James MacMillan:
Stabat Mater

The Sixteen
Britten Sinfonia
Harry Christophers

“...a masterpiece.”
THEARTSDESK

Haydn:
The Creation

Handel and Haydn Society
Harry Christophers

“Harry Christophers, the artistic director, led a performance that was brilliant.”
THE BOSTON GLOBE

Cor16150

For further information about recordings on CORO email: coro@thesixteen.com

Also available as a studio master quality download at www.thesixteen.com

www.thesixteen.com

© 2017 The Sixteen Productions Ltd.
© 2017 The Sixteen Productions Ltd.

Recording Producer: Jeremy Hayes
Recording Engineer: Ben Connellan (Giraffe Productions)
Recorded at: St Martin’s Church, East Woodhay, Newbury, UK, 3 & 5 May, 2014
Cover Image: Into the Light by Osnat Tzadok © www.osnatfineart.com
Design: Andrew Giles: discoyd@aegidius.org.uk
Performing Haydn's *Seven Last Words* is a unique and intense experience for a quartet. There you are, just the four of you, in a beautiful old church that was perhaps several hundred years old when Haydn was alive, and you are alone with Haydn's personal and deeply felt response to the last utterances of Christ. The silence written into the work is as audible and full of meaning as the notes. We can never know for certain how the string quartet which gave the first performance sounded, but maybe we can let ourselves imagine that time can be bridged with a common experience of silence. You become aware that the work is very much a meditation and you feel that Haydn is giving you space to have your own thoughts, both in response to what he is saying and to the words upon which we are meditating. This space and sense of meditation is contrasted harshly with the immediacy of raw human emotion inherent in the seven sentences. All this is framed in a dramatic structure which unfolds from the awe-inspiring introduction through the seven slow movements for each of the seven last words to the thunderous devastation of the final *terremoto*.

A work of such grandeur of form and with such dramatic ambition would usually have been written for much larger forces (there is in fact a version for full orchestra and chorus), so to be entrusted by Haydn with this vision, as a quartet, is an honour and a challenge.

Callino Quartet

Presented with funding from the Arts Council Music Recording Scheme 2013, managed by Music Network.
Haydn’s *Seven Last Words of Our Saviour on the Cross* – which exists in four different versions – is one of the most unusual and remarkable compositions of the Classical period. Its history begins with a commission which the composer received – probably some time in 1786 – from a priest in Cádiz, where it was the custom during Lent to perform a Passion oratorio in the underground grotto of Santa Cueva. Haydn did not go to Spain himself, but later described the ceremony, presumably from details he had been sent with the commission:

‘The walls, windows and pillars of the church were hung with black cloth, and only one large lamp hanging from the centre of the roof broke the solemn darkness. At midday, the doors were closed and the ceremony began. After a short service the bishop ascended the pulpit, pronounced the first of the seven words (or sentences) and delivered a discourse thereon. This ended, he left the pulpit and prostrated himself before the altar. The interval was followed by music. The bishop then in like manner pronounced the second word, then the third, and so on, the orchestra following on the conclusion of each discourse.’

It was this orchestral music that Haydn was asked to supply, and the particular circumstances of it were responsible for the unusual form: an introduction followed by a solemn slow movement (Haydn called them ‘sonatas’) to correspond to each of the final sentences spoken by Christ on the Cross (as

---

**JOSEPH HAYDN** (1732-1809)
The Seven Last Words of Our Saviour on the Cross, Hob. XX/1b

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduzione: Maestoso ed adagio 5.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sonata I: Largo <em>Pater, dimitte illis, quia nesciunt, quid faciunt</em> 6.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sonata II: Grave e cantabile <em>Hodie mecum eris in Paradiso</em> 8.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sonata III: Grave <em>Mulier, ecce filius tuus</em> 10.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sonata IV: Largo <em>Deus meus, Deus meus, ut quid dereliquisti me?</em> 7.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sonata V: Adagio <em>Sito</em> 9.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sonata VI: Lento <em>Consummatum est</em> 9.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sonata VII: Largo <em>In manus tuas, Domine, commendō spiritum meum</em> 8.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Il terremoto: Presto e con tutta la forza 1.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total running time** 67.14
gathered from the accounts in the Gospels of Matthew, Luke and John), with the seventh and final one supplemented by a dramatic representation of the earthquake which, according to Matthew, convulsed Calvary after Christ's death.

*The Seven Last Words* probably received its first performance in Cádiz on Good Friday 1787. Within a year it had been published in Vienna, and it quickly rose to become one of Haydn's most popular works, as familiar and admired as any of his symphonies. Publications followed in London and Paris, followed up by the string quartet arrangement that is the subject of this recording, and a transcription for solo piano. Perhaps it is not surprising then – especially in view of its lyrical and religious foundations – that the idea should have arisen of turning it into an oratorio. If it occurred to Haydn, however, it was not until he was returning to Austria from his second visit to London in 1795 that he was prompted into action when, stopping over in Passau, he heard a vocal version of the piece prepared by the local Kapellmeister, Joseph Frieber, in which a new German text enlarged upon the significance of the original sentences. Haydn enjoyed the performance but thought he could do a better job of the adaptation, and on his return to Vienna set about the task, helped on the literary side by Baron Gottfried van Swieten, the court librarian and music-lover who later prepared the libretti for his oratorios *The Creation* and *The Seasons*. The new work was ready by the early part of 1797, and received its first performance in one of the concerts promoted by van Swieten's Gesellschaft der Associierten Cavaliers at the Schwarzenberg Palace on 26 March.

Despite its orchestral origins and choral destiny, it is the string quartet version of *The Seven Last Words* that is the best-known today. Though hard to programme in a traditional concert environment, the rich beauty of its seven slow movements means that it is often a favourite release for quartet players from the four-movement format of the conventional string quartet. The work's origin as a kind of sacred theatre is often remembered, too, in public performances in which the movements are interspersed with appropriate readings.

Haydn himself confessed that the task of composing 'seven adagios' capable of following each other in sequence while holding the attention of the listener was 'no easy matter', and in the end he adopted the solution, put forward by a friend, of allowing the rhythm of the words of each Latin sentence to suggest a musical theme which could then form the basis of a whole movement. It is not difficult to imagine how this idea might have appealed to a composer with Haydn's command of close thematic development of short motifs, and it enabled him to write what is in effect a series of intense and single-minded musical meditations on the final hours of the Passion. Haydn's religious beliefs were uncomplicated ones, and his concern seems to have been to provide a sympathetic reflection on Christ's suffering and agony rather than to touch on deeper theological matters. His desire, he later wrote, was 'that even the most uninitiated listener will be moved to the depths of his soul', and thus the function of these pieces is similar to that of a painting or a sculpture in church: an encouragement to peaceful and improving contemplation.
The Introduction is a dark and severe prelude, a Crucifixion tableau in which the iron grip of its Baroque-style dotted rhythms dominates the tenderer passages even as the overall dynamic trajectory travels from fortissimo to pianissimo. Sonata I ('Father forgive them, for they know not what they do') is more lyrical, seemingly in affirmative response to Jesus’ appeal to God. Sonata II, taking Jesus’ words to the thief crucified beside him ('Verily I say to thee, today thou shalt be with me in Paradise') is classically 'monothematic' in that the stern minor-key motif that opens it later appears transformed into a more lyrical major-key 'second theme', as if offering a vision of Heaven. Jesus’ words to Mary and the disciple, 'Mother, behold thy son; son, behold thy mother!', cause Sonata III to be suffused with warmth and tenderness, though not without the occasional darkening reminder of the horrors of Golgotha. Sonata IV ('My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?') takes a more deeply anguished tone, Christ's loneliness echoed in those places where the first violin plays plaintively on its own. Sonata V ('I thirst') is the most vividly dramatic of the sequence: a sagging two-note figure signalling Jesus' exhaustion over mocking drip-drop pizzicati until the thirst-pangs (or perhaps the vinegar on its sponge?) kick in with savage force. Sonata VI ('It is finished') uses a four-note motif that Haydn seems to have been pleased with, as he often wrote it out in visitors' autograph books; it appears fortissimo at first (Jesus is said by Luke to have 'cried out with a loud voice'), but softens thereafter as Haydn manipulates it with typical skill. Sonata VII ('Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit') extends its comforting embrace through rich major-key music for delicately muted strings, yet there is at the same time a fateful feel, especially in the repeated bass notes which die out only as the music itself gives up the ghost in high-lying wisps of melody. The Earthquake – a whirl of unisons, tremolos and jagged lightning flashes – follows straight on.

Haydn himself considered The Seven Last Words to be one of his most successful creations, and one can well imagine that for such a master of the construction of 'absolute music' the thought of having successfully applied those skills to the expression of a subject of such deep emotional power brought him lasting pleasure and pride. Interestingly, he was reported to have preferred the instrumental version to the oratorio reworking, and it is fair to say that even The Creation and The Seasons, composed over a decade later and far less contemplative in tone, did not reach or attempt the same levels of profound inner feeling. The century that followed him – the century of the tone poem and the Leitmotif – concerned itself much with the idea that instrumental music could be more precisely and powerfully expressive than vocal, and Haydn's masterpiece gave a good model. It is said that Cosima Wagner, no less a figure than her husband Richard, 'spoke of them with the greatest admiration and said they are deeply moving.'
The Callino Quartet was formed at the West Cork Chamber Music Festival in 1999 where it immediately felt a deep musical affinity and gave a critically acclaimed début concert. Since then the Quartet has been delighting audiences with its fresh, enthusiastic interpretations and engaging programmes.

The Callino Quartet is very versatile and has cultivated a diverse and challenging repertoire. It has a thoughtful and historically informed approach to the classical quartet literature as well as enjoying close collaborations with numerous contemporary composers. The quartet has collaborated with musicians from across a variety of genres, including Edgar Meyer, Tom Poster, Gilbert Kalish, Patricia Rozario, Ailish Tynan, rock band Arcade Fire, Bell Orchestre and jazz guitarist John Abercrombie, and has worked with many composers, including Peteris Vasks, Aleksandra Vrebalov, Alexander Knai fel, Franghiz Ali-Zadeh, Ian Wilson and Raymond Deane on their works for string quartet. The quartet was also honoured to be invited to Italy to work closely with the distinguished Hungarian composer and pedagogue Gyorgy Kurtág. The quartet has received many awards, including prizes at the Borciani and Tromp international string quartet competitions. The group has performed in many of the world’s best concert halls, including Wigmore Hall and Carnegie Hall, and has toured extensively throughout Europe.

Previous recordings by the quartet include works by Arvo Pärt, Valentin Silvestrov, John Tavener, Rachel Stott, Alexander Knai fel and Ian Wilson.

The Callino Quartet takes its name from the Irish air ‘Cailín cois tSuir a mé’ which means ‘Girl by the River Suir’. This is the earliest piece of Irish music to have been notated in the 16th century and it is on display in Trinity College Dublin.

www.callinoquartet.com