

PRESS RELEASE
4 September 2018



The Sixteen celebrates its 40th anniversary in 2019

Highlights include:

- A nine-venue UK tour of Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610*
- Annual Choral Pilgrimage returns to grassroots with English Renaissance music from the Eton Choirbook and a new work by Sir James MacMillan composed especially for the choir
- Christmas tour includes Britten's ever popular *Ceremony of Carols* and a performance of Handel's *Messiah*
- A mini-tour of the sell-out *The Queen of Heaven* programme pairs Allegri's *Miserere* with James MacMillan's own setting of the text
- Five performances of a new production of Handel's *Belshazzar* at the Grange Festival directed by Daniel Slater
- Long-standing relationships with key UK venues continue: the next stage of the Purcell cycle and exploring music from the Chapel Royal with extracts from Samuel Pepys' diary at Wigmore Hall; pieces by female composers commissioned by The Sixteen as part of *Venus Unwrapped* at Kings Place, in association with Genesis Sixteen
- International touring throughout the year to Vienna, Spain the USA, Australia and the Choir's first visit to Singapore
- The Sixteen's award-winning record label CORO releases five albums, including a new recording of Handel's *Acis and Galatea* and a special 40th Anniversary Collection with personal recommendations from members past & present

In May 1979, a group of singers and instrumentalists, brought together and conducted by Harry Christophers, gave their first concerts as The Sixteen. Now, 40 years later, the choir celebrates its ruby anniversary with a season full of concerts all over the UK and internationally: going back to key works in its history which have provided its foundation as well as looking forward with new commissions. This mixture has cemented the choir as one of the world's greatest ensembles, known for its tonal richness, expressive intensity and compelling collective artistry.

Harry Christophers CBE says: '*Can it really be 40 years since a fledgling group of singers gave their first concerts as The Sixteen in May 1979! In celebration of this milestone, we've got a great season with exciting and adventurous projects lined up. I can't thank everyone enough who have cheered us on over the years: our singers, orchestra, staff, supporters, and of course, our fiercely enthusiastic audiences for making The Sixteen all it is.*'

Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610*

The Sixteen and its own period instrument ensemble begin the celebrations with a nine-venue UK tour in February & June of Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610*: one of the most significant collections of sacred music ever written with thrilling rhythms, grand choruses and beautiful solo movements. Its virtuosity stretches every singer and instrumentalist's versatility to the limit, yet the effects of his demands are exhilarating. The choir follows Monteverdi's *dictum recitar cantando* (speak through singing) to maximum effect, bringing this glorious work to life in the wonderful acoustics of some of the UK's finest cathedrals. Dates include Derby Cathedral (**1 February**), Peterborough Cathedral (**2 February**), Lincoln Cathedral (**5 February**), Cadogan Hall (**12 February**),

Chichester Cathedral (**14 February**), Worcester Cathedral (**15 February**), Rochester Cathedral (**16 February**), St Albans Cathedral (**23 February**) & Saffron Hall (**9 June**).

Choral Pilgrimage 2019

The annual Choral Pilgrimage has become a much-loved staple in The Sixteen's programming and this year the programme brings together music past and present, highlighting The Sixteen's choral journey over 40 years. The choir's close relationship with Sir James MacMillan continues with a new commission: *O virgo prudentissima*, based on a fragment from the Eton Choirbook. The programme also features Tavener's *Hymn to the Mother of God & Hymn for the Dormition of the Mother of God*, Sheppard's *Gloria & Agnus Dei* from *Cantate Mass*, Eric Whitacre's *Sainte-Chapelle*, Fayrfax's *Aeternae laudis lilium*, Gabriel Jackson's *Ave Maria* and Robert Wylkynson's monumental *Salve Regina*, also from the Eton Choirbook. Beginning on **3 April** at Kings Place, it takes in 27 locations up and down the UK, finishing up at Greyfriars Kirk, Edinburgh on **26 October**.

Christmas Tour & Handel's *Messiah*

The year closes with the customary Christmas tour of which the highlight is Benjamin Britten's much-loved *Ceremony of Carols*. Other works on the programme include Plainsong *Salve Regina*, various works by Walton, Matthew Martin *Adam lay y-bounded*, Poston *Jesus Christ the apple tree*, Warlock *Corpus Christi carol*, various works by Holst, Praetorius/arr. Sanstrom *Lo, how a rose e'er blooming*, James Burton *Balulalow*, Cecilia McDowall *Of a Rose* and Anon *The Salutation carol*. Performances include St David's Hall, Cardiff (**15 December**), Cadogan Hall, London (**16 & 17 December**) & St John the Evangelist, Oxford (**19 December**) with more to be announced. Further Christmas dates will include a special performance of Handel's *Messiah* to mark the end of The Sixteen's anniversary year. More details to be announced later in the year.

Queen of Heaven

The Sixteen's *Queen of Heaven* programme has been selling out cathedrals and concert halls for the last five years, receiving widespread critical acclaim when it toured the UK as part of the 2013 Choral Pilgrimage. It focuses on three composers' unique devotion to the church and this programme pairs a new version of Allegri's renowned *Miserere* with Sir James MacMillan's own setting of the text alongside pieces by Palestrina. Performances include Newcastle Cathedral (**28 February**), Ripon Cathedral (**1 March**), and Wakefield Cathedral (**2 March**).

Handel's *Belshazzar* at The Grange Festival

From **20 June – 6 July**, The Sixteen choir and orchestra join forces with The Grange Festival Chorus for five performances of Handel's dramatic oratorio *Belshazzar*, conducted by Christophers at The Grange Festival. This previously rarely staged masterpiece receives a new and vibrant production by **Daniel Slater**, which takes its story from the Book of Daniel, dramatizing the fall of Babylon at the hands of Cyrus the Great and the freeing of the Jewish nation, with the chorus taking centre stage: at once pleasure-seeking Babylonians, or solemn Jews, or noble Persians. A host of fine Handelians perform the solo roles: tenor **Robert Murray** as Belshazzar, soprano **Rosemary Joshua** is Nitocris, countertenor **Christopher Ainslie** as Cyrus, bass-baritone **Henry Waddington** is Gobrias and countertenor **James Laing** performs the role of Daniel.

Residencies at Kings Place and Wigmore Hall

Wigmore Hall

Between 1680 and 1695, Purcell composed a series of Welcome Songs and Odes for the celebration of royal occasions. On **17 January** a small consort of singers and instrumentalists showcases the variety and diversity of Purcell, who only just made it into his 30s. On **17 April**, eight singers from The Sixteen and seven instrumentalists explore music from the Chapel Royal, including works by Blow, Humfrey, Corbetta, and Morelli, interspersed with extracts from the diary of Samuel Pepys, narrated by **Michael Pennington**.

Kings Place

As part of Kings Place Venus Unwrapped, which celebrates female composers in all their diversity, The Sixteen pays homage to St Cecilia, the patron saint of music, in association with the Genesis Foundation. Many of the works have been commissioned by The Sixteen over the years and the repertoire includes Britten's *Hymn to the Virgin & Hymn to Saint Cecilia*, Ruth Byrchmore's *Prayer of St Theresa of Avila*, Cecilia McDowall *Now May We Singen*, Margaret Rizza's *O Speculum Columbe*, Alissa Firsova's *Stabat Mater*, Howells' *Take Him Earth for Cherishing*, Kim Porter's *Christmas Eve*, Roxanna Panufnik's *Prayer*, Poston's *Jesus Christ the Apple Tree*, and Maxwell Davies' *Lullaby for Lucy*.

Other UK Performances

Other concerts this season include a return to the intimate, candlelit surroundings of the **Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, The Globe** on **17 February** with a programme spanning two centuries and featuring music from the Eton Choirbook, alongside works by the multi-talented composer, poet, doctor and lawyer Thomas Campion. A few days later, on **22 February**, five singers from the ensemble and nine instrumentalists give a performance of Handel's *Acis and Galatea* at Bath's The Assembly Rooms with **Jeremy Budd** and **Grace Davidson** in the respective title roles, alongside **Mark Dobell** as Damon, **Simon Berridge** as *Coridon* and **Stuart Young** as Polyphemus.

International Touring

The Sixteen continues to expand its international programme with performances across the globe in four locations. The ensemble travels to Vienna in January for an all-Handel programme as part of the Konzerthaus Resonanzen Festival; in March, they tour to Australia and also, for the first time, Singapore where the repertoire features the music of Arvo Pärt & William Byrd. April sees Handel's *Israel in Egypt* performed in Spain and, in June, The Sixteen's orchestra join the choir in a performance of Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610* in Granada.

Outreach Work

The Sixteen's extensive Education and Outreach programme inspires and supports creativity throughout the UK's communities each year. An integral part of the The Sixteen's mission is to connect the power of music to engage, inspire and transform musical education. Christophers and The Sixteen are particularly keen to reach people who may not have had access to music in school and are in culturally underserved areas where arts provision is low. To mark this in the ensemble's 40th anniversary year, This Sixteen will undertake residencies in various locations across the UK, uniting communities through singing. These include the popular workshops which sit alongside the Choral Pilgrimage programme, under the expert guidance of associate conductor **Eamonn Dougan** and singer **Sally Dunkley**: London (**25 May**); Manchester (**6 July**); Carlisle (**13 July**); Tewkesbury (**7 September**); Blackburn (**21 September**); Edinburgh (**26 October**).

Forthcoming CORO releases

In celebration of the 40th anniversary, The Sixteen's award-winning record label, CORO, releases five albums by the ensemble including a special 40th Anniversary Collection comprising 40 tracks which have defined The Sixteen over the last four decades. With personal recommendations from members both past and present, this beautifully packaged album promises to be the must-have collection for all fans of choral music. Other releases include a new recording of Handel's *Acis and Galata*; music by Purcell and Palestrina, two composers The Sixteen have championed to critical acclaim; and a disc which includes all the music from The Choral Pilgrimage 2019, released on **1 March**. The Sixteen will also release two albums this autumn – *Star of Heaven: The Eton Choirbook Legacy* which features four stunning new Genesis Foundation commissions inspired by the legendary choirbook, and *A Renaissance Christmas* featuring some magnificent festive music for those looking for something slightly different this Christmas.

For further press information please contact

Rebecca Driver Media Relations

web: www.rdmr.co.uk

email: rebecca@rdmr.co.uk | ruth@rdmr.co.uk

tel: 020 3691 7034

UK Listings:

Monteverdi's Vespers of 1610

1 February 2019, Derby Cathedral

2 February 2019, Peterborough Cathedral

5 February 2019, Lincoln Cathedral

12 February 2019, Cadogan Hall

14 February 2019, Chichester Cathedral

15 February 2019, Worcester Cathedral

16 February 2019, Rochester Cathedral

23 February 2019, St Albans Cathedral

9 June 2019, Saffron Hall

The Sixteen/Harry Christophers

Choral Pilgrimage 2019

3 April 2019, Kings Place

5 April 2019, St John's College Chapel, Cambridge (to be confirmed)

5 June 2019, Old Royal Naval College Chapel, Greenwich

21 June 2019, Boughton Aluph Church, Boughton Aluph

8 July 2019, The Bridgewater Hall, Manchester

9 July 2019, York Minster

10 July 2019 Lancaster Priory

11 July 2019, Carlisle Cathedral

12 July 2019, Hull Minster

6 September 2019, Wells Cathedral

7 September 2019, Tewkesbury Abbey

10 September 2019, St James' Church, Spanish Place, London

11 September 2019, All Saints' Church, Northampton*

13 September 2019, Winchester Cathedral*

19 September 2019, Birmingham Cathedral

20 September 2019, Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral

21 September 2019, Blackburn Cathedral

2 October 2019, Croydon Minster*

9 October 2019, Hereford Cathedral

10 October 2019, Llandaff Cathedral

11 October 2019, Truro Cathedral

12 October 2019, Exeter Cathedral

18 October 2019, Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford

23 October 2019, Southwell Minster

24 October 2019, Sheffield Cathedral

25 October 2019, Durham Cathedral

26 October 2019, Greyfriars Kirk, Edinburgh

Plainsong Salve Regina

Tavener Hymn to the Mother of God

Sheppard 'Gloria' from Cantate Mass

Eric Whitacre Sainte-Chapelle

Wylkynson *Salve Regina* a9
Fayrfax *Aeternae laudis liliun*
Gabriel Jackson *Ave Maria*
Tavener *Hymn for the Dormition of the Mother of God*
James MacMillan *O virgo prudentissima* (new commission)
Shepard 'Agnus Dei' from *Cantate Mass*

The Sixteen/Harry Christophers/Eamonn Dougan*

The Sixteen at Christmas

15 December 2019, St David's Hall, Cardiff

16 & 16 December 2019, Cadogan Hall, London

19 December 2019, St John the Evangelist, Oxford

Further dates to be announced, including Handel's *Messiah*

Walton *Make we joy now in this fest*

Matthew Martin *Adam lay ybounden*

Poston *Jesus Christ the apple tree*

Warlock *Corpus Christi*

Holst *This have I done for my true love*

Praetorius arr. Jan Sandström *Lo, how a rose e'er blooming*

James Burton *Balulalow*

Cecilia McDowall *Of a Rose*

Britten *A Ceremony of Carols*

Medieval and traditional carols *Nowell, nowell; Out of your sleep; Sweet was the song; Nowell, nowell; In Bethlehem; The Saviour's Work; There is no rose; Angelus ad virginem; Make we joy; The Salutation Carol*

The Sixteen/Harry Christophers

The Queen of Heaven

28 February 2019, Newcastle Cathedral

1 March 2019, Ripon Cathedral

2 March 2019, Wakefield Cathedral

Plainsong *Regina caeli*

Palestrina 'Kyrie' from *Missa Regina caeli*

James MacMillan *Dominus dabit benignitatem*

Allegri *Miserere* (evolution version)

James MacMillan *Videns Dominus*

Palestrina *Stabat mater* a8

Palestrina *Regina caeli Laetare* a8

Palestrina *Vineam meam non custodivi*

James MacMillan *O radiant dawn*

Palestrina *Pulchrae sunt genae tuae*

James MacMillan *Miserere*

Palestrina 'Agnus Dei' from *Missa Regina Caeli*

The Sixteen/Harry Christophers

Handel's Belshazzar

20, 22 & 29 June, 4 & 6 July 2019, The Grange Festival

Robert Murray *Belshazzar*

Rosemary Joshua *Nitocris*

Christopher Ainslie *Cyrus*

Henry Waddington *Gobrias*

James Laing *Daniel*

The Sixteen Choir & Orchestra/The Grange Festival Chorus/Harry Christophers

Purcell's Royal Welcome Songs for King Charles II

17 January 2019, Wigmore Hall

Purcell *The Lord is My Light*

Theodosius – Act 1 Scene 1

God save our sov'reign Charles

Welcome Song for the King 1681 'Swifter, Isis, swifter flow'

Fantasia In nomine a6

Fantasia In nomine a7

Welcome Song for his Majesty 1682 'The summer's absence unconcerned we bear'

Tavener *'Benedictus'* from *Missa Gloria tibi Trinitas*

The Sixteen/Harry Christophers

Authors of Light

17 February, Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, The Globe, London

Programme to include music by Cornysh, Lambe, Byrd and Campion

The Sixteen/Harry Christophers

Handel's Acis and Galatea

22 February 2019, The Assembly Rooms, Bath

Grace Davidson *Galatea*

Jeremy Budd *Acis*

Mark Dobell *Damon*

Simon Berridge *Coridon*

Stuart Young *Polyphemus*

The Sixteen/Harry Christophers

Music from the Chapel Royal

17 April 2019, Wigmore Hall, London

Programme to include works by Blow, Humfrey, Corbetta and Morelli, interspersed with extracts from the diary of Samuel Pepys

The Sixteen/Harry Christophers

Venus Unwrapped

29 November 2019, Kings Place, London

Britten *A Hymn to the Virgin*

Britten *Hymn to Saint Cecilia*

Ruth Byrchmore *Prayer of St Teresa of Avila*

Cecilia McDowall *Now may we singen*

Margaret Rizza *O speculum columbe*

Alissa Firsova *Stabat mater*

Howells *Take him, earth for cherishing*

Kim Porter *Christmas Eve*

Roxanna Panufnik *Prayer*

Poston *Jesus Christ the apple tree*

Maxwell Davies *Lullaby for Lucy*

The Sixteen/Harry Christophers