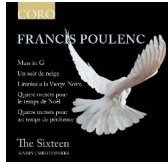


## Francis Poulenc - Mass in G; Un Soir de neige' Litanies... (2017)



1 *Salve regina* 4.30 Quatre motets pour un temps de pénitence 2 *Timor et tremor* 2.44 3  
*Vinea mea electa* 3.28 4 *Tenebrae factae sunt* 3.59 5 *Tristis est anima mea* 3.19 6  
*Litanies à la Vierge Noire* 8.38  
Quatre motets pour le temps de Noël  
7 *O magnum mysterium* 3.44 8 *Quem vidistis pastores* 2.28 9 *Videntes stellam* 2.47 10  
*Hodie Christus natus est* 2.11  
Un soir de neige  
11 *De grandes cuillers de neige* 1.23 12 *La bonne neige* 1.34 13 *Bois meurtri* 2.25 14 *La  
nuit le froid la solitude* 1.06 15 *Ave verum corpus* 2.31  
Mass in G  
16 *Kyrie* 3.15 17 *Gloria* 3.52 18 *Sanctus* 2.30 19 *Benedictus* 3.25 20 *Agnus Dei* 4.50  
The Sixteen Harry Christophers – conductor

The sacred music of Francis Poulenc would seem somewhat off the regular path of the popular British choir The Sixteen, but in a recording of the cantata *Figure humaine* and again with the present selection of sacred choral works, they show themselves to be sensitive and skillful Poulenc interpreters. On one hand this isn't a surprise: Poulenc drew on the Renaissance repertoire that is The Sixteen's bread and butter. They can deliver the clean lines and the vocal homogeneity that the basic style demands. But this is not neo-Renaissance music; it has a numinous, radiant quality and communicates the feeling that it was directly shaped by Poulenc's own experiences. This is where The Sixteen excel: they convey a sense of commitment to the music, and their readings are unique. Sample the "O magnum mysterium." There are dozens of recordings of this piece, beloved by school choirs in several countries, but Sixteen director Harry Christophers here shapes a flowing reading that's faster than usual and uniquely suits the transcendent quality of the text. The Mass in G is perfectly controlled, but somehow radiant. Christophers' engineering staff delivers superior results in London's Church of St. Alban the Martyr, and the package as a whole offers uniquely satisfying results even for those who already have plenty of Poulenc, or plenty of The Sixteen. ---James Manheim, allmusic.com

Francis Poulenc is considered one of the greatest melodists of the 20th century but it is his individual and immediately recognisable harmonic language that makes his music so distinctive. Often overlooked in his lifetime and in the years after his death, his sacred music was an expression of his more serious side and, following the death of his close friend, Pierre-Octave Ferroud, a re-awakening of his religious faith. The Sixteen's new recording centres round the themes of conflict and atonement, reflecting both Poulenc's intense internal struggles and the turbulence of life in France during the mid-20th century.

In 2017 The Sixteen's Choral Pilgrimage tour entitled 'The Olive Branch' featuring music from Poulenc and Palestrina will visit 32 towns and cities across the UK including London, Oxford, Cambridge, York, Manchester, Cardiff and Edinburgh.

The Sixteen's first recording devoted to Poulenc in over 20 years features some of the composer's most beautiful and striking sacred works including the Mass in G, the Quatre motets pour un temps de pénitence and the Litanies à la Vierge Noire. ---challengerecords.com

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