JAMES MacMillan: Stabat mater
Winner of the 2017 Diapason d’Or de l’Année – Musique Chorale

“It’s stunningly composed and also magnificently performed... under Harry Christophers’ inspired direction.”
THE TIMES *****

“Christophers’ adoration of MacMillan’s Stabat mater radiates out of every moment of this compelling performance.”
GRAMOPHONE, Recording of the Month

JAMES MacMillan: Miserere

“This is contemporary religious music for believers and doubters, and the performances are beyond praise. Astonishingly good.”
THEARTSDESK.COM

“The Tenebrae Responsories offer an opportunity to savour just what a superb choir The Sixteen are, and their especial affinity with this music heightens the impact of these powerful performances.”
GRAMOPHONE

To find out more about The Sixteen, concert tours, and to buy CDs visit www.thesixteen.com

James MacMillan
SYMPHONY No.5
‘Le grand Inconnu’

THE SUN DANCED

The Sixteen · Britten Sinfonia · Mary Bevan · HARRY CHRISTOPHERS
Little did I know that only five years after the premiere of James MacMillan’s *Stabat mater* I would be working on his Fifth Symphony, *Le grand Inconnu*. The seed was sown from the same source, John Studzinski. It was John who had commissioned *Stabat mater* and it was John who talked to both James and me about exploring the theme and mystery of the Holy Spirit. Without even a moment’s thought, James told me that he had always wished for his next symphony to be a choral symphony. From then on we discussed various scenarios regarding the musical forces and landed on the idea of The Sixteen as a virtuoso small chamber choir with a separate larger chorus comprised of Genesis Sixteen (our student project which has been running annually since 2011) complemented by a full symphony orchestra replete with sundry percussion, harp and piano.

The first movement landed on my doorstep just after Christmas 2018 – an A4 copy of James’s wispy script, at that size barely decipherable with such a large orchestration, numerous ledger lines, lots of fast black notes, a plethora of complex rhythms and time signatures as well as the vocal parts dividing into sometimes as many as 20 parts; by the time the next two movements arrived at the end of January 2019 the publishers had taken pity on me and rewarded me with A3 scores. I knew immediately that I had to divorce myself from *Stabat mater*. Here was a score so very different: my mind had to turn from heartfelt and emotional to one that was sensual and ecstatic. Once again James explores new sounds and sonorities, from the cellos and basses producing dark and earthy drones from the tail-piece of their instruments, to natural horns viscerally playing the harmonic scale, upper strings cooing like doves, fluttering woodwind; the choirs have moments of multi-voiced polyphony, breathing in and out, and surreal, other-worldly humming. Everything is drawn together by James into a cornucopia of sheer virtuosity and brilliance.

The theme of the Holy Spirit is explored in three movements concentrating on breath, water and fire respectively. It is not a liturgical work in any respect; however, it does open us up and make us examine what the Holy Spirit entails. By calling it *Le grand Inconnu* James has given himself that freedom to explore the mystery of the subject matter and, with repeated listening, we, the listener, discover more and more within the music. We were fortunate enough to perform the world premiere in the Usher Hall at the Edinburgh International Festival in August 2019. From the barely audible breathing at the start of the symphony the audience were totally rapt; the first forte was so sudden and ecstatic that it produced one of those heart-pounding moments. The standing ovation James received at the end was overwhelming. For us as performers, we were only too delighted to be asked to perform the work again for the London premiere at the Barbican from which this live recording comes.

Our thanks go to John Studzinski and the Genesis Foundation for their amazing vision and faith in our unique collaboration with James MacMillan. Our thanks also go to the Shrine of Fatima for helping us programme the opening work on this recording, *The Sun Danced*, which they commissioned for the celebration of the Centennial of the Apparitions in Portugal. This episodic work charts the apparitions and miracle of the sun a century ago in Fatima; frenzied dances blend with moments of pure devotion and eternal peacefulness. I’d also like to thank Britten Sinfonia for their extraordinary playing and Mary Bevan, Julie Cooper, Kim Porter, Mark Dobell and Ben Davies and The Sixteen and Genesis Sixteen for their equally inspirational singing. To stand in the front of such incredible performers is a unique honour.
A note from John Studzinski

The nature of Holy Spirit, the metaphysical element of the Holy Trinity, has rarely, and arguably never successfully, been fully explored in a symphony. Without doubt it presents a far greater challenge to a composer than the depiction in music of an actual event, such as the Crucifixion. It would, however, be difficult to find a subject more deserving of expression in the uniquely powerful form of a symphony, and this is just one reason why the Genesis Foundation is proud to have commissioned Le grand Inconnu.

Initiation through the gift of the Holy Spirit brings us closer to God and the blessing of his love. A commitment to God and to Christ his Son has informed James MacMillan’s compositions from the beginning of his career, and he is now recognised as the world’s leading composer of sacred music. Le grand Inconnu is nothing less than a masterpiece and this recording will ensure that its power is transmitted around the world, now and in years to come.

We are delighted that Harry Christophers and The Sixteen have been joined for this recording by members of Genesis Sixteen. All of us at the Genesis Foundation are indebted to James for moving us so profoundly, and we know that his music will evoke a similar response in future generations of listeners.

John Studzinski CBE, Founder & Chairman, Genesis Foundation

Sir James MacMillan (b.1959)

THE SUN DANCED (2016) *
Mary Bevan soprano

SYMPHONY NO. 5, ‘Le grand Inconnu’ (2019) **

I Ruah 17.38

II Zao 18.15

Soli: Julie Cooper soprano
Kim Porter alto
Mark Dobell tenor
Ben Davies bass

III Igne vel igne 14.05

Total running time 78.54

* The Sun Danced was commissioned by the Shrine of Fatima for the celebration of the Centennial of the Apparitions of Fatima.

** Symphony No. 5, Le grand Inconnu was commissioned by Genesis Foundation for Harry Christophers and The Sixteen.
The Sun Danced (2016)

The Sun Danced is a work for soprano soloist, chorus and orchestra commissioned by the Shrine of Fatima in Portugal to mark the celebration of the Centennial of the Apparitions. The texts are taken from the Apparitions of the Angel and of Our Lady, and also from documented verbal expressions from members of the crowd present at the Miracle of the Sun on 13 October 1917.

The work is written in three languages – Latin, English and Portuguese – and also includes texts from hymns associated with Fatima, Sanctissimae Trinitatis and Ave Theotokos. The work is written in one continuous movement, starting with a mysterious orchestral introduction before we hear the words of the Angel (sung by the basses in the choir). The full choir then sing Latin verses of a Trinitarian text before we hear Our Lady's words sung by the soloist. These fragments are taken from various apparitions of Mary throughout the summer of 1917, culminating in her prediction of a miracle in October. These texts are woven together as the basis of a soprano aria, pushing forward towards the central orchestral fantasy – an instrumental 'dance' inspired by stories of the Miracle of the Sun, witnessed by thousands of people in Fatima on 13 October 1917.

At points throughout this fast-moving central section we hear the choir interject some of the exclamations that were heard in the crowd that day.

The final section of the work is another arioso for the soprano soloist, based on liturgical fragments associated with the Fatima celebrations. This time the vocal style is more ecclesiastical, like Gregorian chant, accompanied by soft chords from strings and choir. The final coda has the choir exclaiming Latin words of praise to Mary and a final joyous orchestral dash to the close.

The work is dedicated to my daughter Catherine.

Symphony No. 5, ‘Le grand Inconnu’ (2019)

The symphonic tradition, and Beethoven's monumental impact on it, is an imposing legacy which looms like a giant ghost over the shoulder of any living composer foolhardy enough to consider adding to it. But some of us, perhaps not fully knowing what writing a symphony 'means' any more, are drawn towards it like moths flapping around a candle flame.

My Fifth Symphony turned out to be a choral symphony, if very different to Beethoven's. It came on the back of my Stabat mater and was commissioned from the same source and involved the same performers. The philanthropist John Studzinski has taken a great interest in The Sixteen and has a special concern for sacred music. It was he who, along with Harry Christophers, suggested I write my own Stabat mater. After that he began talking to me about how the concept of the Holy Spirit has been handled in music.

There are, of course, many great motets from the past which set texts devoted to the Third Person of the Trinity, and in the 20th century the one piece which sticks out is the setting of the Veni Creator Spiritus in the first movement of Mahler's Eighth Symphony. But it still feels like relatively unexamined territory, so perhaps now is the time to explore this mysterious avenue, where concepts of creativity and spirituality overlap. There is a real burgeoning interest in spirituality in our contemporary post-religious and now post-secular society, especially in relation to the arts. Music is described as the most spiritual of the arts, even by non-religious music lovers, and there is today a genuinely universal understanding that music can reach deep into the human soul.

It surely makes sense that a Catholic artist such as myself might want to explore this in music, perhaps even beyond the usual hymnody and paeans of praise associated with liturgy. My Fifth Symphony is not a liturgical work. It is an attempt to explore the mystery discussed above in music for
two choirs and orchestra. It began when John Studzinski gave me a copy of The Holy Spirit, Fire of Divine Love by the Belgian Carmelite Wilfred Stinissen. It was a good point of entry, theologically, but it also called to my attention some visionary poetry by St John of the Cross. This line from the book in particular drew me in: “Even his name reveals that the Holy Spirit is mysterious. The Hebrew word ‘ruah’, the Greek word ‘pneuma’ and the Latin ‘spiritus’ mean both ‘wind’ and ‘breath’”. These words provided the very first sounds heard in my symphony. The work, to begin with, is less a traditional setting of text and more an exploration of elemental and primal sounds and words associated with the Spirit. The first movement is called ‘Ruah’, the second ‘Zao’ (ancient Greek for ‘living water’) and the third is ‘Igne vel igne’ (Latin for ‘fire or fire’). So, each has associations with the physical elements connected to the Holy Spirit (wind, water, fire). These became vivid sources of visual and sonic inspiration. The Fifth Symphony has a subtitle – ‘Le grand Inconnu’, a French term used to describe the mystery of the Holy Spirit which I cannot find replicated in the English spiritual tradition.

Sound associations and impressions guided the choice of texts in each of the three movements and often dictated the overall structure; which bits of St John of the Cross to use, which corresponding moment in Scripture might amplify or reflect the general direction, which sounds to use in the orchestra, as well as extended vocal sounds in the choir which were not necessarily sung. In addition to breathing noises, there are whisperings and murmurings, devised to paint the required element from moment to moment.

The two choirs in the Fifth Symphony are a chamber choir and a large chorus. At the end of the second movement I divide these two ensembles into 20 parts, offering a parallel to the multi-voice writing of Vidi aquam, a 40-part companion piece to Tallis’s Spem in alium that I was composing at the same time as the symphony, and providing a means to continue communing with the English Renaissance master.

Sir James MacMillan © 2019
Soprano solo
Do not be afraid; I will not harm you.

I am of Heaven.

I have come to ask you to come here for six months on the thirteenth day of the month, at this same hour. Later I shall say who I am and what I desire. And I shall return here yet a seventh time. Are you willing to offer yourselves to God?

Words spoken by Mary at Fatima, 13 June 1917

Pray the Rosary every day to bring peace to the world and an end to the war.

Words spoken by Mary at Fatima, 13 June 1917

Continue to pray the Rosary every day in honour of Our Lady of the Rosary in order to obtain peace for the world and an end of war.

You have seen hell ... If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace. The war is going to end, but if people do not cease offending God, a worse one will break out ... When you see the night illumined by an unknown light, know that this is the great sign given by God.

Continue to pray the Rosary in order to obtain the end of the war.

Words spoken by Mary at Fatima, 13 June 1917

Have two litters made. One is to be carried by you and Jacinta and two other girls dressed in white; the other one is to be carried by Francisco and three other boys.

Words spoken by Mary at Fatima, 13 June 1917

I want to tell you that a chapel is to be built here in my honour. I am the Lady of the Rosary. Continue ... The war is going to end and the soldiers will soon return to their homes.

Words spoken by Mary at Fatima, 13 June 1917

In the last month I will perform a miracle ...

Chorus
Look!
Miracle!
Look at the sun!
Beautiful sun! What a beautiful thing!

Miracle of the Sun on 13 October 1917 – documented verbal expressions

Soprano solo
Recebi o teu Verbo no meu Imaculado Coração.
Concebi-O no meu ventre, e dei à luz o Criador do mundo.
Aos pés da Cruz recebi todos os homens e mulheres como meus filhos, nascidos para a vida eterna pela morte do meu Filho.
Quando os Apóstolos esperavam a vinda do Espírito Santo, o prometido, eu uni as minhas súplicas às preces deles e tornei-me o modelo para um povo suplicante.

I received your Word in my Immaculate Heart. I conceived Him in my womb, and gave birth to the Creator of the world. At the foot of the Cross I received all men and women as my children, born to eternal life through the death of my Son. When the Apostles were awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit, the promised one, I united my supplications to their prayers and became the model for a supplicant people.
Chorus
Ave, O Theotokos!
Ave, O Mater Dei!
Ave Maria!
Hail, O bearer of Jesus!
Hail, O Mother of God!
Hail Mary!

Finally elevated to the glory of heaven, I surround with my eternal love the pilgrim people, and lovingly direct their steps to the heavenly dwelling place, until the glorious coming of the Lord.

James MacMillan

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Portuguese translation © Eduardo Ganião
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Symphony No. 5, ‘Le grand Inconnu’ (2019)

I Ruah

Ruah
Breathe through my garden.

Pneuma
Come, south wind, come, you that waken love. And in your sweet breathing, Filled with good and glory, How tenderly you swell my heart with love!
The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes.

St John of the Cross (1542–91)

St John of the Cross

John 3: 8

Acts 2: 2

II Zao

Soli: Julie Cooper soprano · Kim Porter alto · Mark Dobell tenor · Ben Davies bass

Mayim Chayim
Hebrew for ‘Living Water’

Zao
Greek for ‘Living Water’

Aquam viventem
Latin for ‘Living Water’

Soloists
The rivers are yours; I am the riverbank.
The drink is yours; 
I am the cup.
The joy is yours; 
I am the song.
The light is yours; 
I am the ray.
The life is yours; 
I am the pulse.

St John of the Cross

Streams came up
Mayim Chayim.

In novissimo autem die magno festivitatis
stabat Jesus, et clamabat dicens:
Si quis sitit veniat ad me et bibat.
Qui credit in me, sicut dixit Scriptura,
flumina de ventre ejus fluent aquae vivae!

St John of the Cross

On the last day of the festival,
Jesus stood and said in a loud voice,
'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink.
Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said,
rivers of living water will flow from within them.'

John 7: 37–8 (Vulgate)

John of the Cross

You who are called the Paraclete,
best gift of God above,
the living spring,
the living fire, sweet unction and true love.
O guide our minds with your blest light,
with love our hearts inflame; and with your strength,
which never decays, confirm our mortal frame.

Veni Creator Spiritus, attrib Rabanus Maurus (776–856)

Latin for ‘fire or fire’

Quench not the Spirit (1 Thess 5: 19)
Soprano
Amy Carson
Julie Cooper
Katy Hill
Kirsty Hopkins
Alexandra Kidgell
Charlotte Mobbs

Altone
Ian Aitkenhead
Daniel Collins
Edward McMullan
Kim Porter

Tenor
Simon Berridge
Jeremy Budd
Mark Dobell
George Pooley

Bass
Ben Davies
Tim Jones
Rob Macdonald
Stuart Young

Soprano
Elizabeth Adams
Hannah Cox
Hannah Ely
Camilla Harris
Sofia Kirwan-Baez
Margaret Lingas
Hannah Littleton
Ellen Mawhinney
Danni O’Neill
Kirsty O’Neill
Ella Rainbird-Earley
Ellie Sperling

Tenor
Harry Bradford
Tom Castle
Joshua Cooter
Philippe Durrant
Oscar Golden-Lee
Alexander Hume
Samuel Jenkins
Matthew McKinney
Zahid Siddiqui
Christopher Willoughby

Bass
Robert Clark
Freddie Crowley
Colum Donovan-Paterson
Peter Edge
Nathan Harrison
Sebastian Johnson
John Lee
Johannes Moore
Oliver Neale

Violin I
Jacqueline Shave leader
Marcus Barcham Stevens
Ruth Ehrlich
Fiona McCapra
Beatrix Lovejoy
Deborah Preece
Eleanor Stanford
Tamara Elias
Ellie Consta
Ariel Lang

Violin II
Miranda Dale
Nicola Goldscheider
Suzanne Loze
Anna Bradley
Judith Stowe
Bridget Davey
Jo Godden
Joanna Watts

Viola
Carmen Flores
Luba Tunicliffe
Bridget Carey
Rachel Byrt
Ian Rathbone
Francis Kefford

Cello
Caroline Dearnley
Ben Chappell
Julia Vohralik
Juliet Welchman
Reinoud Ford

Double Bass
Ben Scott-Russell
Lucy Shaw
Melissa Favell-Wright
Sam Rice

Flute
Thomas Hancox
Sarah O’Flynn

Oboe
Peter Facer
Emma Feilding

Cor Anglais
Emma Feilding

Clarinet
Joy Farrall
Stephen Williams

Bassoon
Sarah Burnett
Alanna Macfarlane

Contrabassoon
Alanna Macfarlane

Horn
Andrew Littlemore
David McQueen
Matthew Gunner
Joel Ashford

Trumpet
Paul Archibald
Shane Brennan

Trombone
Rory Cartmell
Barnaby Philpott

Bass Trombone
Barry Clements

Tuba
Edward Leech

Timpani
Matthew Turner

Percussion
Owen Gunnell
Tim Gunnell

Harp
Lucy Wakeford

Piano
Clíodna Shanahan
Sir James MacMillan

Sir James MacMillan is one of today’s most successful composers and is also internationally active as a conductor. His musical language is flooded with influences from his Scottish heritage, Catholic faith, social conscience and close connection with Celtic folk music, blended with influences from Far Eastern, Scandinavian and Eastern European music.

MacMillan’s prolific output includes The Confession of Isobel Gowdie, Veni, Veni, Emmanuel, and five symphonies. Recent major works include his Percussion Concerto No.2, Stabat mater and his Symphony No.5, Le grand Inconnu, premiered by The Sixteen at Edinburgh International Festival.

MacMillan also enjoys a flourishing career as conductor, praised for the composer’s insight he brings to each score. He was Principal Guest Conductor of the Netherlands Radio Kamer Filharmonie until 2013 and Composer/Conductor of the BBC Philharmonic from 2000-09. He has conducted orchestras such as the National Symphony Orchestra Washington, Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Munich Philharmonic, Vienna Radio Symphony, Bergen Philharmonic, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and New Zealand Symphony Orchestra among others.

In October 2014 MacMillan founded his music festival, The Cumnock Tryst, which takes place annually in his native Ayrshire. He was awarded a CBE in 2004 and a Knighthood in 2015.

Harry Christophers

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 festivals.

He recently collaborated with BBC Radio 3 presenter Sara Mohr-Pietsch to produce a book published by Faber & Faber entitled *A New Heaven: Choral Conversations* in celebration of the group’s 40th anniversary.

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, Northumbria, Canterbury Christ Church and Kent.

Mary Bevan *soprano*

Mary Bevan enjoys huge success in baroque, classical, and contemporary repertoire, and appears regularly with leading orchestras and ensembles around the world. She was awarded an MBE in the Queen’s birthday honours list 2019. She is a winner of the Royal Philharmonic Society’s Young Artist award and UK Critics’ Circle Award for Exceptional Young Talent in music.

She has performed roles such as Rose Maurrant in Weill’s *Street Scene*, Zerlina in Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, Susanna and Barbarina in Mozart’s *Le nozze di Figaro*, the title role in Rossi’s *Orpheus*, Bellezza in Handel’s *Il Trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno*, Eurydice in Offenbach’s *Orpheus in the Underworld* for opera houses such as Teatro Real, Opéra de Monte-Carlo, Royal Danish Opera, the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, English National Opera, Garsington Opera Festival and Adelaide Festival.

On the concert platform, she has performed with the BBC Symphony, BBC Concert Orchestra at the Proms, CBSO, OAE and AAM, among others.

Mary’s recordings include her art song albums *The Divine Muse* and *Voyages* with pianist Joseph Middleton under Signum Records, *Handel’s Queens* under Signum Classics, Mendelssohn songs for Champs Hill Records, Vaughan Williams Symphony No.3 and Schubert *Rosamunde* with the BBC Philharmonic.

Julie Cooper *soprano*

Julie read English and Music at Durham University. She studied with Julie Kennard at The Royal Academy of Music on a scholarship, before graduating with a Diploma.

Julie has performed extensively as a soloist and consort singer all over the world. Notable performances include Pärt’s *Stabat Mater* and *Miserere* with The Hilliard Ensemble and BBC Singers in Tewkesbury Abbey; Britten’s *War Requiem* and Vaughan Williams’ *Sea Symphony* with the CBSO at Symphony Hall; Mozart’s *Requiem* with the Orquestre de Comunidad de Madrid conducted by Harry Christophers; Michal in Handel’s *Saul* with Harry Christophers and The Sixteen in the Palace of Versailles and Brahms’ *Requiem* in the QEH also for Harry Christophers.
and The Sixteen, which was subsequently recorded on the CORO label and filmed for television. Julie was the soprano soloist for the world premiere of James MacMillan’s *Stabat mater* with The Sixteen and Britten Sinfonia in the Barbican and the first live streamed performance from the Sistine Chapel. In the autumn of 2019, she performed as the soprano soloist in James MacMillan’s Symphony No.5, *Le grand Inconnu*, at the Edinburgh Festival and the Barbican.

Julie has also appeared in four highly acclaimed series of *Sacred Music*, presented by Simon Russell Beale on BBC Four, and has recently been elected an Associate of The Royal Academy of Music for her services to classical music.

**Kim Porter alto**

Kim Porter studied music at Manchester University and subsequently at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama as a postgraduate singer and composer. Her first major professional work was with the BBC Singers, performing a huge amount of contemporary repertoire and working with composers including Boulez, Birtwistle, MacMillan, Maxwell Davis and Finnissy.

As a member of The Sixteen, her solos have included Handel’s *Dixit Dominus* at the Sydney Opera House and Dublin National Concert Hall and Mozart’s *Requiem* at the Alhambra Palace, Granada.

Kim sings with the Gabrieli Consort and the ensemble Ora. She was recently commissioned by Ora to write *Pulchra Es*, which is shortly to be released on disc. She occasionally joins The Cardinall’s Music and Exaudi with whom she was a soloist in Poppe’s *Interzone* with Ensemble Intercontemporain at Cité de la Musique, Paris, and recently in Arvo Pärt’s *Stabat Mater* at Kings Place, London.

**Mark Dobell tenor**

Originally from Tunbridge Wells in Kent, Mark Dobell was a choral scholar of Clare College, Cambridge, where he read Classics. He later studied as a postgraduate at the Royal Academy of Music, and was awarded the Clifton Prize for the best final recital.

Mark has worked as a soloist all over the world with renowned conductors including Harry Christophers, Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Sir Roger Norrington and Sir James MacMillan. His extensive concert and oratorio repertoire includes many of the major works of Handel, Bach and Mozart, as well as pieces by composers as varied as Monteverdi, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Britten, Jonathan Dove and Karl Jenkins.

Mark can be heard on numerous recordings. Most notably he is featured as a soloist on The Sixteen’s recordings of Monteverdi’s *Vespers of 1610* and Mozart’s *Solemn Vespers* (recorded live at the Barbican), as well as Durante’s *Requiem* and Howard Goodall’s *Invictus* with Christ Church Cathedral Choir, Oxford. Other solo recordings include repertoire by Pelham Humfrey, Purcell, Bruckner, Holst, Sir James MacMillan and Roderick Williams.
Ben Davies *bass*

Ben Davies studied at the Royal Academy of Music before joining Glyndebourne Festival Opera chorus and has since sung with many of the world’s best-known choirs and ensembles.

He started singing with The Sixteen during their first Choral Pilgrimage in 2000 and has since toured, broadcast, and recorded with them extensively, most recently as a soloist on their recordings of Sir James Macmillan’s *Stabat mater*, Monteverdi’s *Vespers of 1610*, Purcell’s *The Indian Queen*, two discs of Bach Masses, and Handel’s *Saul*.

He has sung in opera houses and concert halls all over the world for conductors such as Harry Christophers, William Christie, Sir John Eliot Gardiner and Vladimir Jurowski. Operatic roles include Sailor in Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas* at the Vienna Festival, Netherlands Opera and the Opera Comique, Paris; Ubalde in Gluck’s *Armide* at Buxton Festival; Guglielmo in Mozart’s *Così fan Tutte*; Polyphemus in Handel’s *Acis and Galatea* and Amis in Milhaud’s *Le Pauvre Matelot*.

**The Sixteen**

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.
Founded in 1992, Britten Sinfonia was established as a bold reimagining of the conventional image of an orchestra. A flexible ensemble comprising the UK's leading soloists and chamber musicians came together with a unique vision: to collapse the boundaries between old and new music; to collaborate with composers, conductors and guest artists across the arts, focusing on the musicians rather than following the vision of a principal conductor; and to create involving, intelligent music events that both audiences and performers experience with an unusual intensity.

Today, Britten Sinfonia is heralded as one of the world's leading ensembles and its philosophy of adventure and reinvention has inspired a new movement of emerging chamber groups. It is an Associate Ensemble at London's Barbican, Resident Orchestra at Saffron Hall and has residencies in Norwich and Cambridge. It performs an annual chamber music series at London's Wigmore Hall and appears regularly at major UK festivals including the BBC Proms. Recently the orchestra has performed a live broadcast to more than a million people worldwide from the Sistine Chapel, toured to Amsterdam, Paris and Bilbao and has toured to the US, Asia and much of Europe. It is a BBC Radio 3 Broadcast Partner and has award-winning recordings on the Hyperion and Harmonia Mundi labels.