James MacMillan: Stabat Mater
“A masterpiece.”
ARTSDESK

“A haunting and powerful new choral work.”
GUARDIAN

Edmund Rubbra

“Harry Christophers balances the soaring soprano of Julie Cooper caressingly against the ensemble singers, in a performance which achieves ecstasy without any element of overstatement.”
BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE

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Poulenc is a composer who has fascinated me ever since I was a schoolboy struggling with the technical difficulties of his clarinet sonata. His music always bears a human face and he himself felt he put his best and most authentic side into his choral music; the American composer Virgil Thomson said that Poulenc was ‘incontestably the greatest writer of melodies in our time’ and few would disagree. My singers love singing his music.

Francis Poulenc was born and bred a Catholic but lapsed during and after the First World War, preferring to live a witty and hedonistic life in 1920s Paris, where he took great delight in tweaking the noses of the powers-that-be at moribund establishments. Aged 18, he had been rejected by the director of the Paris Conservatoire: the director said to the student Poulenc: ‘Your music stinks, it is nothing but a load of balls. Are you trying to make a fool of me? Ah, I see you have joined the gang of Stravinsky, Satie and co. Well then: I’ll say goodbye’. Some statement that … and, ironically, Poulenc enjoyed huge popular success. He never really looked back until he received the devastating news in 1936 of the death in a horrendous car crash of his friend, Pierre-Octave Ferroud. He sought solace in a pilgrimage to the holy shrine of the Vierge Noire at Rocamadour, and as a result he regained his faith. On his return, he composed his Trois Litanies à la Vierge Noire de Rocamadour. Here we get an insight into the way Poulenc treats text and the sheer variety of vocal declamation. Tempos fluctuate according to the emotion, fierce dissonances are followed by calm, but then that calm is interrupted by dramatic outbursts for ‘priez pour nous’ (pray for us).

Whilst the death of his friend Ferroud had a devastating impact on Poulenc, the poetry of Paul Éluard gave him inspiration beyond measure. Poulenc grew up with him and once said that ‘Éluard was my true brother – through him I learned to express the most secret part of myself’. They both felt the savagery of WWII deeply, the social anguish, internal conflict and ignominy of the Nazi occupation. However, it gave them both an inner strength. Un soir de neige, composed in December 1944, reflects ‘both the inner feeling of peace generated by Christmas and the bleak solitude of another winter of occupation in France’.

With his renewed Catholic faith, Poulenc composed sacred music of unique quality that for me makes him stand out among more recent composers. Of the Agnus Dei from his Mass in G, Poulenc said that the high soprano solo ‘symbolises the Christian soul, confident of a life after death’. But it was his Quatre motets pour un temps de pénitence which Poulenc himself regarded as a major turning point. They are totally individual, powerfully subjective and I really get the feeling that he lives every emotion in this music. Claude Rostand once said of him: ‘In Poulenc there is something of the monk and something of the rascal’. I rather like that, and it comes across in his music, especially in the way he sets his liturgical and secular texts. Every sentence has a different inflection, a personal stamp – he’s telling us ‘this is what these words mean to me’.
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FRANCIS POULENC

Francis Poulenc is so often associated with musical insouciance, wit and irony that discovering his religious works can come almost as a surprise. The directness and sincerity of the music condenses his personal voice to its essence. Indeed, Poulenc described his faith as akin to that of ‘a country priest’, rooted in simple instincts for worship and spiritual celebration.

It was in the music of the ‘everyday’ that he started out, under the influence of Jean Cocteau, with the group of composers known as ‘Les Six’. ‘Enough of clouds, of waves, of aquariums, of water-nymphs, of nocturnal perfumes, we need an earthbound music, AN EVERYDAY MUSIC ...’ Cocteau wrote in 1919. With this outlook, Poulenc and his colleagues Georges Auric, Germaine Tailleferre, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud and Louis Durey aimed to liberate French music from the heady romanticism of Wagner’s influence, besides the impressionistic generation that had gone before them.

Poulenc, born into a wealthy family famous for its part in founding the pharmaceutical giant Rhône-Poulenc, had the luxury of being able to devote his time to music. But his forefathers had been peasants in Aveyron in the Midi-Pyrenées; this heredity, he told the interviewer Stéphane Audel, played a vital role in his religious outlook. ‘Poulenc is a typical southern name’, he declared. ‘In architecture it is Romanesque art – particularly the examples to be found in the south of France – that has always been my religious ideal ... I like religious inspiration to express itself clearly in the sunshine with the same realism as we can see on those Romanesque capitals’.

The composer enjoyed the busy social life and wild parties of the 1920s. Yet the witty, extrovert ‘Poulet’ (chicken), as he sometimes signed his letters, was also sensitive and insecure; and over the years he suffered intense personal crises over both his homosexuality and his religious faith.

In 1936 a seismic change took place in his spiritual life. As he found it difficult to compose in the hectic environs of Paris, he had taken to spending his summers in the Morvan area of Burgundy, near Anost and Autun. That summer, staying at Uzerche with the baritone Pierre Bernac and the pianist Yvonne Gouverné, he was horrified to hear about the sudden death of the composer Pierre-Octave Ferroud in a car accident in Debrecen, Hungary. Ferroud was almost exactly one year younger than Poulenc, and the incident seemed to bring him face to face with mortality.

‘The atrocious extinction of this musician so full of vigour had left me stupified’, he told the critic Claude Rostand. ‘Pondering on the fragility of our human frame, the life of the spirit attracted me anew’. He asked Bernac to drive him to Rocamadour, a place of pilgrimage favoured by his father, where a small chapel held a statue in black wood of the Virgin Mary.

Here he underwent a mystical experience that brought him back to the Catholic faith of his childhood. ‘Outwardly, nothing changed’, noted Gouverné, ‘yet from that moment everything in the spiritual life of Poulenc changed’. The same evening, the composer began to write his first
religious choral piece, *Litanies à la Vierge Noire*, for women’s voices and organ; he completed it within a week.

‘In this work I have tried to express the feeling of “peasant devotion” which had so strongly impressed me in that lofty place’, he recalled. ‘The invocation must be sung simply, without pretention.’ The high voices express themselves with incantatory lack of fuss, but the organ’s interjections bring in a level of complexity that articulates something of the experiential anguish that Poulenc was undergoing, the music reaching a peak of spiritual desperation around half way through. The quiet concluding section manages to be consolatory yet filled with foreboding at the same time.

The Mass in G followed the next year. Here, too, Poulenc pointed out the music’s debt to early Romanesque art and music: ‘My Mass is much closer to Vittoria than to Josquin des Prés’, he told Audel. ‘It has a realistic side, which is characteristic of Mediterranean art.’ The work is dedicated to his father, who had died 20 years earlier.

The setting is essentially a *Missa Brevis* (there is no Credo) and the feel of simple, solid, yet beautifully proportioned architecture is present from the start. The expression is relatively syllabic and very direct. Poulenc himself called the *Kyrie* ‘savage’, with its strong rhythmic gestures and startling, acerbic harmonies. The *Gloria* involves dramatic exchanges between groups of voices, often ironic and almost pictorial. The *Sanctus* evokes a gentle carillon of ringing bells and their overtones, closing with a climactic, homophonic Hosanna; by contrast, much of the *Benedictus* is hushed and inward, its harmonies mysterious and exploratory, before returning to the Hosanna that preceded it. The *Agnus Dei* opens with a magical soprano solo, which sets up a sense of timelessness, followed by an extended passage in unison. This almost mystical movement is Poulenc at his purest and most touching.

The *Quatre motets pour un temps de pénitence* (the Lenten Motets) were next, composed in 1938-9. Their unsettling atmospheres, with frequent changes of metre and harmonies destabilised by vertiginous shifts, may reflect the turbulence of the atmosphere leading up to World War II. The first two pieces were written last. *Timor et tremor* exploits expressive possibilities to the full, with sharp outlines and vivid contrasts involving extreme dynamics, varied textures and unexpectedly colourful chords. *Vinea mea electa* mingles the charm of a folksong-like theme with alternately scrunchy and bleak harmonies. *Tenebrae factae sunt* begins in suitably shadowed mode, but progresses with radical harmonic effects. Contrasts of pace, a sense of questioning and sustained meditative passages trace their way through the final *Tristis est anima mea*.

Their counterpart, *Quatre motets pour le temps de Noël* (Christmas Motets) date from considerably later –1952 – offering four varied images of the Nativity story, full of fervour and generosity, and incorporating unusual techniques – an instruction, for example, for the singers to perform ‘bouche fermée’, i.e. humming, to accompany and offset more significant lines.

The first motet, *O magnum mysterium*, is the most serious, with austere harmonies and an exquisite melodic foreground, gradually increasing in intensity. The second, *Quem vidistis pastores*, is dedicated to Simone Girard, organiser of the Société Avignonnaise de Concerts. Writing to appraise her of this, Poulenc remarked that ‘the way things are going … it will be very lovely. The quiet concluding section manages to be consolatory yet filled with foreboding at the same time.

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Something like a counterpart to ‘Vinea mea electa’… Unfortunately’, he added, ‘I am not as religious as I would like to be. Half of me remains completely the opposite. Though I am not totally impious, I am – alas! – as pied as a horse…’ Third, Videntes stellam is a tender narrative that evokes the starlit night through which the Magi travel; though their gifts are presented in a suitably gleaming sonic climax, the star’s constancy is undisturbed. Finally, Hodie Christus natus est is a joyous, carol-like celebration culminating in a triumphant Alleluia.

Around the same time that Poulenc was rediscovering his spiritual life, he was also coming under the influence of the poet Paul Éluard, with whose words he felt great affinity. Though he had known Éluard since 1917, it took him years to find the ‘musical key’ into his poems. His first attempt was the Cinq poèmes of 1935, written for Bernac. Having explored the expression of love in music through Éluard’s poetry, Poulenc discovered it could offer a similar outlet for his feelings on the tragedies of the war. His most famous Éluard creation, Figure Humaine, was written in 1943 in the turmoil of the German occupation of Paris. The short a cappella cantata Un soir de neige is a set of four brief, winter-themed pieces, written mostly on Christmas Day 1944; as the American academic Keith Daniels put it, it reflects ‘both the inner feeling of peace generated by Christmas and the bleak solitude of another winter of occupation in France’.

Though secular, it feels in no way out of place alongside Poulenc’s religious works, conceived with the same inner fervour and sincerity of expression. The first poem, De grandes cuillers de neige, explores the privations of winter without a fire; the second contrasts its title, La bonne neige, with the anguish and inevitability of the death of hunted prey. Weakness, suffering and reconciliation to fate are central to the third, Bois meurtri, and the cantata ends with La nuit le froid la solitude: an enigmatic release from imprisonment through nature, closing as if wiped out in mid-air.

The Salve regina is intriguing when considered alongside Poulenc’s more famous version of the same words: in 1956 he set the prayer as the cataclysmic conclusion of the opera Dialogue des Carmélites, where it is sung by a group of nuns, condemned to death in the French Revolution, as they are sent one by one to the guillotine. The earlier a cappella setting could scarcely be more different. Written in 1941, its drama is inward, the approach simple and homophonic, at times as gently melodic as a folksong. It can flower briefly into either counterpoint or moments of unison, and its harmonies play on an ambiguity between minor and major. The last 19 bars repeat the incantation ‘dulcis Virgo Maria’, marked ‘dans le style d’une complainte’ – in grief, perhaps, for the wartime fate of occupied France.
Salve regina, mater misericordiae.
Vita, dulcedo et spes nostra, salve.
Ad te clamamus, exsules filii Evae.
Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes,
in hac lacrimarum valle.
Eia ergo, advocata nostra,
illos tuos miserercordes oculos
ad nos converte, et Jesum,
benedictum fructum ventris tui,
nobis post hoc exsilium ostende.
O clemens, o pia, o dulcis Virgo Maria.

Hail Queen, mother of mercy.
Our life, our sweetness and our hope, hail.
To you we cry,
banished children of Eve.
To you we send up our sighs,
mourning and weeping
in this our vale of tears.
Ah, therefore, our advocate,
turn your merciful eyes
towards us, and show us Jesus,
the blessed fruit of your womb,
after our exile here,
O gentle, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

Antiphon to the Virgin Mary from Trinity until Advent

Timor et tremor

Timor et tremor venerunt super me,
et caligo cecidit super me:
Miserere mei, Domine,
quoniam in te confidit anima mea.
Exaudi, Deus, deprecationem meam,
quia refugium meum es tu
et adiutor fortis.
Domine, invocavi te:
non confundar.

Fear and trembling have come upon me,
and darkness has fallen upon me:
have mercy on me, Lord,
for my soul has trusted in You.
Hear, O Lord, my prayer,
for it is You who are my refuge
and my strong helper.
Lord, I have called upon You;
let me not be confounded.

Vinea mea electa

Vinea mea electa, ego te plantavi:
quamodocuraes inamartitudinem?
Ut me crucifixeres
et Barrabam dimitteres.
Sepivi te
et lapides elegi ex te
et aedificavi turrim.

O my chosen vine, it is I who have planted you;
how then have you become so bitter
that you would crucify me
and set Barabbas free?
I guarded you with a hedge,
I removed the stones from around you,
I built a tower to watch over you.
Tenebrae factae sunt
dum crucifixissent Jesum Judaei:
et circa horam nonam
exclamavit Jesus voce magna:
Deus meus, ut quid me dereliquisti?
Et inclinat capite emisit spiritum.
Exclamans Jesus voce magna ait:
Pater, in manus tuas
commendo spiritum meum.

Tristis est anima mea:
Soloist: Alexandra Kidgell soprano
Tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem:
sustine te hic et vigilate mecum.
Nunc videbitis turbam, quae circumdabit me:
yos fugam capietis,
et ego vadam immolari pro vobis.
Ecce, appropinquant hora,
et Filius hominis tradetur
in manus peccatorum.

My soul is sorrowful even to death:
stay here and watch with me.
Now you will see a great crowd surround me:
you will take flight,
and I will go to be sacrificed for you.
Behold the hour draws near,
and the Son of Man will be delivered
into the hands of sinners.

Light fell
when the Jews had crucified Jesus;
and at about the ninth hour
Jesus cried out with a loud voice:
‘O my God, why have you forsaken me?’
and, bowing his head, he gave up his spirit.
Jesus cried out with a loud voice:
‘Father, into your hands
I commend my spirit.’

Seigneur, ayez pitié de nous.
Jésus Christ, ayez pitié de nous.
Jésus Christ, écoutez-nous.
Jésus Christ, exaucez-nous.
Dieu le Père, créateur,
ayez pitié de nous.
Dieu le Fils, rédempteur,
ayez pitié de nous.
Dieu le Saint-Esprit, sanctificateur,
ayez pitié de nous.
Trinité Sainte, qui êtes un seul Dieu,
ayez pitié de nous.
Sainte vierge Marie, priez pour nous.
Vierge, reine et patronne, priez pour nous.
Vierge que Zachée, le publicain
nous a fait connaître et aimer,
vierge à qui Zachée ou Saint Amadour
éleva ce sanctuaire, priez pour nous.
Reine du sanctuaire,
que consacra Saint Martial
et où il célébra ses saints mystères,
Reine, près de laquelle s’égénouilla Saint Louis
vous demandant le bonheur de la France,
priez pour nous.

Lord, have mercy on us.
Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.
Jesus Christ, hear us.
Jesus Christ, hear our prayer.
God the Father, creator,
have mercy on us.
God the Son, redeemer,
have mercy on us.
God the Holy Spirit, sanctifier,
have mercy on us.
Holy Trinity, who are one God,
have mercy on us.
Holy Virgin Mary, pray for us.
Virgin, queen and patron, pray for us.
Virgin, whom Zacchaeus the publican
made us know and love;
Virgin, to whom Zacchaeus or Saint Amadour
constructed this shrine, pray for us.
Queen of this shrine,
which Saint Martial consecrated
and at which he celebrated his holy mysteries;
Queen, before whom Saint Louis knelt
to pray for the good fortune of France,
pray for us.
Reine, à qui Roland consacra son épée, priez pour nous.
Reine, dont la banière gagna les batailles, priez pour nous.
Reine, dont la main délivrait les captifs, priez pour nous.
Notre Dame, dont le pèlerinage est enrichi de faveurs spéciales, Notre Dame, que l’impiété et la haine ont voulu souvent détruire, Notre Dame, que les peuples visitent comme autrefois, priez pour nous.
Agneau de Dieu, qui effacez les péchés du monde, pardonnez-nous.
Agneau de Dieu, qui effacez les péchés du monde, exaucez-nous.
Agneau de Dieu, qui effacez les péchés du monde, ayez pitié de nous.
Notre Dame, priez pour nous, afin que nous soyons dignes de Jésus Christ.

Queen, to whom Roland consecrated his sword, pray for us.
Queen, whose banner won battles, pray for us.
Queen, whose hand delivered the captives, pray for us.
Our Lady, whose pilgrimage is blessed with special favours, Our Lady, whom impiety and hatred have often sought to destroy, Our Lady, whom the people visit as in former times, pray for us.
Lamb of God, you who take away the sins of the world, forgive us.
Lamb of God, you who take away the sins of the world, hear our prayer.
Lamb of God, you who take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Our Lady, pray for us, that we may be worthy of Jesus Christ.

Quatre motets pour le temps de Noël (1951-2) FP 152

7 O magnum mysterium
O magnum mysterium et admirabile sacramentum, ut animalia viderent Dominum natum iacentem in praesepio!
Beata virgo, cuius viscera meruerunt portare Dominum Christum.

Who have you seen, shepherds? Speak: tell us who has appeared on earth. ‘We saw the new-born child and the Angel choir praising the Lord.’ Then tell what you have seen, and announce the birth of Christ.
When they saw the star, the Magi rejoiced with great gladness: and entering the dwelling they offered to the Lord gold, incense and myrrh.

Today Christ is born: today the Saviour has appeared: today on earth the Angels sing, Archangels sing their praises: today the just cry out in exultation: ‘Glory to God in the highest. Alleluia.’

Our frozen feet collect great scoops of snow, and with a harsh word we rebuff the stubborn winter. Every tree has its proper place in the air, every stone its weight on the ground, every stream its living water, but we, we have no fire.

The deep snow, the black sky, the dead branches, the distress of a forest full of snares: it shames the hunted beast, this headlong flight within the heart.

The tracks of a savage prey throw down a challenge to the wolf, and it is always the most beautiful wolf; and it is always the last creature alive that is menaced by the final obstacle of death.
Bois meurtri

Wood bruised, lost wood on a winter voyage, a ship where the snow takes hold.

Wood of refuge, dead wood where without hope I dream of a sea like broken mirrors.

A great surge of icy water has seized the drowning, my whole body feels the pain of it: I lose my strength, I am dissolved. I affirm my life, I affirm my death, I affirm my fellow man.

Wood bruised, lost wood, wood of refuge, dead wood.

Ave verum corpus (1952) FP 154

Ave verum corpus Christi natum ex Maria Virgine, vere passum, immolatum in cruce pro homine.

Hail, true body of Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, who truly suffered, sacrificed on the cross for mankind.

Mass in G (1937) FP 89

Lord, have mercy. Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison.

Autour de moi l’herbe trouva le ciel ma prison s’écroula Le froid vivant le froid brûlant mèut bien en main.

around me the grass found its way to the sky – the sky was locked up – my prison crumbled away. The living cold, the burning cold had me tight in its grasp.

La nuit le froid la solitude

The night, the cold, the solitude: they enclosed me slowly but surely. But the branches were looking for a way out in the prison,

La nuit le froid la solitude

On m’enferma soigneusement Mais les branches cherchaient leur voie dans la prison

around me the grass found its way to the sky – the sky was locked up – my prison crumbled away. The living cold, the burning cold had me tight in its grasp.

Kyrie

Soli: Julie Cooper, Alexandra Kidgell, Kirsty Hopkins soprano, Kim Porter alto, Jeremy Budd tenor

Kyrie eleison.
Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison.

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.
Gloria
Soli: Julie Cooper soprano, Kim Porter, Daniel Collins alto,
Jeremy Budd tenor, Ben Davies baritone, Eamonn Dougan bass
Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.
Laudamus te. Benedictimus te.
Adoramus te. Glorificamus te.
Gratias agimus tibi
propter magnam gloriam tuam.
Domine Deus, Rex caelestis,
God the Father almighty.
Domini Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe.
Lord God, heavenly King,
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.

Glory be to God on high,
Heaven and earth are full of Your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.

Sanctus
Soli: Julie Cooper soprano, Kim Porter, Daniel Collins alto
Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.

Holy, holy, holy
Lord God of hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of Your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.

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

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

Agnus Dei
Soli: Julie Cooper soprano, Kim Porter alto, Jeremy Budd tenor, Ben Davies bass
Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona nobis pacem.

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 Honorary Doctorates from the Universities of Canterbury Christ Church and 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, Artistic Associate of Kings Place and hold a 2015-2016 Artist Residency at Wigmore Hall. 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 150 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, with the support of the Genesis Foundation, 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.