



CORO

§ The Sixteen Edition

MASS IN B MINOR

BWV 232

J. S. BACH

CATHERINE DUBOSC

CATHERINE DENLEY

JAMES BOWMAN

JOHN MARK AINSLEY

MICHAEL GEORGE

The Sixteen

The Symphony of Harmony and Invention

HARRY CHRISTOPHERS

THE VOICES OF
CLASSIC *fm*



To record Bach's iconic Mass in B minor has to be one of the highlights of my career. Not only does it demand choral singing of blistering athleticism but also sensitive, responsive and, at times, majestic orchestral playing coupled with virtuosic obligatos and a team of soloists who can breathe an immediacy of expression into the words of the mass.

I do believe that this is a recording of exceptional quality and one of the most remarkable and memorable in The Sixteen's catalogue. In the company of such phenomenal musicians, it is perhaps remiss of me to single out anyone in particular. However, I feel I must mention the unique James Bowman; when I asked James for this project, I was astounded to learn that he had never recorded the work before - our gain and others' loss. He himself was nervous of the challenge but he had no reason to be; you are witness here to one of the most heart-rending interpretations of the Agnus Dei that you will ever hear.

When you are recording, you long for the occasion when one 'take' not only suffices but indeed fulfils all expectations. Michael George's and Roger Montgomery's rendition of the Quoniam does just that; singing of immense nobility and playing that is sheer perfection. How anyone can play the natural horn without splitting at least one note is unimaginable.

For once words fail me; it is for you alone to judge whether or not The Sixteen in all its glory sounds inspirational.

Harry
Christophers,

MASS IN B MINOR

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

CD1

KYRIE

- | | | |
|---|---|------|
| 1 | Kyrie eleison (<i>Chorus</i>) | 9.01 |
| 2 | Christe eleison (<i>Duet: Soprano I & II</i>) | 4.48 |
| 3 | Kyrie eleison (<i>Chorus</i>) | 3.29 |

GLORIA

- | | | |
|----|--|-------|
| 4 | Gloria in excelsis Deo (<i>Chorus</i>) | 1.52 |
| 5 | Et in terra pax (<i>Chorus</i>) | 4.06 |
| 6 | Laudamus te (<i>Air: Soprano II</i>)
(<i>solo violin: David Woodcock</i>) | 4.22 |
| 7 | Gratias agimus (<i>Chorus</i>) | 2.20 |
| 8 | Domine Deus (<i>Duet: Soprano I, Tenor</i>)
(<i>solo flute: Rachel Beckett</i>) | 5.28 |
| 9 | Qui tollis (<i>Chorus</i>) | 3.11 |
| 10 | Qui sedes ad dextram Patris (<i>Air: Alto</i>)
(<i>solo oboe: Anthony Robson</i>) | 4.17 |
| 11 | Quoniam tu solus Sanctus (<i>Air: Bass</i>)
(<i>solo horn: Roger Montgomery</i>) | 4.30 |
| 12 | Cum Sancto Spiritu (<i>Chorus</i>) | 3.52 |
| | Total Playing Time | 51.28 |

CD2

CREDO

- | | | |
|---|--|------|
| 1 | Credo in unum Deo (<i>Chorus</i>) | 1.59 |
| 2 | Patrem omnipotentem (<i>Chorus</i>) | 1.58 |
| 3 | Et in unum Dominum
(<i>Duet: Soprano I, Alto</i>) | 4.21 |
| 4 | Et incarnatus est (<i>Chorus</i>) | 3.19 |
| 5 | Crucifixus (<i>Chorus</i>) | 3.11 |
| 6 | Et resurrexit (<i>Chorus</i>) | 3.58 |
| 7 | Et in Spiritum Sanctum (<i>Air: Bass</i>) | 5.17 |
| 8 | Confiteor unum baptisma (<i>Chorus</i>) | 4.54 |
| 9 | Et expecto (<i>Chorus</i>) | 2.12 |

SANCTUS & BENEDICTUS

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 10 | Sanctus (<i>Chorus</i>) | 4.49 |
| 11 | Osanna (<i>Chorus</i>) | 2.58 |
| 12 | Benedictus (<i>Air: Tenor</i>)
(<i>solo flute: Rachel Beckett</i>) | 4.24 |
| 13 | Osanna (<i>Chorus</i>) | 2.59 |

AGNUS DEI

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|-------|
| 14 | Agnus Dei (<i>Air: Alto</i>) | 5.36 |
| 15 | Dona nobis pacem (<i>Chorus</i>) | 2.42 |
| | Total Playing Time | 55.01 |

MASS IN B MINOR

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Bach did not compose the *Mass in B Minor*, he compiled it. The *Mass* had its origins in two much shorter and entirely separate pieces: a *Sanctus* written for a Christmas service at Leipzig in 1724, and a B minor Missa (just a *Kyrie* and *Gloria*) composed for the Catholic court at Dresden in 1733. The *Osanna in excelsis*, *Benedictus*, *Agnus Dei* and *Credo* Bach adapted from suitable arias and choruses drawn from his existing cantatas. Only a handful of movements (including the opening of the *Credo*) appear to have been written specifically for the *Mass* when Bach came to compile it during the final years of his life.

In his careful recycling of old material Bach may be considered a 'green' composer, but not a lazy one. Such economy of effort was entirely typical of the period. Bach and his contemporaries didn't wait around to be struck by the blinding light of inspiration, they were craftsmen who were required to produce music regularly and to order. Parody technique – the re-use of existing music but with new words – was widely employed at the time both as a convenient expedient when time was short and as a means of giving occasional music greater permanence.

Originality *per se* was not the major criterion of artistic judgement that it is today. So the *Mass* is in no sense a compromise, rather we should view it as a powerful vindication of parody as a compositional technique.

But for what purpose did Bach assemble the *Mass in B Minor*? A complete setting of the *Mass* had no place in the Lutheran liturgy in Leipzig which only used the *Kyrie*, *Gloria* and *Sanctus* (and even then not all at the same time). Neither could the work have been performed as part of a Catholic service. Not only was it simply too long, but Bach also departed from the authorised Latin text (omitting the third petition of *Agnus Dei*), and divided the *Sanctus* into two separate sections which would have been liturgically inappropriate. It would have been unusual for a composer of the Baroque era to write a work for no specific occasion and with no prospect of a performance, but yet there are no records to show that the work was ever performed in its entirety in either a sacred or secular context during Bach's lifetime. So why did he expend so much trouble and energy on the work?

Perhaps it was written with an eye to posterity: a summation of Bach's compositional skills charting his artistic development over three decades. There is no doubt that Bach was acutely aware of his own musical heritage. For over two centuries before his birth there had been Bachs in well-placed positions as court, town or church musicians in central Germany, and around the

time of his 50th birthday Johann Sebastian collated the available evidence and produced a Bach family tree. His interest in his predecessors also extended to their music. He had inherited from his father, and further supplemented, a manuscript collection of family music, the *Alt-Bachisches Archiv*, and regularly performed the motets of his uncles Johann Christoph and Johann Michael. Might the *Mass in B Minor*, then, have been intended as his own musical legacy to his family?

The *Mass* does not stand alone. In his final years Bach, who had long since ceased to invest much time or energy in discharging his church duties as Thomaskantor, seems to have planned a series of works as a summation of his art in many fields. It was a rich harvest: *The Well-Tempered Clavier* Book II, the eighteen chorale preludes BWV 651-667, *The Musical Offering*, *Goldberg Variations* and the compendious *Art of Fugue*. In common with the *Mass*, both the second book of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* and the eighteen chorale preludes also contain much earlier material, carefully refined with a wisdom which only comes with age and experience. And like the *Mass* all these works exhibit a self-conscious and encyclopaedic panoply of styles, techniques and approaches. But unique amongst this group of late works, the *Mass* alone is for choral forces.

Bach seems to have viewed the *Mass* as the most historically durable of forms. Undeniably, the Latin text stood above time

and transient fashion, unlike the ephemeral poetry of his cantatas. Arguably, too, choral music was less prone to fashionable changes than solo vocal and instrumental music, and the *Mass* had always been essentially choral rather than soloistic in emphasis. Bach was also keenly aware of the venerable tradition of *Mass* composition as far back as Palestrina (whose six-voice *Missa sine nomine* he performed and later echoed in the opening chorus and *Confiteor* of the *Credo*), and must have wanted to contribute to the genre which from the fourteenth century composers had come to regard as the ultimate form of sacred music.

In recent years historically informed approaches to the performance of Bach's *Mass* have led to a certain amount of controversy both on and off the concert platform. Reliable scholarly work by the American musicologist Joshua Rifkin has suggested that Bach's Leipzig cantatas and Passions were usually performed by just four singers who took both the solo as well as the chorus parts. When more good singers were available, Bach might either write for them in six parts (as in the *Sanctus* of 1724) or in eight parts (as in the *St. Matthew Passion*), or else deploy his four extra singers to strengthen the solo choral ensemble at climactic moments, rather like the *ripieno* strings in a Baroque concerto *grosso*.

Some conductors have applied this evidence to the entire *Mass in B Minor*, with mixed results. Movements such as the highly-charged

Crucifixus have gained a madrigalian intimacy, while other sections, like the explosive opening of the *Gloria*, have struck some as rather underpowered. But of one thing we can be certain: Bach was a practical musician and worked with whatever forces were at his

disposal, large or small. Maybe we should do the same; perhaps pragmatism should be our only dogma. The present recording therefore follows Bach's fundamental performing ethos, and uses the best forces available today.

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The Sixteen

SOPRANO

Fiona Clarke
Libby Crabtree
Ruth Dean
Sally Dunkley
Nicola Jenkin
Carys Lane
Rebecca Outram
Katie Pringle

ALTO

Andrew Giles
Natanya Hadda
Michael Lees
Philip Newton
Christopher Royall
Susanna Spicer

TENOR

Simon Berridge
Andrew Carwood
Robert Johnston
Duncan MacKenzie
Neil MacKenzie
David Roy

BASS

Simon Birchall
Matthew Brook
Robert Evans
Charles Gibbs
Timothy Jones
Michael McCarthy

Soloists

SOPRANO I

Catherine Dubosc

SOPRANO II

Catherine Denley

ALTO

James Bowman

TENOR

John Mark Ainsley

BASS

Michael George

The Symphony of Harmony and Invention

VIOLIN

David Woodcock
Marc Ashley Cooper
James Ellis
Stephen Jones
Claire Sansom
William Thorp
Helen Orsler
Theresa Caudle
Stefanie Heichelheim

VIOLA

Jane Norman
Katie Heller

CELLO

Jane Coe
Helen Verney

BASS

Tim Lyons

FLUTE

Rachel Beckett
Utako Ikeda

OBOE, OBOE D'AMORE

Anthony Robson
Cherry Forbes
Matthew Dixon

BASSOON

Sally Jackson
Noel Rainbird

HORN

Roger Montgomery

TRUMPET

Crispian Steele-Perkins
David Blackadder
Philip Bainbridge

TIMPANI

Benedict Hoffnung

ORGAN

Laurence Cummings

HARPSICHORD

Alastair Ross

THEORBO

Robin Jeffrey



MASS IN B MINOR BWV 232
J. S. BACH

CD1

KYRIE

❶ **Chorus**

Kyrie eleison

Lord have mercy

❷ **Duet (Soprano I & II)**

Christe eleison

Christ have mercy

❸ **Chorus**

Kyrie eleison

Lord have mercy

GLORIA

❹ **Chorus**

Gloria in excelsis Deo

Glory be to God on high

❺ **Chorus**

*Et in terra pax,
hominibus bonae voluntatis*

And on earth peace
to men of good will.

6 Air (Soprano II)

*Laudamus te,
benedicimus te,
adoramus te,
glorificamus te.*

We praise Thee,
we bless Thee,
we worship Thee,
we glorify Thee.

7 Chorus

*Gratias agimus tibi
propter magnam gloriam tuam.*

We give thanks to Thee
for Thy great glory.

8 Duet (Soprano I, Tenor)

*Domine Deus, Rex coelestis,
Deus Pater omnipotens.
Domine Fili unigenite,
Jesu Christe altissime.
Domine Deus,
Agnus Dei,
Filius Patris.*

O Lord God, heavenly King,
God the Father Almighty.
O Lord, the only-begotten Son,
Jesu Christ most high.
O Lord God,
Lamb of God,
Son of the Father.

9 Chorus

*Qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Qui tollis peccata mundi,
suscipe deprecationem nostram.*

Thou that takest away the sins of the world,
have mercy upon us.
Thou that takest away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer.

10 Air (Alto)

*Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris,
miserere nobis.*

Thou that sittest at the right hand of the
Father, have mercy upon us.

11 Air (Bass)

*Quoniam tu solus Sanctus,
tu solus Dominus,
tu solus Altissimus, Jesu Christe.*

For Thou only art Holy,
Thou only art the Lord,
Thou only art the most high, Jesus Christ.

12 Chorus

*Cum Sancto Spiritu,
in gloria Dei Patris.
Amen.*

With the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen

CD2

C R E D O

1 Chorus

Credo in unum Deum

I believe in one God.

2 Chorus

Patrem omnipotentem,

The Father Almighty,

*factorem coeli et terrae,
visibilibus omnium et invisibilibus.*

Maker of heaven and earth,
and of all things visible and invisible.

3 Duet (Soprano I, Alto)

*Et in unum Dominum Jesum Christum,
Filium Dei unigenitum,
et ex Patre natum ante omnia saecula.
Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine,
Deum verum de Deo vero,
genitum non factum,
consubstantialem Patri,
per quem omnia facta sunt.
Qui, propter nos homines,
et propter nostram salutem,
descendit de caelis.*

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only-begotten Son of God,
begotten of his Father before all worlds.
God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God,
begotten, not made,
being of one substance with the Father,
by whom all things were made.
Who for us men,
and for our salvation,
came down from heaven.

4 Chorus

*Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto
ex Maria virgine,
et homo factus est.*

And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost
of the Virgin Mary
and was made man.

5 Chorus

*Crucifixus etiam pro nobis
sub Pontio Pilato;
passus et sepultus est.*

And was crucified also for us
under Pontius Pilate;
He suffered and was buried.

6 Chorus

*Et resurrexit tertia die,
secundum scripturas;
et ascendit in coelum,
sedet ad dexteram Dei Patris.
Et iterum venturus est cum gloria
judicare vivos et mortuos,
cujus regni non erit finis.*

And the third day He rose again
according to the scriptures;
and ascended into heaven,
and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father.
And He shall come again with glory
to judge both the quick and the dead,
whose kingdom shall have no end.

7 Air (Bass)

*Et in Spiritum Sanctum
Dominum et vivificantem,
qui ex Patre Filioque procedit;
qui cum Patre et Filio simul
adoratur et conglorificatur;
qui locutus est per Prophetas.
Et unam sanctam catholicam
et apostolicam ecclesiam.*

And I believe in the Holy Ghost,
the Lord and giver of life,
who proceedeth from the Father and the Son;
who with the Father and the Son together
is worshipped and glorified;
who spake by the prophets.
And I believe in one holy Catholic
and Apostolic church.

8 Chorus

*Confiteor unum baptisma
in remissionem peccatorum.*

I acknowledge one baptism
for the remission of sins.

9 Chorus

*Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum
et vitam venturi saeculi. Amen*

I acknowledge one baptism
for the remission of sins.

SANCTUS

10 Chorus

*Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus,
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria eius.*

Holy, Holy, Holy,
Lord God of Hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.

11 Chorus

Osanna in excelsis.

Hosanna in the highest.

BENEDICTUS

12 Air (Tenor)

*Benedictus qui venit
in nomine Domini.*

Blessed is He that cometh
in the name of the Lord.

13 Chorus

Osanna in excelsis.

Hosanna in the highest.

AGNUS DEI

14 Air (Alto)

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

O Lamb of God,
that takest away the sins of the world,
have mercy upon us.

15 Chorus

Dona nobis pacem.

Grant us peace.

§ The Sixteen

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§ The Sixteen Edition

CORO is the lively and successful record label of The Sixteen, The Symphony of Harmony and Invention and Harry Christophers.

Formed in 2001, CORO is re-mastering, re-packaging and re-issuing recordings of The Sixteen that were for a short time available on Collins Classics, and making brand new recordings every year.

§ The Sixteen

HARRY CHRISTOPHERS

After nearly three decades of world-wide performance and recording, **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, many prize-winning, reflect The Sixteen's quality in a range of work spanning the music of six hundred years.

The Sixteen has toured throughout Europe, Japan, Australia and the Americas and has given regular performances at major concert halls and festivals worldwide, including the Barbican Centre, Sydney Opera House, and Vienna Musikverein; also the BBC Proms, and the festivals of Salzburg, Granada, Lucerne and Istanbul. The vigour and passion of its performance win new fans wherever it performs. At home in the UK, the group promotes A Choral Pilgrimage, a tour of our finest cathedrals bringing music back to the buildings for which it was written.

The choir is enhanced by the existence of its own period instrument orchestra, The Symphony of Harmony and Invention, and through it Harry Christophers brings fresh insights to music including that of Purcell, Monteverdi, JS Bach and Handel. 2004 witnessed the launch of the group's annual Handel in Oxford Festival, a weekend of concerts and events dedicated to the life of this great composer.



Recording Producer: Mark Brown
Recording Engineer: Mike Hatch (Floating Earth)
Recorded at St Augustine's Church, Kilburn, London,
April, 1994
CD Mastering: Julian Millard

Quad Electroacoustics Ltd loaned Floating Earth
Quad ESL-63 professional loudspeakers and 520f
power amplifier for the recording

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