ian Aitkenhead, David Clegg, Daniel Collins, Christopher Royall  
**Tenor**: Simon Berridge, Jeremy Budd, Mark Dobell, Tom Kelly  
**Bass**: Ben Davies, Eamonn Dougan, Tim Jones, Stuart Young

This recording was made possible by the generous support of Simon Haslam and Timothy & Damaris Sanderson.

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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