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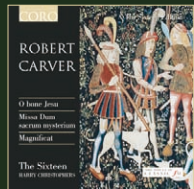
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TREASURES of TUDOR ENGLAND

Parsons • White • Tye

The Sixteen
HARRY CHRISTOPHERS

THE VOICES OF CLASSIC

Thy Muse lives on...

The wealth of music emanating from Tudor England deserves to be preserved and this recording brings you some remarkable works that will amaze you in their complexity, spirituality and sheer size.

I have devoted it to three composers born in, or just before, the reign of King Henry VIII. They not only survived the Reformation and the turbulent years of King Edward VI and Queen Mary, but also lived to enjoy the relative security of a more established church under Queen Elizabeth I. The oldest of the three composers, Christopher Tye, is perhaps the best known. Although some of you may have heard his glorious Mass, *Euge bone*, few will have come across his deeply penitential and extended work *Peccavimus cum patribus nostris*, whose final section is ecstatically uplifting. His son-in-law Robert White and Robert Parsons deserve to be much better known. Although the lives



of both were cut short by misfortune - White died of the plague in Westminster and Parsons drowned in the River Trent - they, thankfully, left us works of extraordinary beauty. Listen to the soaring phrases of Parsons' much-loved *Ave Maria* and his highly unusual devotion on the name of Jesus, *O bone Jesu*. But it is White's *Lamentations* that, I guarantee, will astound you. They are intimate yet searingly powerful and should surely become recognised as one of the finest works of the Renaissance.

Each one of these pieces is a real gem just waiting to be discovered by a wider audience. None of it would have been possible without the devoted scholarship of Sally Dunkley whose editions of these works have been a delight to perform from. And in turn, Sally and I would never have felt so passionately about this period of music had it not been for the guidance and pioneering work of Bernard Rose and David Wulstan during our student days at Oxford.

This music is part of our great heritage and I look forward to you joining us on this discovery.

Harry
Christopher

TREASURES *of* TUDOR ENGLAND

①	<i>Ave Maria</i>	Robert Parsons (c.1535-72)	4.28
②	<i>O bone Jesu</i>	Robert Parsons	13.18
③	<i>Lamentations a5</i>	Robert White (c.1538-74)	22.24
④	<i>Christe qui lux es et dies IV</i>	Robert White	5.38
⑤	<i>Agnus Dei from Mass: Euge bone</i>	Christopher Tye (c.1505-73)	6.26
⑥	<i>Peccavimus cum patribus nostris</i>	Christopher Tye	10.45
	Total playing time		63.43

The turbulent period of religious change in England that was initiated by Henry VIII and continued in very different ways by his heirs Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth I presented composers working in the church with the challenge of having to adapt to rapidly changing musical requirements. With the Act of Uniformity passed early in the reign of Elizabeth I, and the subsequent publication of a new Prayer Book, services were appointed to be said in English, yet much of the greatest sacred music from the 1560s and 70s is indisputably that inspired by Latin texts. This apparent contradiction may well be attributable to the exception that was granted to the Chapel Royal and the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, presumably on the basis that these were places where Latin would have been understood. Although little is known about the personal religious affiliation of composers such as Parsons and White, their Latin music – whatever its intended use – surely represents by far the most interesting and significant musical thought of the generation senior to Byrd.

Not only is there a perceptible move towards expressive word setting, but also one towards creating more succinct imitative phrases and textures, features that were already established in much of the Continental music that was beginning to find its way over the sea from the busy printing presses of Antwerp, Venice and other European cities.

Between the expansive Latin festal Masses that John Taverner wrote in the 1520s and the miniature English-texted anthems of the Edwardian years (1547-53) lay a complete turnaround of compositional technique, reflecting fundamental questions about the purpose and function of music in the liturgy: should its aim be to inspire devotional thoughts in its splendour, or should it be a vehicle to convey vernacular texts in a simple style? Feelings ran high on both sides of the religious debate, and unfortunately much of the material that would inform and illuminate our study was destroyed along the way, with the extant music representing only a small portion of what must originally have existed: a grievous

loss indeed. In fact much of it owes its survival solely to the activities of a few anthologists in the 1580s who must have recognised its intrinsic value despite its very restricted suitability for use in the liturgy by that time.

As the oldest of the three composers represented here, Christopher Tye lived through the reign of Edward VI, to whom he is thought to have acted as music tutor. It is likely that his own sympathies lay with the Protestant church, for which he composed a number of works, but in different circumstances he also produced the wonderfully idiosyncratic Mass *Euge bone* and several large-scale antiphons and motets such as *Peccavimus cum patribus nostris*, whose musical roots lie in an older form, the votive antiphon. After a long tenure as master of the choristers at Ely Cathedral, 'Dr Tye' was ordained towards the end of his life, though he then suffered the indignity of being described as 'not very skilful at preaching'.

The lives of Tye's son-in-law Robert White, and White's contemporary

Robert Parsons, were both cut short by misfortune: White and his family died in a virulent outbreak of plague in the Westminster area in 1574, and Parsons drowned in the River Trent at Newark in January 1572, his place in the Chapel Royal being filled by the young William Byrd. (Was his journey connected with the recruitment of choristers?) Both of them composed music to English texts, yet are best represented by their Latin works. It must be noted that Parsons and White, born c.1535 and c.1538 respectively, were too young to have written all their distinguished Latin-texted works during the Catholic revival of Mary's reign (1553-8), so their output provides confirmation that Latin polyphony continued to be cultivated in Elizabethan times. Both composers were active in London in their maturity, White having left his job as master of the choristers at Chester for one at Westminster Abbey in 1569, and Parsons becoming a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal (the monarch's own musical establishment) in 1563. As well as writing sacred vocal music, Parsons was involved in providing songs for the

choirboy plays that were a feature of life at the Elizabethan court; a quantity of his instrumental consort music survives too, its contrapuntal techniques clearly informing some of his vocal writing. The young William Byrd must have known him and his music, since various points of connection between them can be identified, notably their related settings of the burial text *Libera me, Domine*.

Parsons's much-loved *Ave Maria* would have been sung at a time of reflection, the end of the evening service of Compline, and conveys a sense of complete serenity as it gradually unfolds through a rising pedal point in the top voice to an Amen whose soaring lines seem to make the perfect counterpart to the ecclesiastical architecture of the time.

The text of his motet *O bone Jesu* was known as the Verses of St Bernard, a compilation of psalm verses each prefaced by an acclamation ('O bone Jesu', 'O Adonai', 'O Messias' etc.); such texts were frequently included in the Books of Hours or Primers used by the wealthy and literate for their private

devotions, though Parsons was the only English composer known to have set this one (which continues with altogether different words from the votive *O bone Jesu* of Fayrfax and Carver). Curiously, for its sentiments seem universal enough, it was among the 'superstitious' devotions that attracted the specific disapproval of Thomas Cranmer, archbishop and reformer in the reign of Edward VI. In his music Parsons highlighted each of the acclamations in block chords, framing the verses whose expansive imitative phrases are developed with characteristically oblique harmonic movement. The vocal scoring is enriched by the division into two of the bass part in the section 'clamavi ad te, Domine' ('I have cried to you, O Lord'), where the voices assertively stride up through ten notes of the scale.

Verses drawn from the Old Testament Lamentations of Jeremiah are specified as Lessons at Matins during Holy Week, and as such, claimed the attention of many Continental composers from the mid-15th century onwards. The existence of

a handful of Lamentations from the first 20 or so years of the reign of Elizabeth I (by Parsley, Byrd, White x2, Tallis x2 and Ferrabosco I) may suggest that their composers valued these melancholy texts that invited an expressive response, recognised in their particular significance for their own times if they had Catholic sympathies, and were familiar with each other's work; examples of what Thomas Morley termed 'friendly emulation' are often found amongst this circle of musicians. Whether the music was intended for use in a liturgical context is not known, but the imagery of Jerusalem and its destruction had a well-known metaphorical association with 'Rome', the Catholic Church, under threat in England at this time.

Robert White made two exceptionally fine settings of the same portion of text from the Lamentations, scoring them for five and six voices respectively. While they share the distinctive Phrygian mode (which has two plaintive-sounding semitones, immediately above the key-note and the 5th), in other respects

they present very different musical approaches. The five-part setting is the more forward-looking of the two, its music moving between expressive contrapuntal writing and block chords where one voice leads the others; in the course of this lengthy and impassioned text White introduces some remarkably bold harmonic shifts. The music's structure is governed by that of the text, where each verse is prefaced by a Hebrew letter, presented in alphabetical sequence. These letters afforded the composer an opportunity to show his skill at writing abstract music, their elaboration in some ways not dissimilar to the decorative art practised by the medieval scribe illuminating initial capitals. The verses of the Lamentations culminate with the exhortation 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum' ('Jerusalem, Jerusalem, turn to the Lord your God') which in White's setting is heard twice, at the halfway point as well as at the conclusion. The sustained emotional power of White's music was noted in the 1580s by the copyist Robert Dow, who wrote:

*Non ita moesta sonant plangentis verba
prophetae*

Quam sonat authoris musica moesta mei.

'Not even the words of the gloomy prophet sound so sad as the sad music of my composer'.

The Compline hymn *Christe qui lux es et dies* follows the established pattern of alternating plainchant verses with polyphonic ones that incorporate the chant, in this instance in the tenor part. Its text, an evening prayer for peaceful rest, full of imagery of light and darkness, seems to have held special appeal for White, who made four separate settings of it. This one is a gem: the beautifully judged vocal scoring, the sense of spaciousness contained within a miniature framework, and most of all, the final polyphonic verse which opens out from absolute simplicity into exquisitely gentle flowing quaver patterns.

Writing in the 1770s, the historian Charles Burney evidently recognised that Tye's Mass *Euge bone* represented a very different style of writing when he described it as 'much more clear, correct,

and accented than any other composition in the collection' (he was referring to its manuscript source, the Forrest-Heyther partbooks). Most probably dating from the reign of Mary – it has been speculated that it might have been written to celebrate the return from exile of the leading Catholic, Cardinal Pole, in 1554 - the Mass is concise, imitative in texture and in a resolutely 'major' mode; it also makes use of distinctive pairs of repeated notes. All these characteristics could be regarded as rather modern, and they certainly sound so when juxtaposed with the more conservative (and equally idiosyncratic) writing of White and Parsons. The title *Euge bone* would seem to suggest a musical connection with either a plainchant or a polyphonic work of that title, but although a chant beginning *Euge serve bone* ('Well done, good and faithful servant') does exist, there are only fleeting references to it in the music. A closer, if tantalising, relationship has been identified with some passages in Tye's own motet *Quaesumus omnipotens*, but many questions - such as the origin of the distinctive opening

bars shared by each movement of the Mass - remain unanswered, and suggest a more complex relationship than can now be traced. The *Euge bone* Mass has four rather than the usual three settings of the Agnus Dei, with the second one scored for low voices, and the third for four high voices following each other in canonic pairs above a bass anchor; perhaps these settings were envisaged as alternatives.

Another aspect of Tye's musical output is displayed in the large-scale motet *Peccavimus cum patribus nostris*, whose penitential text elaborates on a verse from Psalm 105 and most probably owes its origin to a Book of Hours or similar source. Here the vocal textures are differentiated in the manner of the pre-Reformation votive antiphon, with clearly defined sections for three and four voices contrasting with sonorous passages for full seven-part choir, building up a tremendous sense of momentum in the final tutti.

A question that surely comes to mind

when listening to these works is why they are not much more widely known. The answer, I believe, lies mainly in the vagaries of 20th-century music publishing. Parsons' music, along with that of Tye and Sheppard, was a casualty of the financial problems that truncated the plans for the great Tudor Church Music library series supported by the Carnegie Trust in the 1920s and 30s, from which many performing offprints were derived in the following decades. Although performing editions of all this music have long been in private circulation, their commercial viability is somewhat restricted, either because of their texts or their taxing vocal ranges. Making these treasures accessible to a wider public in our own times can perhaps be regarded as a kind of musical regeneration, in that they are enabled once again to flourish, albeit in a context altogether different to the one in which they were conceived.

Sally Dunkley © 2007

TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

1 AVE MARIA

*Ave Maria, gratia plena,
Dominus tecum.
Benedicta tu in mulieribus,
et benedictus fructus ventris tui.
Amen.*

2 O BONE JESU

*O bone Jesu.
Illumina oculos meos,
ne umquam obdormiam in morte:
nequando dicat inimicus:
Praelului adversus eum.
O Adonai.
In manus tuas Domine
commendo spiritum meum:
redemisti me, Domine Deus veritatis.
O Messias.
Locutus sum in lingua mea:
notum fac mihi finem meum,*

Robert Parsons

Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with you;
blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb.
Amen.

Robert Parsons

O Good Jesus.
Give light to my eyes,
that I never fall asleep in death:
lest the enemy say:
'I have prevailed over him'.
O Supreme Being.
Into your hands O Lord
I commend my spirit:
you have redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.
O Anointed Deliverer.
I have said with my tongue:
'Let me know my end,

O Agios.
*Et numerum dierum meorum quis est:
ut sciam quid desit mihi.*

O Heloi.
*Dirupisti, Domine, vincula mea:
tibi sacrificabo hostiam laudis,
et nomen Domini invocabo.*

O Emmanuel.
*Periit fuga a me,
et non est qui requirat animam meam.*

O Christe.
*Clamavi ad te, Domine, dixi:
Tu es spes mea,
portio mea in terra viventium.*

O Rex noster.
*Fac mecum signum in bonum,
ut videant qui oderunt me,
et confundantur:
quoniam tu Domine adiuvististi me
et consolatus es me.*

O Rabbi.
*Signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui
Domine: dedisti laetitiam in corde meo.
Amen.*

O Holy One.
And the number of my days: that I may
know how much longer I have to live'.

O Lord.
You, Lord, have broken my chains:
I will offer you a sacrifice of praise,
and invoke the name of the Lord.

O 'God with us'.
I cannot flee,
and nobody cares about my soul.

O Christ.
I have cried to you, O Lord, saying:
'You are my hope,
my share in the land of the living'.

Our King!
Make me a standard for good,
so that those who hate me may see it
and be overthrown:
because you Lord have helped
and consoled me.

O Teacher.
The light of your face has shone upon us,
O Lord: you have given joy to my heart.
Amen.

3 LAMENTATIONS

HETH
*Peccatum peccavit Jerusalem,
propterea instabilis facta est.
Omnes qui glorificabant eam
spreverunt illam,
quia viderunt ignominiam eius;
ipsa autem gemens
et conversa est retrorsum.*

TETH
*Sordes eius in pedibus eius,
nec recordata est finis sui.
Deposita est vehementer,
non habens consolatorem.
Vide, Domine, afflictionem meam,
quoniam erectus est inimicus.*

IOD
*Manum suam misit hostis
ad omnia desiderabilia eius,
quia vidit gentes
ingressas sanctuarium suum
de quibus preceperas
ne intrarent in ecclesiam tuam.
Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.*

Robert White

Jerusalem has committed a great sin,
and therefore she has become inconstant.
All who used to praise her
have spurned her,
because they have seen her shame;
and she groans
and has turned away her face.

Her own filth is upon her feet,
and she has given no thought to her fate.
She has been brought very low,
and has none to comfort her.
'Look, Lord, upon my suffering
and see how my enemy is exalted'.

The foe has laid hands
on all that was dear to her,
for she has seen the foreigner
enter her sanctuary –
the men you decreed should
never be admitted into your assembly.
Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
return again to the Lord your God.

CAPH

*Omnis populus eius gemens
et quaerens panem;
dederunt preciosa quaeque pro cibo
ad refocillandum animam.
Vide, Domine, et considera
quoniam facta sum vilis.*

LAMED

*O vos omnes qui transitis per viam,
attendite et videte
si est dolor sicut dolor meus,
quoniam vindemiavit me,
ut locutus est Dominus
in die irae furoris sui.*

MEM

*De excelso misit ignem
in ossibus meis, et erudit me;
expandit rete pedibus meis,
convertit me retrorsum.
Posuit me desolationem,
tota die maerore confectam.
Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.*

All her people are groaning
as they search for bread;
they have given anything of value for food
to keep them alive.
'Look, Lord, and mark
how low I have sunk.

All you who pass by on the road,
stop and see
if there be any grief like my grief,
for the Lord has pressed me like the grape,
as he said he would
on the day of his furious rage.

From on high he has sent a fire
into my very bones, and has taught me;
he has spread a net to snare my feet,
and has reversed my course.
He has left me abandoned,
exhausted from mourning all day long'.
Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
return again to the Lord your God.

4 CHRISTE QUI LUX ES ET DIES

*Christe qui lux es et dies,
noctis tenebras detegis,
lucisque lumen crederis,
lumen beatum praedicans.*

*Precamur, Sancte Domine,
defende nos in hac nocte,
sit nobis in te requies,
quietam noctem tribue.*

*Ne gravis somnus irruat,
nec hostis nos surripiat,
nec caro illi consentiens,
nos tibi reos statuatur.*

*Oculi somnum capiant,
cor ad te semper vigilet,
dextera tua protegat
famulos qui te diligunt.*

*Defensor noster aspice,
insidiantes reprime,
guberna tuos famulos,
quos sanguine mercatus es.*

*Memento nostri, Domine,
in gravi isto corpore,
qui es defensor animae,
adesto nobis Domine.*

Robert White

O Christ who are light and day,
you disperse the shadows of the night,
and we believe in you as light from light
who speak to us of the heavenly light.

We pray you, Holy Lord,
defend us this night,
let our rest be in you
and grant to us a quiet night.

Let no burdensome dream invade us,
nor let the enemy surprise us
lest our flesh in yielding to him
should render us guilty in your sight.

Let our eyes win sleep,
but let our hearts always watch for you,
and let your right hand protect
the servants who love you.

Look on us, our defender,
repulse all who lie in wait for us,
and direct us, your servants,
whom you have redeemed by your blood.

Remember us, Lord,
burdened by this body,
and as defender of our souls
be present to us Lord.

*Deo Patri sit gloria,
eiusque soli Filio,
cum Spiritu Paraclito,
et nunc et in perpetuum. Amen.*

⑤ AGNUS DEI

*Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,
dona nobis pacem.*

⑥ PECCAVIMUS CUM PATRIBUS NOSTRIS Christopher Tye

*Peccavimus cum patribus nostris;
injuste egimus, iniquitatem fecimus:
tuae tamen clementiae spe animati
ad te supplices confugimus,
benignissime Jesu, qui,
ut omnia potes, ita omnibus
te invocantibus vere praesto es.
Respice itaque in nos infelices
peccatores, bonitas immensa.*

To God the Father be glory
and to his only Son,
with the Spirit, the Comforter,
both now and for ever. Amen.

Christopher Tye

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of
the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of
the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of
the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of
the world, grant us peace.

We have sinned like our fathers;
we have dealt unjustly and done what is wrong:
yet, moved by hope in your kindness,
we humbly fly to your feet,
most gracious Jesus, who,
as you are able to do all things, so also
are you truly near to all who call on you.
Look therefore on us miserable sinners,
O measureless goodness.

*Respice in nos ingratisimos miseros,
salus et misericordia publica, nam
despecti ad omnipotentem venimus,
vulnerati ad medicum currimus,
deprecantes ut non secundum peccata
nostra facias, neque secundum iniquitates
nostras retribuas nobis.*

*Quin potius, misericordiae tuae antiquae
memor, pristinam clementiam serva:
ac mansuetudine adhibe incrementum
qui tam longanimiter
suspendisti ultionis gladium;
ablue innumerositatem criminum
qui delectaris multitudine
misericordiarum.*

*Ingere cordibus nostris tui sanctissimum
amorem, peccati odium
ac caelestis patriae ardens desiderium,
quod magis ac magis crescere faciat
tua omnipotens bonitas. Amen.*

Look on us ungrateful wretches,
O salvation and mercy of all, for as
contemptibles we come before your power,
like the wounded we run to our healer,
begging that you deal with us not
according to our sins, nor repay us
according to our faults.

No: rather, mindful of your mercy of old,
continue in your former kindness:
and show us still greater gentleness,
you who with such forbearance
have withheld your sword of vengeance:
cleanse away the countless number of our
misdeeds, you who delight in the multitude
of your mercies.

Arouse in our hearts a most holy love for
you, hatred for sin
and a burning desire for our heavenly home,
and let it grow more and more
by your almighty goodness. Amen.

Translations: © Jeremy White

The Sixteen is recognised as one of the world's greatest vocal ensembles. Its special reputation for performing early English polyphony, masterpieces of the Renaissance and a diversity of 20th-century music is drawn from the passions of conductor and founder, Harry Christophers. Over ninety recordings reflect The Sixteen's quality in a range of work spanning the music of five hundred years, winning many awards including a Grand Prix du Disque for Handel's *Messiah*, numerous Schallplattenkritik, the coveted Gramophone Award for Early Music for *The Eton Choirbook* and the prestigious Classical Brit Award for *Renaissance*. The Sixteen tours throughout Europe, Japan, Australia and the Americas and has given regular performances at major concert halls and festivals worldwide, including the Barbican Centre and Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, Sydney Opera House, and Vienna Musikverein; also at the BBC Proms, and the festivals of Salzburg, Granada, Lucerne and Istanbul. The group promotes The Choral Pilgrimage in some of the UK's finest cathedrals, bringing music back to the buildings for which it was written. The Sixteen are Associate Artists of London's Southbank Centre and also well known as the 'The Voices of Classic fM'. The Sixteen's own CD label CORO now releases most of the group's recordings.

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Ruth Massey**, Charlotte Mobbs, Rebecca Outram

ALTO Ian Aitkenhead, David Clegg, William Missin, Christopher Royall

TENOR Simon Berridge, Steven Harrold, Nicolas Robertson, David Roy

BASS Jonathan Arnold, Ben Davies, Eamonn Dougan, Timothy Jones

* not Tye: *Peccavimus* ** Tye: *Peccavimus* only



§ The Sixteen
HARRY CHRISTOPHERS

www.thesixteen.com

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Recording Engineer: Mike Hatch (Floating Earth Ltd)
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