Henry Purcell:
The Indian Queen

“It’s a delicious 72 minutes of Restoration wit and lyrical charm...stirring trumpet tunes, one magnificent bass scene (sonorously delivered by Eamonn Dougan), and fine solos.”

THE TIMES

Henry Purcell:
Royal Welcome Songs for King James II

“Christophers coaxes virtuosic performances from eight of The Sixteen with a fine band of period instrumentalists reveling in the glories of Purcell’s unique harmonic palette.”

THE OBSERVER

To find out more about The Sixteen, concert tours, and to buy CDs visit www.thesixteen.com
Over the next few years, we are embarking on a series of recordings devoted to the musical genius of Henry Purcell. Although we do not know exactly when he was born, we do know from his memorial stone in Westminster Abbey that he died on 21 November 1695 when he was in his 37th year. At a mere 18 years old he succeeded Matthew Locke as the composer to His Majesty King Charles II, and from then on he rewarded us with church anthems of all descriptions, full, verse and ceremonial, countless songs, a plethora of catches (some bawdy, some highly political), various operas, incidental music to plays, Fantasias and Welcome Songs or Birthday Odes. In this series, we will depict the wealth of Purcell’s versatility, with each volume focusing on one or two of his Welcome Songs.

What are these Welcome Songs? Soon after the Restoration, it became the custom for the King to be entertained on his birthday, at New Year and when he returned to London, usually from Windsor after his summer retreat there. It was Purcell’s job to write suitable odes for these occasions. These Welcome Songs were performed in the newly converted Hall Theatre in the Palace of Whitehall, sadly all destroyed in the fire of 1698. Purcell not only had to delight his monarch, but also had to keep his fellow musicians on board, singers and instrumentalists alike. His setting of the English language is second-to-none; he possessed an extraordinary talent for writing vocal lines that reflect not only verbal rhythms but also syllabic lengths and stress patterns. But whereas he could relish verses from the scriptures or decent metaphysical poetry by the likes of Jeremy Taylor (Great God, and just), he often had to endure setting some poor poetry where the predictable scansion would test any composer. It is not only his vocal writing which is brilliant; his string writing is extraordinary. He had at his disposal the Twenty-Four Violins, a unique band of musicians, modelled on the French court orchestra but, unlike the French distribution of one violin, three violas and bass, Purcell preferred two violins, viola and bass. And he certainly gave them music of great variety, intensity and sheer joy to revel in. Just listen to the dramatic ritornellos in Fly, bold rebellion; this is Purcell at his very best.

This series has evolved from our residency at the Wigmore Hall in London, where we have had the pleasure of revelling in Purcell’s extraordinary music and will continue to do so for some years to come. With my octet of singers, 12 strings (not as many as Purcell had at his disposal but nevertheless preserving the numerical ratio) and continuo section of organ, harpsichord, theorbo and harp, we have so enjoyed committing Purcell’s genius to disc and hope that you, the listener, get as much enjoyment from it as we did performing it.

Harry Christophers
Henry Purcell (1659-95)

1. Catch: Since the Duke is return'd Z271 (1685) 1.52
   Jeremy Budd, Nicholas Mulroy, George Pooley tenor

WELCOME SONG: Welcome, Vicegerent of the mighty King Z340 (1680) 4.20
   Welcome, Vicegerent of the mighty King

2. Ah! mighty Sir 4.55
   Daniel Collins *alto*, Nicholas Mulroy *tenor*, Stuart Young *bass*

3. When the Summer in his glory 2.07
   Kirsty Hopkins, Grace Davidson *soprano*

4. Music, the food of love 3.37
   Daniel Collins *alto*, Nicholas Mulroy *tenor*, Stuart Young *bass*

5. Let mine eyes run down with tears Z24 (c.1682) 7.25
   Grace Davidson, Kirsty Hopkins *soprano*,
   Jeremy Budd, Nicholas Mulroy *tenor*, Stuart Young *bass*

6. Sleep, Adam, sleep, and take thy rest Z195 (1683) 1.50
   Kirsty Hopkins *soprano*

7. Beati omnes qui timent Dominum Z131 (c.1680) 4.31
   Grace Davidson, Kirsty Hopkins *soprano*, Jeremy Budd *tenor*, Ben Davies *bass*

O sing unto the Lord Z44 (1688) 3.31
   Ben Davies *bass*

8. Sing unto the Lord, and praise his name 2.30
   Kirsty Hopkins *soprano*, Jeremy Budd, George Pooley *tenor*, Ben Davies *bass*

9. Symphony / O sing unto the Lord a new song 3.31

10. The Lord is great 2.00
    Kirsty Hopkins *soprano*, Jeremy Budd *tenor*

11. O worship the Lord 1.19
    Kirsty Hopkins *soprano*, Jeremy Budd, George Pooley *tenor*, Ben Davies *bass*

12. Tell it out among the heathen 2.32
    Kirsty Hopkins *soprano*, Jeremy Budd, George Pooley *tenor*, Ben Davies *bass*

13. Great God, and just Z186 (1688) 3.37
    Grace Davidson, Kirsty Hopkins *soprano*, Stuart Young *bass*

WELCOME SONG: Fly, bold rebellion Z324 (1683) 1.59

14. Symphony 1.59

15. Fly, bold rebellion 2.25
    Daniel Collins *alto*, Jeremy Budd, George Pooley *tenor*,
    Ben Davies, Stuart Young *bass*

16. Rivers from their channels turn’d 4.03
    Daniel Collins *alto*

17. If then we’ve found 4.21
    Grace Davidson, Kirsty Hopkins *soprano*,
    Nicholas Mulroy, Jeremy Budd *tenor*, Ben Davies *bass*

18. Come then, change your notes 1.21
    Daniel Collins *alto*, George Pooley *tenor*, Stuart Young *bass*

19. Be welcome, then, great Sir 2.56
    Jeremy Budd *tenor*

20. Welcome to all those wishes fulfill’d 1.42
    Grace Davidson, Kirsty Hopkins *soprano*, Daniel Collins *alto*,
    Jeremy Budd, George Pooley *tenor*, Ben Davies, Stuart Young *bass*

Total Running Time 64.54
The Duke of Newcastle's often-quoted pre-Restoration memorandum to Charles II, on appropriate kingly behaviour, made it clear that appearances mattered: 'Ceremony though it is nothing in itself yet it doth everything. For what is a king more than a man but for ceremony and order?' Monarchs had to act the part: they had subjects to impress and foreign competitors to intimidate. Palaces, hunting estates, paintings and tapestries, precious tableware, thousands of court placeholders more or less generously salaried, and armies of domestic staff consumed resources greedily and very publicly. Near the bottom of that extravagant hierarchy court musicians did their modest bit – playing and singing for Chapel Royal services, supplying function music of all sorts, working on special projects when ordered to, and turning out in liveried splendour on major state occasions. Coronations, weddings and funerals were relatively infrequent: the musicians needed a routine organised around more dependable diary dates.

New Year and the King's birthday were obvious hooks; others not so obvious but eagerly exploited from 1680 onwards were the ceremonial returns bringing Charles and his courtiers back from their out-of-London summer holiday or 'remove'. Welcome Songs marked their safe arrival in Whitehall and the resumption of normal government business under re-invigorated royal direction.

Charles's grandfather James VI of Scotland (who became James I of England and Ireland) achieved the personal union of his three kingdoms (Elizabeth I had had no jurisdiction in Scotland), and tried in vain to persuade his separate parliaments to agree to permanent political union. The Act of Union of which James dreamed became political reality only in 1707. James called himself King of Great Britain, a new and ambitious country eager to join the rest of Europe's Renaissance cultural conversation. The court masques put on under James and his queen, Anne of Denmark, rivalled contemporary Italian opera in scenic splendour and musical sophistication. Succeeding James, Charles I extended the masque tradition and filled a gallery with famous paintings. For his first ten years the future Charles II lived amidst art commission and collected for a clear political purpose: to glorify the ruling Stuart dynasty and help persuade their subjects that the Stuarts were here to stay. Civil wars were not supposed to happen; kings by divine right were not supposed to stand trial and face execution – but Charles I endured both. The future Charles II spent two heroic years after his father's death leading remnants of the royalist army in their attempted fightback before fleeing into exile by way of Worcester (where he lost the royalists' last battle) and the fabled Royal Oak (one of his hiding places while on the run).

Charles II's formal Restoration in 1660 was both an end and a beginning, therefore: the end of England's republican experiment and the beginning of a long process of monarchical reconstruction designed not just to rebuild broken institutions but also to encourage more effective outreach from those institutions to the wider public. Since Charles II was politically accident-prone, the court public relations machine could never rest. Purcell joined its small team of composer operatives at the perfect moment – for the Stuart propaganda art-wave swelled massively during the 1679-81 'Exclusion Crisis'.

Purcell jumped on and surfed the wave with breathtaking panache until it crashed late in 1688. (The Exclusion Crisis was a succession issue. Would Charles's openly Catholic brother James be allowed to take over if Charles died first? A proposed Act of Parliament disqualifying James came threateningly close to being passed.)

Since the Duke is return’d is a three-part Purcell catch first published in the second edition of Henry Playford's collection Wit and Mirth. This and other multi-composer catch anthologies supplied repertoire for the all-male members of informal catch clubs. They met in pubs to drink, to sing and to talk politics. 'Since the Duke is return’d' cheers James Duke of York's June 1682 return to London from temporary
exile in Scotland. Charles had sent James away at the height of the Exclusion Crisis knowing that his provocative Catholic presence at court goaded Exclusionists – the 'Whigs' – beyond endurance. Charles 'dished the Whigs', as the catch says, by dissolving Parliament. While it stayed dissolved Exclusionist legislation could not be discussed. Parliament never met again in Charles's lifetime.

**Welcome, Vicegerent of the mighty King**

was probably written in 1680, to mark the return of Charles and his numerous hangers-on from Windsor to Whitehall: they arrived back in London on 9 September. 'Welcome, Vicegerent of the mighty King' was Purcell's first attempt at a court ode: he was eager to please. It is not an ostentatious piece and not very long: choruses and short solo sections alternate for 15 minutes or so. Still, with a sizeable chorus and all of Charles's Twenty-Four Violins performing in a space no larger than the Whitehall Banqueting House it would have made a rousing impression. Purcell's use of the second section of the introductory symphony also as the string accompaniment for the opening chorus was a clever touch, more likely to be noticed by fellow musicians than by his court audience. The now-anonymous text which Purcell had to set pictures Charles as God's earthly vicegerent or designated deputy (not, as modern typesetters sometimes assume, a misprint for viceregent). Londoners will wish to follow Charles to Windsor if he plans another extended summer break. Charles is the sun on whose light – leadership – they depend. Though real winter is not far off, when it does arrive Charles by his sun-like presence will turn it into spring. The Charles-as-sun image was widely understood. One of the recently completed ceiling paintings at Windsor showed him as Phoebus-Apollo riding in the chariot of the sun. The author of this ode text may have seen the ceiling paintings, and courtiers returning from Windsor had them fresh in the memory.

**Let mine eyes run down with tears**

is a verse anthem written in 1682 for the Choir of Westminster Abbey. In liturgical terms it is an alternative canticle for use with Purcell's B flat Service in purposely sombre Lent. Its tortured harmonies perfectly match the tortured text, taken from the Old Testament Book of Jeremiah. Echoes of the Lamentations of Jeremiah are unmistakable (Lamentations 1:16: 'For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water'): Purcell when setting 'Let mine eyes run down with tears' knew that comparisons with William Byrd and Thomas Tallis were inevitable, and took care to ensure a personally satisfactory outcome. He was in his early 20s at this stage, aware both of his indebtedness to earlier generations of English composer and of his ability to outshine many of them.

**Sleep, Adam, sleep, and take they rest**

first appeared in London publisher John Playford's 1683 collection _Choice Ayres and Songs to Sing to the Theorbo-lute or Bass-Viol … The Fourth Book_. Still-young Purcell contributed eight songs to this collection and in doing so thrust himself assertively into more established company. (Purcell self-published his _Sonnata's of III Parts_ also in 1683, probably because Playford could not see an instruments-only Purcell debut album selling.) 'Sleep, Adam, sleep, and take they rest' is on the face of it a straightforward devotional song – its words are anonymous – but, as close court associates of sex-obsessed Charles II would have recognised, its last four lines carried more than a hint of menace:

Wake, Adam, wake to embrace thy bride, Who is newly risen from thy side [from Adam's rib]; But in the midst of thy delights beware Lest her enticements prove thy snare.

Charles spent too much time in the midst of his delights and not enough attending to the business of government.

Purcell's music cataloguer and biographer Franklin B Zimmerman suggested that the anthem _Beati omnes qui timent Dominum_ might have been produced for ecumenical inclusion in Purcell's own wedding ceremony: Mrs Purcell, née Peters, was almost certainly a practising Catholic. Zimmerman undervalued the piece musically, and his suggestion that Purcell
of all composers would ‘dash off’ a wedding piece for himself seems far-fetched. ‘Beati omnes qui timent Dominum’ could just as plausibly have been intended for use in the Catholic chapels maintained by Charles II’s queen Catherine of Braganza and James II’s duchess Mary of Modena.

**O sing unto the Lord** is a monumental verse anthem with four-part string accompaniment. It was composed in 1688, for performance in the Chapel Royal on a special occasion that cannot now be identified. Words for the anthem were compiled from Psalm 96. Charles II had been dead three years; James II’s succession reignited political opposition to rule by a Catholic monarch. If ‘O sing unto the Lord’ celebrated any kind of victory it had been won only in James’s head, for by Christmas 1688 he and his immediate family had fled the country.

**Great God, and just**, also dating from 1688 (published that year in the first book of *Harmonia Sacra*), is a short penitential hymn setting words by Jeremy Taylor. A solo soprano does most of the work, joined toward the end by two more singers for a short closing chorus. From Taylor’s perspective the Stuart court was a dangerous place to be:

> Poor, miserable man …
> Wapp’d up in tender dust,
> Guarded with sins and lust,
> Who, like court-flatterers, wait
> To serve themselves in thy unhappy fate!

The Welcome Song **Fly, bold rebellion** was composed in 1683 and probably performed at the end of September shortly after Charles and his court had returned to London from Winchester. A brand new royal palace was being built there under Sir Christopher Wren’s direction, incorporating the great hall of otherwise ruined Winchester Castle. King Arthur’s round table hung on the wall in the great hall then as it does now, and Charles identified strongly with Arthur. Again the text is anonymous; again (apart from a few curiously clumsy lines) it is nowhere near as ineptly written as commentators typically believe. The bold rebellion put to flight was the Rye House Plot, a plan to assassinate the King and the Duke of York as they returned from Newmarket races to London via Hoddesdon in Hertfordshire. Rye House, near Hoddesdon, was the plotters’ base. A fire at Newmarket sent the royal brothers home early. They escaped assassination by a lucky accident inevitably interpreted as divine intervention. Ruthless investigation to discover the full extent of the plot followed, then a show trial and a spate of public executions.

Like ‘Welcome, Vicegerent of the mighty King,’ ‘Fly, bold rebellion’ uses sun imagery: ‘But kings, like the sun, sometimes have their clouds / To make them shine more bright’. The ‘disloyal crowd’ upbraided near the end, ordered to change their tune and join in with royalist celebration, were Londoners of Exclusionist persuasion, some of them so opposed to James as possible future king that perhaps they would have preferred him dead.

‘Fly, bold rebellion’ dishes the Whigs far more elegantly and elaborately than ‘Since the duke is return’d’. Again the King’s Twenty-Four Violins accompanied. Some parts of ‘Fly, bold rebellion’ sound strangely like dramatically equivalent sections of *Dido and Aeneas*: listen for the string ritornello following ‘Victorious in Council great Charles is return’d’, and for the F minor dressing-down aimed at disloyal Londoners (this the key in which *Dido’s Sorceress and Witches hatch a plot of their own*). If *Dido* was intended for court performance in 1684, ode echoes in the opera would be only natural.

Purcell’s work as an ode and Welcome Song composer – which musicologists used to think had been misapplied: modern performances hardly ever happened – in fact meshed seamlessly with his work as a composer of anthems and of English opera. Purcell achieved the full integration of court music in every genre into the Stuart propaganda project, and thanks to Purcell that propaganda remains edgy and influential to this day.

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Since the Duke is return’d, we’ll damn all the Whigs,
And let them be hang’d for politic prigs;
Both Presbyter Jack, and all the whole crew,
That lately design’d forty-one to renew;
Make room for the men that never denied,
To ’God Save the King and Duke’ they replied;
Whose loyalty ever was fix’d with that zeal,
Of voting down schism, and proud Common-weal:
Then bring up a pottle, we’ll huzza the glass,
And drink off a bottle each man in his place;
Here’s a health to the Duke, boy, give me my measure,
The fuller the glass is, the greater the pleasure.

Welcome Song:
Welcome, Vicegerent of the mighty King Z340 (1680)

Welcome, Vicegerent of the mighty King
That made and governs everything;
Welcome from rural pleasures to the busy throne
In this head city, this imperial town,
The seat and centre of the crown.

Ah! mighty Sir
Daniel Collins alto, Nicholas Mulroy tenor, Stuart Young bass

Ah! mighty Sir, if you
To such long absence are inclin’d,
Augusta will not stay behind,
But will your guardian light pursue,
And steal from this cold air to follow you,
As birds, when autumn is begun,
Follow the journey of the sun.
But your blest presence now,
All we can hope or wish for does allow.
Your influous approach our pensive hope recalls,
While joyful sounds redouble from the walls,
As when Apollo with his sacred lyre,
Did in the Theban stones a harmony inspire.

When the Summer in his glory
Kirsty Hopkins, Grace Davidson soprano

When the Summer in his glory
Was delightful, warm and gay,
All was but a winter’s story
While our Sov’reign was away;
Now decrepit Winter’s coming,
Yet the presence of a King
Makes him young and still a-blooming,
Turns his autumn into spring.
All loyalty and honour be
To this, our mortal deity.
Music, the food of love
Daniel Collins alto, Nicholas Mulroy tenor, Stuart Young bass

Music, the food of love,
The gentle reliever of care,
Gift of the Pow’r above,
Please with a cheerful air,
Touch with a joyful sound
The sense of a mortal divine;
May his days and his pow’r abound,
By the pow’r of the Une and Trine.
His absence was autumn; his presence is spring,
That ever new life and new pleasure does bring.
Then all that have voices, let ’em cheerfully sing,
And those that have none may say: ‘God save the King.’

(Anonymous)

Let mine eyes run down with tears
Grace Davidson, Kirsty Hopkins soprano,
Jeremy Budd, Nicholas Mulroy tenor, Stuart Young bass

Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease:
For the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach,
with a very grievous blow.

If I go forth into the field, then behold the slain with the sword!
And if I enter into the city, then behold them that are sick with famine!
Yea, both the prophet and the priest go about into a land which they know not.
Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? Hath thy soul loath’d Zion?
Why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us?
We look’d for peace, and there is no good;
and for the time of healing, and behold trouble!

We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and th’ iniquity of our forefathers:
for we have sinn’d against thee.

Do not abhor us, for thy name’s sake,
do not, oh do not disgrace the throne of thy glory:
remember, break not thy cov’nant with us.

Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain?
Or can the heav’ns give show’rs? Art thou not he, O Lord our God?
Therefore will we wait upon thee, O Lord:
for thou hast made all these things.

(Jeremiah 14: 17–22)
Blessed are all they that fear the Lord:
and walk in his ways.

For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands:
O well is thee, and happy shalt thou be.

Thy wife shall be as the fruitful vine
upon the walls of thine house.

Thy children like the olive branches
round about thy table.

Lo, thus shall the man be blessed
that fear eth the Lord.

Sleep, Adam, sleep, and take thy rest;
Let no sad thoughts possess thy breast;
But when thou wak'st, look up and see
What thy creator hath done for thee:
A creature from thy side is ta'en,
Who till thou wak'st she wants a name;
Flesh of thy flesh, bone of thy bone,
A mate most fit for thee alone.
Wake, Adam, wake, to embrace thy bride,
Who is newly risen from thy side;
But in the midst of thy delights beware
Lest her enticements prove thy snare.

The Lord is great, and cannot worthily be praised:
he is more to be feared than all gods.
As for all the gods of the heathen, they are but idols:
but it is the Lord that made the heavens.

O worship the Lord
in the beauty of holiness: let the whole earth stand in awe of him.
Tell it out among the heathen
Kirsty Hopkins soprano, Jeremy Budd, George Pooley tenor, Ben Davies bass

Tell it out among the heathen that the Lord is king;
and that it is he who hath made the round world so fast that it cannot be moved;
and how that he shall judge the people righteously.
Alleluia. Amen.

(Psalm 96: 1–6, 9–10)

Great God, and just Z186 (1688)
Grace Davidson, Kirsty Hopkins soprano, Stuart Young bass

Great God, and just! How canst thou see,
Dear God, our misery,
And not in mercy set us free?
Poor, miserable man! How wert thou born,
Weak as the dewy jewels of the morn,
Wrapp’d up in tender dust,
Guarded with sins and lust,
Who, like court-flatterers, wait
To serve themselves in thy unhappy fate!
Wealth is a snare, and poverty brings in
Inlets for theft, paving the way for sin;
Each perfum’d vanity doth gently breathe
Sin in thy soul, and whispers it to death.
Our faults like ulcerated sores do go
O’er the sound flesh and do corrupt that too.
Lord, we are sick, spotted with sin
Thick as a crusty leper’s skin;
Like Naaman, bid us wash, yet let it be
In streams of blood that flow from thee.
Then will we sing,
Touch’d by the heavenly dove’s bright wing,
Alleluias, psalms and praise
To God the Lord of night and days,
Ever good and ever just,
Ever high, whoever must
Thus be sung, is still the same;
Eternal praises crown his name.

(Jeremy Taylor)

Welcome Song: Fly, bold rebellion Z324 (1683)

Fly, bold rebellion!
Make haste and begone!
Victorious in Council great Charles is return’d,
The Plot is display’d and the traitors, some flown,
And some to Avernus by justice thrown down;
Then with heart and with voice

Prepare to rejoice,
All you that are loyal and true:
They nobly contend
Who maintain to the end
Those honours to Majesty due.

Rivers from their channels turn’d
Daniel Collins alto

Rivers from their channels turn’d
Other plains and meadows bless,
And those tow’rs from whence they cease
Ruined lie and unadorn’d;
’Tis the Prince’s presence graces
And his absence that defaces,
For Majesty moves like the seasons’ bright King:
Seats of monarchs naked look
By the monarch once forsook.

For Majesty moves like the seasons’ bright King:
Appears and withdraws, restores and gives life
Both to places and men.
If then we’ve found the want of his rays,
Thank wicked Contrivance,
And Ambition as vain,
That sought t’have shorten’d our Sov’reign’s days.

But kings, like the sun, sometimes have their clouds
To make them shine more bright;
Their greatness exhales the vapour that shrouds
And seeks to eclipse their light;
But Heaven has now dispell’d those fears,
And here once again our Monarch appears,
The delight of our eyes,
To try if his subjects at length will grow wise.

Grace Davidson, Kirsty Hopkins soprano,
Nicholas Mulroy, Jeremy Budd tenor, Ben Davies bass

Come then, change your notes, disloyal crowd,
You that already have been too loud
With importunate follies and clamours;
’Tis no business of yours
To dispute the high pow’rs
As if you were the government framers;
But with heart and with voice
Join all to rejoice,
With welcomes redoubled to see him appear
Who brings mercy and peace,
And all things to please
A people that knew but how happy they are.

Daniel Collins alto, George Pooley tenor, Stuart Young bass

Be welcome, then, great Sir
Jeremy Budd tenor

Be welcome, then, great Sir, to constant vows
Of loyalty never to vary more;
Welcome to all that obedience owes
To a Prince so mild and gentle in pow’r.
Welcome to all those wishes fulfill’d
Grace Davidson, Kirsty Hopkins soprano, Daniel Collins alto,
Jeremy Budd, George Pooley tenor, Ben Davies, Stuart Young bass

Welcome to all those wishes fulfill’d
That thrones of monarchs firmly build,
Welcome to all the blessings of a long reign:
Thus let united duty pray, and never pray in vain.

(Anonymous)

On the cover:
Marcellus Laroon’s Cryes of the City of London

The death of Oliver Cromwell and the restoration of Charles II made the thoroughfares of London festive places once again, renewing the street life of the metropolis. When the Great Fire of 1666 destroyed shops and markets, an unprecedented horde of hawkers flocked to the city from across the country to supply the needs of Londoners. Among the first Cries to be credited to an individual artist, Marcellus Laroon’s Cryes of the City of London Drawne after the Life were on a more ambitious scale than had been attempted before, permitting sophisticated use of composition and greater detail in costume.

Hawkers were portrayed not merely as representative types but each with a distinctive personality, revealed through their movement, their attitudes, their postures, their gestures and their clothing, according to the wares they sold. Perhaps influenced by Bonnart’s Cries de Paris and Carraci’s drawings in Bologna, Laroon’s Cries possessed more vigour and individuality than those that had gone before, reflecting the dynamic renewal of London at the end of the 17th century.

Such was their success, Laroon’s original set of 40 designs commissioned by the entrepreneurial bookseller Pierce Tempest in 1687 was quickly expanded to 74 and continued to be reprinted from the same plates until 1821.

Living in Bow Street, Covent Garden, from 1680 until his death in 1702, Laroon sketched those he came to know in his years of residence there. Expanding the range of subjects beyond hawkers and watchmen, he included street performers, a prostitute, tricksters, dubious clergymen and other

hustlers. For the first time, the swagger and the performance that is essential to success as a street trader was manifest.

The details of Marcellus Laroon's life are scarce and conjectural. A Frenchman born in the Hague, Laroon was reputedly an acquaintance of Rembrandt as a young man. He may have become drawing master to King William III when he came to London, but was primarily employed as a costume painter in the portrait studio of Sir Godfrey Kneller. According to Bainbrigg Buckeridge, author of the earliest history of English painting, entitled An Essay Towards An English School of Painters, Laroon was 'an exact Draftsman but chiefly famous for Drapery, wherein he exceeded most of his contemporaries.'

Unlike the highly formalised portraits upon which he was employed by Kneller, Laroon’s Cries of the City of London Drawne after the Life demonstrate an inventive variety of pose and vigorous spontaneity of composition. Each subject is permitted individual attention with close observation to the detail of their clothing as an integral expression of their identity. Portrayed with an unsentimental balance of stylisation and realism, all Laroon's figures are presented with grace and poise, even if they are wretched.

Since Laroon's designs were ink drawings produced under commission to Pierce Tempest, he achieved little personal reward or success from the subsequent exploitation of his creations, earning his day-to-day living by painting the drapery for Kneller's aristocratic portraits and then dying of consumption at the age of 49.

Yet, through widening the range of subjects of the Cries to include all social classes as well as preachers, beggars and performers, Marcellus Laroon left us a shrewd and exuberant vision of the variety of London street life in his day.

© The Gentle Author's Cries of London published by Spitalfields Life Books
Harry Christophers stands among today's great champions of choral music. In partnership with The Sixteen, the ensemble he founded almost 40 years ago, he has set benchmark standards for the performance of everything from late medieval polyphony to important new works by contemporary composers. His international influence is supported by more than 150 recordings and has been enhanced by his work as Artistic Director of Boston's Handel and Haydn Society and as guest conductor worldwide.

The Sixteen’s soundworld, rich in tonal variety and expressive nuance, reflects Christophers’ determination to create a vibrant choral instrument from the blend of adult professional singers. Under his leadership The Sixteen has established its annual Choral Pilgrimage to cathedrals, churches and other UK venues, created the Sacred Music series for BBC television, and developed an acclaimed period-instrument orchestra. Highlights of their recent work include an Artist Residency at Wigmore Hall, a large-scale tour of Monteverdi’s Vespers of 1610, and the world premiere of James MacMillan’s Stabat mater; their future projects, meanwhile, comprise a new series devoted to Purcell and an ongoing survey of Handel’s dramatic oratorios.

Harry has served as Artistic Director of the Handel and Haydn Society since 2008. He was also appointed as Principal Guest Conductor of the City of Granada Orchestra in 2008 and has worked as guest conductor with, among others, the London Symphony Orchestra, the BBC Philharmonic, the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra and the Deutsches Kammerphilharmonie. Christophers’ extensive commitment to opera has embraced productions for English National Opera and Lisbon Opera and work with the Granada, Buxton and Grange Park festivals.

He was appointed a CBE in the Queen's 2012 Birthday Honours for his services to music. He is an Honorary Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, as well as the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, and has Honorary Doctorates in Music from the Universities of Leicester, Canterbury Christ Church and Northumbria.

Whether performing a simple medieval hymn or expressing the complex musical and emotional language of a contemporary choral composition, The Sixteen does so with qualities common to all great ensembles. Tonal warmth, rhythmic precision and immaculate intonation are clearly essential to the mix. But it is the courage and intensity with which The Sixteen makes music that speak above all to so many people.

The Sixteen gave its first concert in 1979 under the direction of Founder and Conductor Harry Christophers CBE. Their pioneering work since has made a profound impact on the performance of choral music and attracted a large new audience, not least as ‘The Voices of Classic FM’ and through BBC television's Sacred Music series.

The voices and period-instrument players of The Sixteen are at home in over five centuries of music, a breadth reflected in their annual Choral Pilgrimage to Britain’s great cathedrals and sacred spaces, regular appearances at the world’s leading concert halls, and award-winning recordings for The Sixteen’s CORO and other labels.

Recent highlights include the world premiere of James MacMillan’s Stabat mater, commissioned for The Sixteen by the Genesis Foundation, an ambitious ongoing series of Handel oratorios, and a debut tour of China.