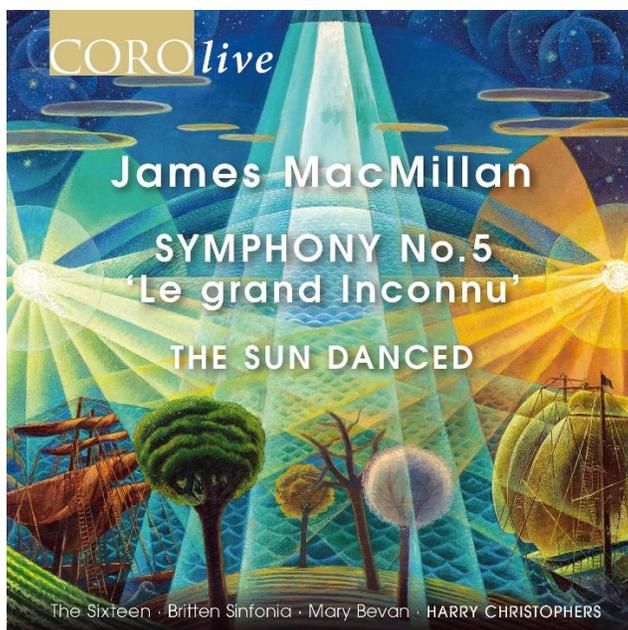


PRESS RELEASE
4 March 2020

The Sixteen release the premiere recording of Sir James MacMillan's *Symphony No.5 'Le grand Inconnu'* on CORO

Recorded live at the London premiere at the Barbican with The Sixteen, Britten Sinfonia and Genesis Sixteen



The Sixteen releases the premiere recording of **Sir James MacMillan's** *Symphony No.5 'Le grand Inconnu'* on **Friday 3 April**, on its own label CORO. It was commissioned especially by the **Genesis Foundation** for **Harry Christophers** and his award -winning choir, The Sixteen. They gave the world premiere of the work, a meditation on the mystery of the Holy Spirit, to rave reviews at the Edinburgh International Festival in August 2019 with the **Scottish Chamber Orchestra** and **Genesis Sixteen**.

This live recording is taken from the London premiere performed at the Barbican in October 2019 with The Sixteen, **Britten Sinfonia** and Genesis Sixteen. It's no secret that MacMillan's profound religious belief drives his creativity, but music this powerful conveys a universal message, and the title of his new symphony 'Le grand Inconnu' suggests many possible interpretations.

Harry Christophers CBE founder & conductor of The Sixteen says: *'By calling his new Symphony '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... From the barely audible breathing at the start of the symphony to the first forte that is so sudden and ecstatic that it produces one of those heart-pounding moments. Everything is drawn together by James into a cornucopia of sheer virtuosity and brilliance.'*

Sir James MacMillan says: *'I regard Harry Christophers' choir as one of the great choirs of the world and their standards of vocal brilliance and blend are unsurpassed.'*

The Genesis Foundation has commissioned 25 sacred music works in its 20-year history, from composers including Bob Chilcott, Roxanna Panufnik, Stephen Hough, Alissa Firsova and Will Todd, making it the largest commissioner of choral sacred music in the UK.

'Le grand inconnu' is the 20th commission that John Studzinski's Foundation and The Sixteen have collaborated on together. Over the last decade the partnership has resulted in new works from 13 composers as well as six albums on the CORO label and the first ever live-streamed concert from The Sistine Chapel.

To listen to the Genesis Foundation's podcast which features Sir James MacMillan and Cardinal Vincent Nichols discussing the Fifth Symphony visit genesisfoundation.org.uk

The disc also includes another premiere recording of a MacMillan work. *The Sun Danced*, sung by celebrated British soprano Mary Bevan, is an ecstatic choral celebration of the Miracle of Fatima, commissioned by the Shrine of Fatima for the celebration of the Centennial of the Apparitions in Portugal.

Title: Sir James MacMillan *Symphony No.5 'Le grand Inconnu' & The Sun Danced*

Catalogue Number: COR16179

Label: CORO

Release date: Friday 3 April 2020

Harry Christophers/Mary Bevan/The Sixteen/Genesis Sixteen/Britten Sinfonia

For further press information and to request a copy of the disc please contact:

Rebecca Driver Media Relations

Tel: 020 3691 7034

Email: ruth@rdmr.co.uk

Web: www.rdmr.co.uk

Notes to Editors

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. For information, please visit thesixteen.com

About the Genesis Foundation

Established by John Studzinski in 2001, the Genesis Foundation supports programmes that nurture the careers of outstanding young artists. In partnership with leaders of prestigious UK arts organisations such as the Almeida Theatre, LAMDA, National Theatre, Young Vic and The Sixteen, it provides and enhances opportunities for directors, playwrights, actors and musicians at key stages in their professional lives. It also awards the bi-annual Genesis Prize, the only arts award to focus on mentors and the vital role they play in an artist's development. For information, please visit genesisfoundation.org.uk

About Genesis Sixteen

Now in its ninth year, Genesis Sixteen is The Sixteen's unique free training scheme that aims to nurture the next generation of talented young ensemble singers, helping them to bridge the gap between student and professional performer. During the year-long scheme singers receive group tutoring from conductor Harry Christophers and associate conductor Eamonn Dougan, individual and consort mentoring from members of The Sixteen and masterclasses run by some of the industry's top vocal experts.

In 2014 the scheme was expanded to include a Conducting Scholarship, supporting graduate conductors in the early stages of their careers. Thanks to a close partnership with the Genesis Foundation, participants not only receive free tuition but also a bursary to cover all additional costs. Alumni from Genesis Sixteen's first eight years have enjoyed significant success: many are now performing, recording and touring with professional groups, including The Sixteen, and several have set up their own choirs and are showing true entrepreneurialism in developing their reputation on the music circuit.

About Britten Sinfonia

Just over 25 years ago, 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. Over the last year 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 in the 2019-20 season is touring to the US, Asia and much of Europe. It is a BBC Radio 3 Broadcast Partner and has awardwinning recordings on the Hyperion and Harmonia Mundi labels. For information, please visit brittensinfonia.com

About 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.