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Missa de la batalla escoutez

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Flight of Angels

Francisco Guerrero
Alonso Lobo

The Sixteen
HARRY CHRISTOPHERS

HARRY CHRISTOPHERS

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In 16th-century Europe, Spain was still very much the most powerful country. It was arguably also the most influential; truly imperial with the acquisition of vast new lands in the Americas, a plethora of universities and a wealth of great art and music. Two of the most influential composers of the Renaissance, who spent their life in Spain and for many years in the service of Seville Cathedral, one of the most splendid ecclesiastical establishments, were Francisco Guerrero and Alonso Lobo, master and disciple. Both were prolific and here on this recording we give you an overview of their music, which is undoubtedly imbued with the religious fervour of Philip II’s Spain.

There can be few composers who can boast a pilgrimage to the Holy Land; Guerrero made his in 1588 and published a book about his incredible journey. That was one of his very few forays out of Spain. He was reputed to have been a person of gentleness and charm and in possession of a beautiful high tenor voice, and it is that singing quality that comes across in his works – every line is a joy to sing. Robert Stevenson wrote that the moods he captured included ecstasy, gaiety, melancholy, longing, submission and repose, many of which are captured in Agnus Dei I and II from his Missa Congratulamini mihi. One could also add grandeur and solemnity, as in the hymn Vexilla Regis.

Lobo was a choirboy at Seville Cathedral where Guerrero was maestro de capilla and, as a young man, he was clearly a studious pupil who then became a worthy disciple. To say he was obsessed with musical form would detract from the beauty of his works, yet his eight-part setting of Ave Maria is a technical tour de force, but one which in no way impedes its rich sonority and sheer beauty. However, there is a single work that, in my opinion, makes Lobo deserving of a lasting reputation, and that is Versa est in luctum. Is there a more poignant setting of this funeral motet than that of Lobo? It was written for the obsequies of Philip II in 1598; it is not only contemplative but also daring with one of the most heartfelt dissonances I know in Renaissance music.

Both Guerrero and Lobo’s works were performed for nearly two centuries after their deaths in cathedrals throughout Spain, Portugal and the New World, such was their popularity. Let us ensure today that they can achieve the same renown.

This recording was made possible by the generous support of the following:

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Francisco Guerrero (1528-1599)
Alonso Lobo (1555-1617)

1. Guerrero: Duo Seraphim a12 4.08
2. Lobo: Kyrie (from Missa Maria Magdalene) 4.36
3. Lobo: Libera me 8.05
4. Guerrero: Gloria (from Missa Surge propera) 4.44
5. Guerrero: Laudate Dominum a8 3.27
6. Guerrero: Maria Magdalene 7.20
7. Guerrero: Credo (from Missa de la batalla escoutez) 7.25
8. Guerrero: Vexilla Regis 7.45
9. Lobo: Ave Regina caelorum 3.18
10. Lobo: Ave Maria a8 3.34
11. Lobo: Versa est in luctum 4.27
12. Guerrero: Agnus Dei I & II (from Missa Congratulamini mihi) 5.00

Total playing time 63.52

Francisco Guerrero was born in Seville in 1528. He learnt his art as a chorister in the Cathedral, aided by his elder brother, Pedro, also a fine musician. We know many details of his life and work, for he was the most distinguished musician of his time living in Spain; and he had a lifelong association with the Cathedral, eventually becoming maestro de capilla there for nearly 30 years until his death. He lived a colourful and adventurous life, even ending up briefly in 1591 in a debtor’s prison, overwhelmed by the expenses of publishing his music and of his travels on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. In his own book, El viaje de Hierusalem, he describes his adventures on this journey, among them being captured by pirates (twice) and having to pay them for his freedom; also we learn that he was a pupil of the esteemed Cristóbal de Morales, the most famous Spanish composer of the early 16th century, who had spent 10 years as a singer in the Papal Choir in Rome. Guerrero was exceptionally gifted, (as Pacheco tells us in his Book of True Portraits): he possessed a fine high tenor voice and he was also proficient on several instruments: vihuela, organ, harp and cornett. A prodigious talent, he was appointed at the early age of 18 as maestro in Jaén Cathedral. Shortly thereafter he returned to Seville Cathedral where he was initially assistant to the aged Pedro Fernandez, eventually succeeding him as maestro, at last, in 1574. After negotiating a year’s absence from his duties for another journey to the Holy Land at the beginning of 1599, before he could leave, he succumbed to the plague which visited Seville that summer.

Seville had finally been liberated from the Moors in 1248 by the Christian
armies under Ferdinand III of Castille. Almost immediately a site was cleared for a church (to be the largest in Christendom) by demolition of the city’s mosque. However, the minaret (built 1184-1198) was retained as the tower of the new building. The Cathedral was largely erected between 1403 and 1506 (although the central lantern collapsed and was re-erected in 1511-1519; and the Capilla Real on the east side was rebuilt in 1551-1575). At the time of Guerrero’s birth, Seville had the grandest cathedral in Christendom and rivalled Toledo as the most important ecclesiastical establishment in the Spanish kingdoms. By then it was also growing as a rich and thriving commercial centre, for in 1503 it had been granted a monopoly by royal decree on all the trade with the New World: everything that came or went to and from the Americas had to pass through its harbour.

A traveller coming to Seville in Guerrero’s lifetime would have been impressed not only by the sea of masts in the busy port but by the Alcázar and the Cathedral, both dominating the skyline of the city from afar. In particular the Giralda, the old minaret, would have been visible from a long way off, at 320 feet high. Inside, soldiers were able to ride to the top mounted on horses, for the stairs were built as a series of broad and gently-sloping ramps. The Cathedral has probably the greatest space and height of all the Gothic churches. At 454 feet long and 295 feet wide, with a span of 53 feet and a height of 121 feet, it surely was the most grandiose building project of medieval times.

Guerrero’s output as a composer was substantial: he published two books of Masses, Psalms, Hymns and Canticles for Vespers, more than 100 Motets, two Requiems, two Passions, and a collection of religious villancicos in Castilian. More religious and secular pieces, among them Passions, Lamentations and an early Missa L’Homme armé, survive in manuscripts. The extant published collections span the years 1555 to 1597 and were printed internationally, in Seville, Paris, Louvain, Venice and Rome. No wonder that he was regarded as the greatest Spanish composer of the century by his contemporaries throughout the Hispanic domains, Europe and the New World.

The city of Toledo shares a similar history to that of Seville. It too was conquered by the Moors, in 711, and later regained by Alfonso VI in 1085. Shortly thereafter it was recognised by the Vatican as the seat of the Spanish Church. The old city is built on a very ancient defensive site in an acute bend of the River Tagus and is a fascinating glimpse into the past with its mix of churches, synagogues, converted mosques, convents and other old buildings all jammed together on a prominent rocky outcrop. The Cathedral and Alcázar still dominate the skyline even today reflecting the city’s great historical significance. Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, used Toledo as his Spanish capital, but in 1561 his son, Phillip II, chose Madrid instead, leading to an inevitable economic decline. However, the city remains as the seat of the Catholic Church in Spain today.
him with a rich chasuble from the ‘Treasury of Heaven’. This legend is immortalised in the fine motet *Quam pulchri sunt* by Alonso Lobo, which refers to Mary’s footprint. The frontispiece of Lobo’s 1602 book of Masses and Motets (which contains this music) depicts Mary presenting the chasuble to Ildefonse. In addition, a short 3-ex-1 canonic motet is printed in the window above the main picture, with the text: “O Ildefonse, accipe vestem hanc”.

Alonso Lobo was the most distinguished musician (apart from Morales) to become choirmaster at Toledo. Other choirmasters who worked at Toledo included Andrés de Torrentes, Cristóbal de Morales, Bartolome de Quebedo, Gines de Boluda and Bernardino de Ribera. Guerrero, while still a singer at Seville, was offered the choirmastership at Toledo in 1554; but it seems that this offer only served to enhance Guerrero’s then position (and salary) at Seville, for he declined to take up the post.

Lobo himself was born in 1555 in Osuna, a town some fifty miles east of Seville. In 1591 he was appointed at Seville Cathedral as assistant to the now ageing Francisco Guerrero. There Lobo no doubt learned much from the older man, and revered him, for of his six settings of the Mass Ordinary published in Madrid in 1602, all but one of them are parodies on motets by Guerrero: *Beata Dei Genitrix*, *Maria Magdalene*, *Prudentes virgines*, *Petre ego pro te rogavi* and *Simile est regnum caelorum*. The sixth is modelled on Palestrina’s *O Rex gloriae*. Lobo moved to Toledo to be maestro de capilla from 1593 until 1604; then he returned to Seville, this time as maestro, dying there in 1617.

Lobo’s 1602 print of six Masses and seven Motets is no doubt a product of his Toledo years, most likely stimulated by his sojourn in Seville with Guerrero. Exemplars travelled widely, copies even reaching the New World, not unexpectedly, as Seville dominated overseas trade at the time. Guerrero however was more productive, publishing no less than 18 settings of the Mass Ordinary.

Alonso Lobo’s *Missa Maria Magdalene* is a parody mass on Guerrero’s fine motet of the same name, first published in 1570. The Motet uses six voices and the Mass has the same voicing, keeping the bright sound of the two soprano lines. Lobo’s *Kyrie* opens with Guerrero’s theme, but slightly modified and rearranged between the parts. Lobo maintains the spacious grandeur of the original, even where the melodies are not directly those by Guerrero.

Among Guerrero’s finest creations, *Duo Seraphim* seems to be his single essay for 12 voices. First published in 1589, the text is a centonization of Isaiah 6:2-3 and the First Epistle of John 5:7. This three-choir motet seems ideally suited for performance in the vastness of a Gothic cathedral, with or without instruments; and Guerrero is masterly in the way he employs sonority and contrast to bring the text to life for us. From the extended opening duo the music builds impressively through the first antiphonal three-choir declamation of “Sanctus”, to the glorious outburst of the full 12 voices at “Plena est...”. Trinitarian symbolism defines the structure: three choirs, separately and in conjunction; three statements of much of the text, e.g. of “Sanctus”, or of “Plena est ... gloria eius”; three voices singing at “Tres sunt qui...”. The third and final repeat of “Plena ... gloria eius” with a simple “Amen” provides a striking and satisfying conclusion.

Apart from the 1602 publication, some music by Alonso Lobo still survives today in manuscript, mostly...
at Toledo, Seville, Segovia and Lerma. This includes Gospel Motets, Marian Antiphons, Psalms, liturgical Hymns, a Te Deum and Holy Week music. Some pieces now exist in collections without their texts for it was a frequent practice at Seville, Toledo and other establishments to substitute instruments for singers in certain contexts.

In an 18th-century Toledo manuscript a set of polyphonic movements attributed to Lobo survives. These include a Responsory for the Absolution at the catafalque after Requiem Mass, Libera me Domine, de morte aeterna. As the manuscript does not include the alternatim plainchant, nor indicate the necessary repeats, a reconstruction has been made by Bruno Turner, using appropriate chant from contemporaneous books of the Toledo Use. The presence of this music in such a late manuscript indicates its continued use at Toledo Cathedral for many years after the composer’s death.

Guerrero’s Masses are all for four and five voices, except for the Missa Surge propera from the second book, published in 1582 in Rome, which is for six. The volume itself and the Mass are dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The model for this work has not been identified, but presumably it was a motet, probably not by Guerrero himself, for he would surely have ensured the publication of such fine music. The wordier movements – Gloria and Credo – are often a challenge for a composer. It could be a temptation to rush through in a perfunctory fashion with much syllabic, chordal writing. Guerrero however relies on pervasive imitation, short melodic ideas, closely spaced, resulting in conciseness, yet maintaining momentum and variety of texture and sonority. This music has a spacious grandeur, the lines are always grateful to sing, and to hear, perhaps due to Guerrero’s easy, natural control of the underlying harmony.

Laudate Dominum is a setting of the words of Psalms 148 and 150 for double choir. Guerrero only wrote a few pieces for eight voices, for this style was largely taken up by younger composers working in Rome, such as Victoria, and those of the Italian school, the Anerio brothers for example. This Psalm setting was published in 1597, and it is in the most up-to-date style of the time, enthusiastically adopted here by Guerrero. It depends for its effect on rhythmic vitality and contrast in sonority between the full- and single-choir passages, as befits the celebratory text.

Guerrero wrote a number of outstanding motets on Marian texts, so much so that he was revered in his time as “El cantor de Maria”. The motet Maria Magdalene is equally inspired although of course it celebrates the role of the other Marys in the Gospel narrative. Various versions of this well-known Paschal text, referring to John 20, were also famously set by other composers, among them Victoria, Crecquillon, Palestrina (all as Congratulamini mihi) and Michael Praetorius. Guerrero’s setting is masterly in its broad sweep and in the subtlety of its response to the text. Serene and sonorous, the passage at the words “Iesum quem quaeritis Nazarenum crucifixum: surrexit,...” is surely one of the most beautiful passages in his music. The six voices, equally committed, intertwine sensuously throughout, rejoicing together in the exuberant Alleluias which close each of the two parts.

Clément Janequin, born in France in 1485, was famous in his lifetime for his numerous chansons (he wrote nearly 300 of them, the texts often bawdy). Many of them were extremely popular, such as Le Chant des Oyseaux, Les Cris de Paris, Le Caquet des Femmes, La Chasse, and most famous of all, the riotously graphic La Guerre, which spawned a genre of clichéd imitations for a
century and more after the composer’s death in 1558.

Guerrero selects only some of the music from La Guerre for his Missa de la batalla escoutez, (which dates from 1582). Unlike Victoria in his setting, Guerrero generally avoids the repeated or short note patterns, preferring the longer, more lyrical themes. However in the Credo, at “Et iterum…” and at “Et unam sanctam catholicam…”, Guerrero allows the secular atmosphere of the chanson to dominate the polyphonic texture.

The seven motets included by Alonso Lobo in his 1602 print are generally designated “Moteta ex devotione inter missarum decantanda”, i.e. they were for extra-liturgical performance during the celebration of Mass.

In Ave Regina caelorum, Lobo again shows his indebtedness to Guerrero. There is obvious imitation of Guerrero’s most famous work, Ave Virgo sanctissima. Both are scored for SSATB; both have a canon between the two sopranos, at the unison; the layout of the voices at the beginning is remarkably similar, both pieces beginning with the tenor and/or bass; the entries of both sets of canonic voices are exactly after two and a half and four and a half bars; the melodic intervals of the themes are initially identical except that in Ave Regina the upward leaps of a fourth and fifth of Ave Virgo are inverted. And yet Lobo makes something completely his own out of this music, for these similarities are only the starting point for his own vivid musical imagination. He was clearly not a slavish imitator.

Ave Maria is the only motet in the set for eight voices, for double choir. Again there is a canon, but this time the voices of the higher choir are the resolutions at the fourth or fifth of the melodic lines of the lower. While contrapuntal wizardry is no guarantee of musical excellence, Lobo’s musical imagination is so vivid and transcendental that the music flows, seemingly without artifice, richly sonorous and serene, in this, one of his loveliest creations.

Versa est in luctum, for six voices, remains Lobo’s most famous piece, at least in modern times. Philip II was unduly favoured by pieces written in homage to him during his lifetime; even in death (he died in 1598) he continued to be thus honoured, and Lobo’s elegy remains the most inspired. It is marked “for the obsequies of Philip II, Catholic King of Spain”.

The third item in his Liber Primus Missarum, printed in Paris in 1566, Guerrero’s Missa Congratulamini mihi is based on a five-voice motet by Thomas Crecquillon, a Franco-Flemish composer and member of the chapel of the Emperor Charles V. The subject of the motet is the well-known story of Mary Magdalene finding the tomb empty. Guerrero changes, appropriately, the voicing, doubling the treble part for his Mass, rather than the bass part as in the source motet (although he reinstates the second bass for the six-voice Agnus Dei II). The motif of a rising fourth is prominent throughout the Mass both as an initial leap and within the texture. In Agnus I this motif is emphasised: a long-note, four note ostinato cantus firmus, written across the main pulse and repeated five times, is sung by the second sopranos to the words “Agnus Dei”. Guerrero likes full textures; generally, in his music, all the voices are equally committed. There is no question of dull harmonic parts for the lower voices, a feature which became all too common later in the 17th century.

Spain at the end of the 16th century had the greatest and most powerful empire in the world, its domains extending from the Philippines in the east to the Americas in the west. The great riches
flowing into the country from abroad were reflected in the magnificent buildings of the time – cathedrals, churches, royal palaces – and in the flowering of the Arts – literature, painting, music throughout the country. Spanish composers, by the end of the century, had attained a prominent and justified eminence in Europe and the New World. Largely this was due to the wide dissemination of their works in lavishly printed volumes, a process begun by Morales by the middle of the century. From 1555 on, with his first publication in Seville, to the last in 1597 from Venice, Guerrero continued to send forth his music, and his fame, into the outside world. By the end of the century it had become commonplace, and necessary, for composers to have published their music: Alonso Lobo’s high reputation was certainly a result of his 1602 Madrid publication, as well as his association with both Seville and Toledo Cathedrals. Both men were inextricably linked through their association with Seville, and Lobo, while greatly influenced by and indebted to Guerrero’s music, had the talent to forge his own distinctive musical personality.

Martyn Imrie, March 2014. © Copyright 2014 Vanderbeek & Imrie Ltd

1 Francisco Guerrero: “El Viaje de Hierusalem, crónica de un viaje por el autor a Tierra Santa entre el verano de 1588 y la primavera de 1589”, Valencia, 1590, reprinted Seville, 1592, Alcalá 1605; and elsewhere 1620, 1645, 1668, etc. up to 1785.

2 Francisco Pacheco, (1571-1664), Sevillian artist and Inquisitor: “Libro de descripción de verdaderos retratos de ilustres y memorables varones ... en Sevilla, 1599”. In ms. It consists of a series of portraits by Pacheco himself of his chosen subjects, and commentaries on their lives and achievements.

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

1 GUERRERO Duo Seraphim a12

Duo Seraphim clamabant alter ad alterum:
Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus,
Dominus Deus Sabaoth:
Plena est omnis terra gloria eius.
Tres sunt qui testimonium dant in caelo:
Pater, Verbum, et Spiritus Sanctus:
et hi tres unum sunt.
Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus,
Dominus Deus Sabaoth:
Plena est omnis terra gloria eius.
Gloria Patri, et Filio,
et Spiritui Sancto.
Plena est omnis terra gloria eius.
Amen.

The two Seraphim cried one to the other:
Holy, holy, holy,
Lord God of Hosts:
All the earth is full of His glory.
There are three who give testimony in heaven:
the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost:
and these three are one.
Holy, holy, holy,
Lord God of Hosts:
All the earth is full of His glory.
Glory to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost.
All the earth is full of His glory.
Amen.

2 LOBO Kyrie (from Missa Maria Magdalene)

Kyrie eleison.
Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison.

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.
Deliver me, O Lord, from eternal death on that day of terror.
When the earth and the heavens shall be shaken.
When Thou shalt come to judge the world through fire.
Trembling and frightened am I, till the trial shall be at hand and the wrath to come.
When the earth and the heavens shall be shaken.
That day of anger, disaster and misery, that day of great and exceeding bitterness.
When Thou shalt come to judge the world through fire.
Give unto them eternal rest, O Lord: and let perpetual light shine upon them.
Deliver me, O Lord, from eternal death on that day of terror.
When the earth and the heavens shall be shaken.
When Thou shalt come to judge the world through fire.
Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.
We praise You, We bless You, We adore You, We glorify You,
We give You thanks for Your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father, Lord Jesus Christ, Only-begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, You take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
You take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer.
You are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on 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.
1. Laudate Dominum de caelis; laudate eum in excelsis.
2. Laudate Dominum in sanctis eius; laudate eum in firmamento virtutis eius.
3. Laudate eum in virtutibus eius; laudate eum secundum multitudinem magnitudinis eius.
4. Laudate eum in sono tubae; laudate eum in psalterio et cithara.
5. Laudate eum in tympano et choro; laudate eum in chordis et organo.
6. Laudate eum in cymbalis benesonantibus; laudate eum in cymbalis iubilationis.
7. Omnis spiritus laudet Dominum.

1. Praise the Lord in His sanctuary: praise Him in the firmament of His power.
2. Praise the Lord from the heavens: praise Him in the heights.
3. Praise Him for His mighty acts: praise Him according to his excellent greatness.
4. Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet: praise Him with the psaltery and harp.
5. Praise Him with the timbrel and dance: praise Him with stringed instruments and organ.
6. Praise Him upon the resounding cymbals: praise Him upon the high-sounding cymbals.
7. Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.


Credo (from Missa de la batalla escoutez)

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 natum ante omnia saecula.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary had bought spices that they might come and anoint Jesus. And very early on the first day of the week they came unto the sepulchre, at the rising of the sun. Alleluia. And they entered into the sepulchre, and saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he said unto them: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. Alleluia.
Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine, 
Deum verum de Deo vero, 
genitum, non factum, 
consubstantialem 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 virgine, 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 
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 proceeded 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 Church, 
and apostolic Church. 
I acknowledge one baptism 
for the remission of sins. 
And I look for the resurrection of the dead 
and the life of the world to come. 
Amen.

The banners of the King advance: 
the mystery of the Cross shines forth; 
He, the creator of all flesh, 
who is mankind, was hanged.

He whose side was wounded 
by the cruel point of the spear, 
that He might wash away our sins, 
gave forth water and blood.

It is fulfilled 
in David's true song 
that prophesied, saying: among the nations 
God has reigned from a tree.

O tree of light and beauty, 
adorned with royal purple, 
chosen from stock worthy 
to touch the sacred limbs.
Ave Regina caelorum
Ave Regina caelorum, Ave Domina Angelorum.
Salve, radix sancta, ex qua mundo lux est orta.
Gaude gloriosa, super omnes speciosa.
Vale, valde decora, et pro nobis semper Christum exora.

Ave Maria, gratia plena:
Dominus tecum:
benedicta tu in mulieribus,
et benedictus fructus ventris tui Iesus.
Sancta Maria, Mater Dei,
ora pro nobis peccatoribus
nunc et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen.

Versa est in luctum
Versa est in luctum cithara mea
et organum meum in vocem flentium.
Parce mihi, Domine, nihil enim sunt dies mei.

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

Lobo
Te summa Deus Trinitas,
Collaudet omnis spiritus:
Quos per Crucis mysterium,
salvas rege per saecula.
Amen.

Lobo
Beata cuius brachiis
Saecli pependit pretium,
Statuta facta corporis,
Prædamque tuit tertariam.

Lobo
O Crux ave, spes unica,
Hoc Passionis tempore:
Auge piis iustitiis,
Resigna dona veniam.

Hail, Queen of Heaven.
Hail, Mistress of the Angels.
Hail, sacred stem, from whom light for the world has arisen.
Rejoice, most glorious Virgin, beautiful above all others.
Hail and farewell, most gracious one, plead always with Christ for us.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

My harp is turned to mourning and my music into the voice of those that weep.
Spare me, Lord, for my days are nothing.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, grant us peace.
Harry Christophers is known internationally as founder and conductor of The Sixteen as well as being 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.

Since 2008 Harry Christophers has been 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 three decades of worldwide 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 Belém 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 the group 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.