“The Sixteen’s consummate technical ability has long been legendary, but it’s their ability to conceal it which is truly special. It puts the music front and centre, in this beautifully realised Christmas sequence.”

BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE

“A sublime Gloria by Sheppard ... and, finest of all, Byrd’s Lullaby in a masterly performance.”

GRAMOPHONE

To find out more about The Sixteen, concert tours, and to buy CDs visit www.thesixteen.com
Christmas is that most important season of the year when love and hope prevail. Above all, it is a time for families, and we hope that this collection of Renaissance motets will bring the spirit of Christmas into your home. There is no better age for glorious sacred music than the Renaissance. Europe abounded in outstanding composers: Byrd and Tallis from England, Guerrero and Victoria from Spain and a plethora of Flemish composers such as Sweelinck and Lassus. All these composers and the others represented on this album show a wealth of glorious polyphony and inventiveness.

We take you right through the Christmas season, from Advent to the birth of Christ, Holy Innocents and the Three Kings. Threaded through the album is the recurrent theme of Resonet in laudibus; its original 14th-century tune (Resonemus laudibus) is one of the earliest examples of a Christmas song and was clearly one of the most popular tunes for this festive season. Listen to the way Eccard, Handl and Lassus all put their own individual stamp on it. When programming this compilation, I was astounded by the variety of sound worlds. Tallis’s Videte miraculum and Sheppard’s Reges Tharsis represent that distinctive English sonority: lengthy responds where the polyphony traces around the plainsong chant delivered in long note values underpinning the whole texture like a perfectly weaved tapestry; the madrigalian feel of Byrd’s ebullient This day Christ was born and Dering’s Quem vidistis, pastores? compared to the spiritual fervour created by Victoria and Guerrero’s settings. And then there is the poignancy of Kirbye’s Vox in Rama, depicting the tragic and chilling side of Holy Innocents, set against the sheer pageantry and celebration at the appearance of the Three Kings in Lassus’ double-choir setting of Omnes de Saba venient’.

It only remains for us to wish you all a very happy Christmas where peace, love and goodwill may prosper.

Harry Brough.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Composer</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jacob Handl</td>
<td>Resonemus laudibus</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>J. P. Sweelinck</td>
<td>Hodie Christus natus est</td>
<td>2.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Jacob Handl</td>
<td>Omnes de Saba venient</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Johannes Eccard</td>
<td>Resonet in laudibus</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Plainsong</td>
<td>Veni, veni Emmanuel</td>
<td>4.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>George Kirbye</td>
<td>Vox in Rama</td>
<td>4.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Orlande de Lassus</td>
<td>Videntes stellam Magi</td>
<td>2.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Thomas Tallis</td>
<td>Videte miraculum</td>
<td>9.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Richard Dering</td>
<td>Quem vidistis, pastores?</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>William Byrd</td>
<td>O magnum mysterium/Beata Virgo</td>
<td>5.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Jacob Handl</td>
<td>Resonet in laudibus</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Tomás Luis de Victoria</td>
<td>Quem vidistis, pastores?</td>
<td>4.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Orlande de Lassus</td>
<td>Resonet in laudibus</td>
<td>3.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>William Byrd</td>
<td>This day Christ was born</td>
<td>2.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>John Sheppard</td>
<td>Reges Tharsis</td>
<td>5.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Francisco Guerrero</td>
<td>Pastores loquebantur</td>
<td>5.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Peter Philips</td>
<td>O beatum et sacrosanctum diem</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Plainsong</td>
<td>Crudelis Herodes</td>
<td>4.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Orlande de Lassus</td>
<td>Omnes de Saba venient</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Running Time: 67.11
A Renaissance Christmas draws from a golden age of sacred music. Most of its harmonious contents were created in Europe at a time of discordant upheaval, a world-historical epoch marked by religious reform and reaction, power politics and internecine strife, radical revisionism and resilient conservatism. The great feast of Christmas served to remind warring Catholics and Protestants of the eternal Christian message. Composers on both sides of the 16th century’s religious divide graced the season with intimations of the polyphony of paradise, directing the best of human creativity to celebrate God’s promise to mankind of salvation through his son. The nativity story, told across the winter seasons from Christmas to Candlemas, brought spiritual light to the harsh material realities of a dark world. Choral music’s part in its reiteration was in many ways inestimable yet fundamental to the shared experience of Christmas ritual and contemplation.

In today’s tumult of passing Twitter storms and online moral crusades, it is hard to imagine the explosive force of Martin Luther’s Reformation. The scholarly Augustinian monk, little known before he sent his Ninety-five Theses to Cardinal Albert of Brandenburg in 1517, attacked what he saw as the abuse of selling indulgences, dispensations for good works or other acts of merit intended to shorten the amount of time spent by the faithful Christian soul in Purgatory. His radical ideas challenged the authority of the papacy, not least by questioning why the Pope, richer than Crassus, needed to raise money from the poor to pay for the new St Peter’s Basilica in Rome. The Roman Catholic Church responded to the genuine threat of Protestantism by convening a council, at first ‘in German lands’, later in the city of Trent in present-day Italy.

The Council of Trent brought together Catholic bishops, theologians and others to discuss serious matters of doctrinal and Church reform. They convened three times between 1545 and 1563. A series of sessions held late in the process considered the Mass and its ‘true and proper’ representation of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. The consequent decree included a section devoted to ‘Things to be observed and avoided in celebrating Mass’; it also directed bishops to ‘keep out of their churches the kind of music in which a base and suggestive element is introduced into the organ playing or singing’. An early draft asked whether polyphony, which ‘appealed more to the ear than the spirit’, should be excluded from the Roman rite, a question soon revised to consider the quality of devotional music and the imperative that it should clearly communicate sacred texts. There was no mention of polyphony in the decree’s final version; messages about the need for simplicity, purity and clarity, however, spread from Trent to reach musicians working throughout the Catholic world.

Church composers would need look no further for appropriate models of the expression of sacred words than the vast resource of Gregorian chant and other devotional melodies. Veni, veni Emmanuel, one of a series of antiphons sung at Vespers during Advent, evokes the timeless certainty of ancient ritual. Its folk-like melody, sung here in a version preserved in a French missal, captures the expectation shared by those awaiting the birth of ‘God’s dear son’. It is known to date at least from the time of Charlemagne, who was crowned Holy Roman Emperor by Pope Leo III on Christmas Day 800. Crudelis Herodes articulates another chapter in the Christmas story, where Herod’s fear for his earthly throne is countered by the Magi’s tributes to the king of heaven.

Resonemus laudibus, written down in the 14th century, stands among the earliest surviving examples of an ancient Christmas song. Its melody was popular...
above all in Germany, where it was sung to one of two texts: ‘Resonet in laudibus’ and ‘Joseph, lieber Joseph mein’. The lilting ‘Resonet’ tune ideally suited the medieval cradle-rocking tradition, practised at first by nuns in the Rhineland and later introduced to the services of Vespers and Matins at Christmas in Germany and the Netherlands.

Johannes Eccard, who became Kapellmeister to the Elector of Brandenburg in the early 1600s, employed Lutheran chorales as foundation stones for much of his sacred polyphony. His Resonet in laudibus setting for five voices opens with a hymn-like harmonisation of the pre-Reformation tune; its texture is soon lightened with dancing scale figures and brief contrapuntal exchanges between the lower voice parts. Jacob Handl’s Resonet in laudibus echoes the Lutheran Wechselgesang tradition, a contribution to the drama of services for Christmas night in which sections of popular carols and seasonal hymns were shared between separate choirs distributed around the church. The Slovenian-born Handl, whose German family name means ‘little rooster’, was a master of polychoral composition who attracted criticism during his lifetime for his counterpoint’s complexity. His Resonet is distinguished by the restraint of its chordal harmony and the contrasting contrapuntal exuberance invested in its rapid-fire setting of the word ‘Eia’.

Eccard’s teacher Orlande de Lassus was born in the Franco-Flemish province of Hainaut, home to many outstanding names in Renaissance music. Young Orlande was enlisted as a boy chorister to serve a member of the Gonzaga family and received much of his training as a composer in Italy. His formative years coincided with the debates of the Catholic Counter-Reformation, current during his brief time as Maestro di Cappella at San Giovanni in Laterano, Rome’s cathedral church, and in the air throughout his long service at the Duke of Bavaria’s Munich court. Lassus’ Resonet in laudibus belongs to a trio of Christmas motets for five voices published in Munich in 1569. The composition strikes a fine balance between textual clarity, helped at first by the prominent projection of the popular Christmas melody, and a shrewd blend of syllabic declamation and contrapuntal virtuosity, heard later in the work. Lassus displays comparable creative individuality in his setting of Videntes stellam Magi, the Magnificat antiphon for Epiphany. The motet, which dates from the composer’s early years in Munich, takes wing with a fanfare-like figure propelled by its rapid repetition across five voice parts. Lassus varies his composition’s rhythmic drive and vocal scoring to underline the excitement and reverence conveyed by the words.

Omnes de Saba venient draws its text from the Responsory verse for Epiphany. Handl’s setting, with its emphatic opening and fleeting scale figures, portrays the headlong rush of gift-bearers from the biblical kingdom of Sheba, widely associated by modern scholars with southern Arabia. Lassus combines two choirs of four voices each for his setting of the same. The result, published in Nuremberg in 1590, moves from a state of tranquillity to one of ecstasy, inviting mind and heart to cultivate unconditional joy at Christ’s incarnation.

Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck attracted a loyal following for the improvisations he performed twice daily during his long tenure as organist at Amsterdam’s Oude Kerk. His spontaneous brilliance at the keyboard flowed into many of his written compositions. Sweelinck’s Cantiones sacrae, published by Pierre Phalèse in Antwerp in 1619 and dedicated to the composer’s Catholic friend Cornelis Plemp, presents a collection of Latin motets in a predominantly jubilant
Reges Tharsis are constructed around their respective plainchant melodies, delivered in notes of equal value by the second-lowest voice part.

In 1573 Tallis and his former pupil William Byrd, both members of the Chapel Royal, petitioned Elizabeth I for a source of additional income. The Queen granted them an exclusive licence to print and publish music, which they soon employed to produce their anthology *Cantiones sacrae*. Byrd’s setting of the responsory for Christmas Day Matins, *O magnum mysterium*, was published together with the liturgically related motet *Beata Virgo* in his *Gradualia* of 1607. There is no artifice here, no self-serving demonstration of technical display; rather, Byrd directs the listener to contemplate the ineffable mystery of Jesus’ birth with music stripped of all excess. The composer’s joyful response to the nativity courses through his carol for Christmas Day, *This day Christ was born*. Its intricate imitative counterpoint and noble cadences seem to echo the entire company of heaven singing.

England’s road to religious reform took many turns, some sharp, others gradual. The matter of Henry VIII’s divorce from Catherine of Aragon led to a break with papal obedience but not with many of the old Catholic rites and observances. The evangelical religious and political settlement that emerged during the early years of Edward VI’s reign introduced a new Protestant spirit to the nation’s Church until the process of reform was reversed following the coronation of the Catholic Mary Tudor in 1555. Thomas Tallis served the royal household as a musician to Henry VIII and the monarchies of his three children, Edward, Mary and Elizabeth. He appears to have held a lifelong allegiance to Catholicism while trimming his professional sails to the realities of religious reform and counter-reform.

Tallis’s Candlemas respond *Videte miraculum*, probably written for either Henry VIII or Mary Tudor’s Chapel Royal, is distinguished by its sonorous scoring for six voices, bright flashes of harmonic colour and arching melodic lines suggestive of life everlasting. Its high-lying upper parts, wide vocal range and consonant harmonies recall the style of an earlier age of Latin church music in England, largely impervious to continental influence. Tallis’s younger contemporary John Sheppard wrote most of his surviving works for Mary Tudor’s chapel. *Reges Tharsis*, based on a line from the Latin Vulgate Psalm 71, was created for performance at Matins during Epiphany. Sheppard’s composition is striking in its passing dissonances and irresistible rhythmic energy. *Videte miraculum* and *Reges Tharsis* stand among the anthology’s finest treasures. Fully alive in its jubilant response to the news of Jesus’ birth, the piece builds to deliver a spellbinding closing sequence of acclamations.

Peter Philips was a boy chorister at St Paul’s Cathedral and may have studied with Byrd. For his Catholic faith he fled England in 1582 and found refuge at the English College in Rome. His fervent motet *O beatum et sacrosanctum diem*, published in 1612, probably dates from his years in service to Archduke Albert, regent of the Spanish Netherlands, at his court in Brussels. Overseas influence touched the music of George Kirbye, known chiefly today for his English madrigals on Italian models. He also made significant contributions to The Whole Book of Psalmes published in London in 1592. *Vox in Rama*, for six voices, reveals the quality and refined craftsmanship of the Suffolk composer’s work. Recent research has shown how Kirbye shaped his sublime motet for the fourth day of Christmas, the feast of the
Holy Innocents, after an earlier setting of the text by the Flemish musician Jacobus Clemens non Papa. Herod’s execution of all male infants born in or near Jerusalem, which Kirbye recalls in the chilling words of St Matthew’s gospel, fulfilled the Old Testament prophesy of Jeremiah and its vision of Rachel ‘weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they are no more’.

The story of the shepherds, like that of the Magi and of Herod’s infamy, inspired composers across the sectarian divide. The Oxford graduate Richard Dering appears to have been raised a Protestant and probably converted to Catholicism soon after arriving in Rome in the early 1610s. His setting of Quem vidistis, pastores?, published in Antwerp in 1618, underlines the shepherds’ dramatic account of Christ’s birth with antiphonal exchanges between high and low voices and a near-breathless succession of Alleluias. Tomás Luis de Victoria, whose sacred compositions gave strength to the Catholic Counter-Reformation, infuses his Quem vidistis, pastores? with spiritual fervour in its first part and a feeling of awe in its second. The motet, the antiphon for Lauds at Christmas Day, was published in 1585 around the time of its composer’s return to his native Spain after two decades in Rome. Victoria’s older contemporary Francisco Guerrero, a native of Seville and chapel master of the city’s cathedral, wrote some of the finest sacred music of the 16th century’s second half. Pastores loquebantur stands as a worthy companion piece to Victoria’s Quem vidistis in the latter’s 1585 book of motets, hallmarked by contrapuntal ingenuity and great sensitivity to the text’s combination of urgent narrative, considered reflection and unbridled delight.

© Andrew Stewart, 2018

TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

14TH CENTURY Resonemus laudibus

Let us make the church resound with the merry praises of the faithful: He whom Mary bore has appeared.

Deus fecit hominem ad suam imaginem et similitudinem:

He whom Mary bore has appeared.

Therefore let our company bless the Lord with strings and organ:

He whom Mary bore has appeared.

And let us give thanks to the same God, who gives us pardon and joys:

He whom Mary bore has appeared.
J. P. SWeelinck (1562-1621)  **Hodie Christus natus est**

*Hodie Christus natus est.*

*Noe, Noe, Noe.*

*Hodie Salvator apparuit.*

*Alleluia.*

*Hodie in terra canunt angeli, laetantur archangeli.*

*Noe, Noe, Noe.*

*Hodie exultant iusti dicentes: Gloria in excelsis Deo, alleluia.*

*Noe, Noe, Noe.*

Today Christ is born.

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell.

Today the Saviour has appeared.

Alleluia.

Today the angels sing on earth, the archangels rejoice.

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell.

Today the righteous are glad and say:

Glory to God in the highest, alleluia.

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell.

Magnificat Antiphon at 2nd Vespers for Christmas Day

---

Jacob Handl (1550-91)  **Omnes de Saba venient**

*Omnes de Saba venient,*

*aaurum et thus deferentes et laudem Domino annuntiantes.*

*Alleluia.*

All they from Sheba shall come, bringing gold and frankincense and proclaiming the praise of the Lord.

Alleluia.

Short Responsory for the Epiphany [Isaiah 60:6]

---

Johannes Eccard (1553-1611)  **Resonet in laudibus**

*Resonet in laudibus cum iucundis plausibus.*

*Sion cum fidelibus: Apparuit quem genuit Maria.*

*Sunt impleta quae praedixit Gabriel: eia.*

*Virgo Deum genuit, quem divina voluit clementia.*

*Hodie apparuit in Israel:* ex Maria virgine est natus Rex.

*Magnum nomen Domini Emmanuel,*

*quod annunciatum est per Gabriel.*

Let Sion resound with the joyful acclaim of the faithful:

He whom Mary bore has appeared.

Gabriel’s prophecies have been fulfilled: O joy!

A Virgin has given birth to God, as divine mercy willed it to be.

Today he has appeared in Israel:

a King is born of the Virgin Mary.

Great is the Lord’s name Emmanuel, which all the world has heard proclaimed by Gabriel.

Words: 14th century, German
Veni, Clavis Davidica, 
regna reclude caelica: 
fac iter tutum superum, 
et claude vias inferum. 
Gaude! Gaude! etc.

Veni, veni, O Oriens, 
solare nos adveniens: 
nocetis depelle nebulas, 
dirasque mortis tenebras. 
Gaude! Gaude! etc.

Veni, veni, Rex Gentium, 
veni, Redemptor omnium, 
ut salvas tuos famulos 
pescati sibi conscios. 
Gaude! Gaude! etc.

O come, Thou Key of David, come, 
and open wide our heavenly home: 
make safe the way that leads on high, 
that we no more have cause to sigh. 
Rejoice! Rejoice! etc.

O come, Thou Dayspring from on high, 
and cheer us by thy drawing nigh: 
disperse the gloomy clouds of night 
and death’s dark shadow put to flight. 
Rejoice! Rejoice! etc.

O come, Desire of nations, bind 
in one the hearts of all mankind: 
bid every strife and quarrel cease 
and fill the world with heaven’s peace. 
Rejoice! Rejoice! etc.

From a French Missal, paraphrase of the Advent ‘O’ Antiphons
6  George KIRBYE (c.1565-1634)  Vox in Rama

Vox in Rama audita est,
ploratus et ululatus,
Rachel plorans filios suos:
noluit consolari,
quia non sunt.

A voice is heard in Rama,
weeping and wailing,
Rachel lamenting her sons:
she will not be consoled,
for they are no more.

Antiphon at Communion for the Feast of the Holy Innocents
[Matthew 2:18, citing Jeremiah 31:15]

7  Orlande de LASSUS (1532-94)  Videntes stellam Magi

Videntes stellam
Magi gavisi sunt gaudio magno:
et intrantes domum
invenerunt puerum
cum Maria matre eius,
et procidentes
adoraverunt eum.
Et aperitis thesauris suis
obtulerunt ei munera,
aurum, thus et myrrham.

Seeing the star,
the Magi rejoiced with great gladness:
and entering the dwelling
they came upon the boy
with Mary, his mother,
and, prostrating themselves,
they worshipped him.
And, opening their treasures,
they offered him gifts,
gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Magnificat Antiphon for 2nd day within the Octave of the Epiphany
[Matthew 2:10-11]

8  Thomas TALLIS (c.1505-85)  Videte miraculum

Videte miraculum matris Domini:
concepit virgo virilis ignara consortii,
stans onerata nobili onere Maria:
et matrem se laetam cognoscit
quae se nescit uxorem.

Haec speciosum forma
prae filiis hominum
castis concepit visceribus,
et benedicta in aeternum
Deum nobis protulit et hominem.

Gloria Patri et Filio
et Spiritui Sancto.

Behold the miracle of the mother of the Lord:
a virgin has conceived though she knew no husband,
Mary, heavy with her noble burden:
and with joy she knows herself a mother,
who knows she is no wife.

She, beautiful in form
beyond all the children of men,
has conceived in her virgin womb,
and, for ever blessed,
has borne for us him who is both God and man.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

Responsory at 1st Vespers, Feast of the Purification (Candlemas)
Richard DERING (c.1580-1630)  Quem vidistis, pastores?

Quem vidistis, pastores?
Dicite: et annuntiate nobis
in terris quis apparuit?

Natum vidimus,
et choros angelorum,
collaudentes Dominum.

Alleluia.

Who have you seen, shepherds?
Speak: and tell us
who has appeared on earth?

We have seen the new-born child
and a chorus of angels
praising the Lord.

Alleluia.

Antiphon at Lauds for Christmas Day

William BYRD (1543-1623)  O magnum mysterium / Beata Virgo

O magnum mysterium
et admirabile sacramentum,
ui animalia viderent Dominum natum
iacentem in praesepio.

Beata Virgo,
cuius viscera meruerunt portare
Dominum Christum.

Ave Maria gratia plena,
Dominus tecum.

O great mystery
and wonderful sacrament,
that the animals should see the newborn Lord
lying in a manger.

O blessed Virgin,
whose womb was worthy to bear
Christ our Lord.

Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with you.

Responsory at 2nd Nocturn of Matins for Christmas Day

Jacob HANDL (1550-91)  Resonet in laudibus

Resonet in laudibus
cum iucundis plausibus
Sion cum fidelibus:
Apparuit quem genuit Maria.

Sunt impleta quae praedixit
Gabriel: eia.
Virgo Deum genuit,
quod divina voluit
clementia.

Hodie apparuit
in Israel,
ex Maria virgine
est natus Rex.

Let Sion resound
with the joyful acclaim
of the faithful:
He whom Mary bore has appeared.

Gabriel’s prophecies
have been fulfilled: O joy!
A Virgin has given birth to God,
as divine mercy
willed it to be.

Today he has appeared
in Israel:
a King is born
of the Virgin Mary.

Words: 14th century, German
Quem vidistis, pastores?
Who have you seen, shepherds?

Dicite: annuntiate nobis quis apparuit?
Speak: tell us who has appeared on earth.

Natum vidimus, et choros angelorum, colaudantes Dominum. Alleluia.
We have seen the new-born child and a chorus of angels praising the Lord.

Dicite quidnam vidistis et annuntiate nobis Christi nativitatem.
Speak, what have you seen? Tell us of the birth of Christ.

Natum vidimus etc.
We have seen the new-born child etc.

Responsory at 1st Nocturn of Matins for Christmas Day

Resonet in laudibus, cum iucundis plausibus Apparuit quem genuit Maria. Sunt impleta quae praedixit Gabriel: eia.
Let Sion resound with the joyful acclaim of the faithful: He whom Mary bore has appeared.

Virgo Deum genuit quod divina voluit clementia. Gabriel's prophecies have been fulfilled: O joy!

Hodie apparuit in Israel, per Mariam virginem est natus Rex. A Virgin has given birth to God, as divine mercy willed it to be.

Magnum nomen Domini Emmanuel, quod annuntiatum est per Gabriel. Eia, eia!
Today he has appeared in Israel: a King is born through the Virgin Mary.

Great is the Lord's name Emmanuel, which all the world has heard proclaimed by Gabriel.
Oh joy, joy!

Words: 14th century, German
Francisco GUERRERO (1528-99)  *Pastores loquebantur*

Pastores loquebantur ad invicem:
transeamus usque Bethlem,
et videamus hoc verbum, quod factum est,
quod fecit Dominus et ostendit nobis.
Et venerunt festinantes et invenerunt Mariam et Joseph et infantem positum in praesepio. Alleluia.

The shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. Alleluia.

from the Gospel for the Dawn Mass of Christmas Day
[Luke 2:15-19]

William BYRD (1543-1623)  *This day Christ was born*

This day Christ was born, this day our Saviour did appear.
This day the angels sing in earth. The archangels are glad.
This day the just rejoice, saying: Glory be to God on high. Alleluia.

John SHEPPARD (c.1515-58)  *Roges Tharsis*


The kings of Tharsis and of the isles shall give presents: the kings of Arabia and Sheba will bring gifts to the Lord God, and all kings will adore him, all nations will serve him. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

Responsory/Offertory for the Epiphany
[cf Ps 71: 10-11]

And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. Alleluia.

from the Gospel for the Dawn Mass of Christmas Day
[Luke 2:15-19]
**Peter PHILIPS (1561-1628)**

*O beatum et sacrosanctum diem*

O blessed and most holy day
on which our Lord deigned to be born
of the Virgin Mary for our sake.
Therefore let the whole world rejoice,
and let us sing to him with the sound of the trumpet,
with strings, the harp and the organ.
Let us rejoice
with the numerous hosts of angels
who ceaselessly sing his praise.
Nowell.

---

**Plainsong**

*Crudelis Herodes*

Crudelis Herodes, Deum
Regem venire quid times?
Non eripit mortalia,
qui regna dat caelestia.

Ibant Magi, quam viderant,
stellam sequentes praeviam;
lumen requirunt lumine:
Deum fatentur munere.

Lavacra puri gurgitis
caelestis Agnus attigit:
peccata, quae non detulit,
nos abluendo sustulit.

Novum genus potentiae:
aquae rubescunt hydriae,
vini que iussa fundere,
mutavit unda originem.

Jesu, tibi sit gloria
qui apparuisti gentibus,
cum Patre, et almo Spiritu,
in sempiterna saecula.
Amen

---

Most cruel Herod, whence does spring
thy fear, lest Christ should come as king?
He seizes not on realms below,
who realms celestial does bestow.

The sages followed the bright
preceding star they had in sight;
by light to find our light they sought:
they God confess, by gifts they brought.

The heavenly Lamb, though spotless, took
the baptism of a crystal brook;
by washing us he cleansed the blot
of sin, which he contracted not.

A novel kind of power he shows,
ruddy the pitchers water grows,
which bid by him to send forth wine,
the water changed its origin.

To thee be glory, Christ, who hast
thy beams upon the Gentiles cast;
the like unto the Father be,
and Holy Ghost eternally.
Amen.

---

*Antiphon for Christmas Day*

---

*Hymn at 2nd Vespers of the Epiphany*

words by Caelius Sedulius (5th century)
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.
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.

Harry Christophers CBE 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.