

**PRESS RELEASE**

12 February 2018

**Howard Goodall's *Invictus: A Passion* receives its world premiere on 25 March in Houston, Texas and its European premiere on 25 May in London**

The premiere recording of *Invictus: A Passion* is to be released on The Sixteen's record label, CORO Connections, on 31 August 2018 performed by the Choir of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, with the Lanyer Ensemble and soloists from The Sixteen, conducted by Stephen Darlington.

Howard Goodall's brand new choral work, *Invictus: A Passion* is to receive its world premiere at **St Luke's Methodist Church, Houston, Texas on 25 March 2018** (Palm Sunday), conducted by the composer. The European premiere, performed by the **Choir of Christ Church Cathedral Oxford**, conducted by **Stephen Darlington** with soloists of **The Sixteen** and **The Lanyer Ensemble** will be at **St John's Smith Square on 25 May 2018**.

The work is a contemporary reflection on the themes of the traditional Christian Passion story with particular attention to the role and perspective of women. Poems by various authors are interwoven with the 1611 verse narrative of the biblical Passion by **Æmelia Lanyer** née Bassano, one of the first books published in the English language by a female poet. Interspersing extracts of her long-form poem are texts from various periods of historic turmoil, written or inspired by women which eloquently portray humility in the face of tyranny. These texts include *Gethsemane* by Ella Wheeler Wilcox, *Mary Magdalene and the Other Mary* by Christina Georgina Rossetti and *Slave Auction* by Ellen Watkins Harper.

The themes that run through the work – persecution of the innocent, malevolent authority exerting itself against ideas that threaten and challenge, the redemptive power of love, and the resilience of the human spirit – hold profound universal resonance.

Goodall said: "In writing a setting of the Passion story, in the 21st century, I felt it important to look at its ideas, its format and its message afresh...to reflect musically on what this story has to tell us, now."

The 55-minute, nine-movement work is scored for soprano solo, tenor solo, SATB choir and an unusually configured chamber orchestra of double (antiphonal) string quartet, bass, piano, horns and soprano saxophone. *Invictus: A Passion* was commissioned by St Luke's Friends of Music for the Chancel Choir of St Luke's United Methodist Church, Houston, Texas, Sid Davis, Director of Music and Fine Arts.

*Invictus: A Passion* will be the second collaboration between CORO Connections and Christ Church Cathedral Choir. The relationship began in 2016 with the acclaimed release of Francesco Durante's *Requiem* (COR16147) performed by Christ Church Cathedral Choir, Oxford Baroque, Soloists from The Sixteen and conducted by Stephen Darlington.

*Invictus: A Passion* is published by Faber Music.

The vocal score (0-571-53653-0) will be released in May.

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## **Notes to Editors**

### **About Howard Goodall**

Howard Goodall is a composer of choral music, stage musicals, TV and film scores, a music historian and broadcaster. His choral music is performed worldwide, featuring on several platinum-selling CDs. *Eternal Light: A Requiem* has had over 500 performances winning him a Classical BRIT Award and his 2009 *Enchanted Voices* was no.1 for six months in the Classical CD specialist chart, winning a Gramophone award. His *Rigaudon* accompanied Queen Elizabeth II on her Diamond Jubilee Regatta and he was musically responsible for Rowan Atkinson's performance at the 2012 London Olympics' Opening Ceremony. In 2014 his *Sure of the Sky-Des Himmels sicher* was performed in Mons and televised to mark the start of the First World War.

Howard's West End musicals include *The Hired Man*, *Girlfriends*, *The Kissing-Dance*, *The Dreaming*, *Love Story* and *Bend it Like Beckham*. His TV theme tunes include *Mr Bean*, *Blackadder*, *Red Dwarf*, *Q.I.* and *The Vicar of Dibley*. His film score *Into the Storm* won an EMMY.

For 30 years he has written and presented TV documentary series on the theory and history of music and his books accompanying the programmes are published in over 20 countries and widely used in schools. His BBC2 *Sergeant Pepper's Musical Revolution* was shown worldwide in 2017 to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beatles' album. His TV work has been honoured with numerous awards including a BAFTA and an RTS Prize for Outstanding Contribution to Broadcasting. He was England's first National Ambassador for Singing and Classic *FM's* Composer-in-Residence for many years. He was appointed CBE in the 2011 New Year's Honours for services to music education.

### **About the Choir of Christ Church Cathedral Oxford**

The Choir of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, founded 500 years ago, holds a distinctive place within the great English choral tradition. Unlike all other collegiate and cathedral choirs, it serves both an Oxford college and a diocese. The choir is revered for the vibrancy of its sound and its artistic flexibility, performing early and contemporary music with equal skill. On recent international tours, in addition to performing its own programmes, the choir has worked intensively alongside local community choirs in Portugal, Jamaica, Bermuda, China and the USA, culminating in successful and memorable joint concerts. Christ Church Cathedral Choir boasts a legacy of ground-breaking recordings which have excited the critics and the listening public for over thirty years. The astonishing versatility of this choir gives them a strong media profile, featuring in more than fifteen documentaries in the last ten years.

### **About Stephen Darlington**

Stephen Darlington is one of the country's leading choral conductors. He has been Director of Music and Tutor in Music at Christ Church since 1985. Previously he was Master of the Music at St. Alban's Abbey and Artistic Director of the world-famous International Organ Festival. He has established Christ Church as an acknowledged centre of academic musical excellence and maintained the highest choral traditions of the Church of England in the Cathedral. His outstanding strength is in his performances of choral music of the 16th century, and of modern sacred music. An extensive discography, comprising over fifty CDs, includes several award-winning recordings.

Stephen has travelled worldwide both with the choir and as an organist and conductor, directing, among others, the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, London Mozart Players, English Chamber Orchestra, Northern Sinfonia, Hanover Band, English String Orchestra, and London Musici. He has performed with many great artists including Plácido Domingo and José Carreras, and has collaborated with distinguished contemporary composers such as Judith Weir, John Tavener, Howard Goodall, and Robert Saxton. Stephen was President of the Royal College of Organists from 1998 to 2000 and is Chairman of the Ouseley Trust. He is currently Choragus of the University of Oxford and is one of

only two Oxford Doctors of Music in the University's Music Faculty. He has recently been awarded Honorary Membership of the Royal Academy of Music and appointed a Lay Canon of Christ Church Cathedral.

Christ Church Cathedral Choir and Stephen Darlington are represented by Val Fancourt Music Management ([www.valfancourt.com](http://www.valfancourt.com))

### **About 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.

### **About CORO and CORO Connections**

CORO is the award-winning record label of Harry Christophers and The Sixteen. Formed in 2001, CORO releases all of the ensemble's new recordings.

The label currently boasts 159 titles, including Allegri's *Miserere* and Tallis's *Spem in Alium*; an extensive collection of Bach and Handel titles including *Mass in B minor*, *Lutheran Masses*, *Messiah*, *Saul* and *Jephtha*; Requiems by Victoria, Brahms and Fauré; three volumes of Monteverdi's *Selva morale e spirituale* and his *Vespers of 1610*.

The label has released premiere recordings of works by Antonio Teixeira, James MacMillan, Will Todd, Tarik O'Regan, Matthew Martin and Roxanna Panufnik to name but a few, and has worked with the Britten Sinfonia, BBC Philharmonic and Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields, all of whom feature on CORO recordings.

The launch of CORO DVD in 2008 allowed the label to release Series One of the BBC's groundbreaking *Sacred Music* as well as four of the subsequent programmes in the series.

New CD releases include James MacMillan's *Stabat mater*, Purcell's *Royal Welcome Songs for King James II* (the first in a new series of Purcell recordings), choral works by Francis Poulenc, and a new album entitled *Sacred and Profane* which accompanies *The Choral Pilgrimage 2018*.

Launched in 2015, CORO Connections features recordings by our guest artists, all of whom have links to Harry Christophers, The Sixteen or the Handel and Haydn Society.

Founder and Conductor, Harry Christophers, is also Artistic Director of Boston's celebrated Handel and Haydn Society and since 2010 CORO has released all their recordings.