

Polyphony

Polyphony was formed by Stephen Layton in 1986 for a concert in King's College Chapel, Cambridge. Since then the choir has performed and recorded regularly to wide critical acclaim throughout the world. Recent reviews declare Polyphony 'one of the best small choirs now before the public' (Daily Telegraph) and 'possibly the best small professional chorus in the world' (Encore Magazine, USA).

For more than a decade Polyphony has given annual sell-out performances of Bach's *St John Passion* and Handel's *Messiah* at St John's Smith Square. These have become notable events in London's music calendar and have been broadcast by BBC Radio 3 and the EBU. According to the Evening Standard 'no one but no one performs Handel's *Messiah* better every year than the choir Polyphony', and the Times 'would rate it among the finest John Passions I have ever heard'.

Polyphony's performance highlights include several BBC Proms, among them Arvo Pärt's *St John Passion*, and Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, regular festival performances, most recently at Aldeburgh and at the RTE Living Music Festival in Dublin, Schnittke's *Symphony No 2* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, and numerous première performances. These include works by John Tavener in honour of his 60th birthday as part of the Barbican's *Great Performers* series, several works by Arvo Pärt, and James Dillon's *Oceanos*.

Other broadcast highlights have been performances of works by Poulenc, Rautavaara, Tormis, Britten and Grainger for BBC Radio 3, and an EBU broadcast of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*. Recent performances abroad include concerts in France, Spain, Brazil, Denmark and Hungary.

Polyphony's extensive discography on Hyperion encompasses works by Tavener, Pärt, Grieg, Grainger, Britten, Walton, Rutter, MacMillan, Lauridsen, Whitacre, Bruckner and Poulenc. The CD of Britten, *Sacred and Profane*, won a Gramophone Award and a Diapason d'Or in 2001; in 2002 a second Gramophone Award nomination followed for the choir's Walton CD; and at the 2004 Gramophone Awards Polyphony's première recording of works by Arvo Pärt, *Triodion*, was Best of Category (Choral).

Two consecutive US Grammy Award nominations followed; in 2006 for *Lux aeterna*, a disc of works by Morten Lauridsen, and in 2007 for the choir's CD of works by Eric Whitacre, *Cloudburst*. This 'staggering disc' (BBC Radio 3) last year passed its fiftieth week in the Billboard Classical Album Chart, and has been described by the Times as 'extraordinarily beautiful', by CNN as 'outstanding', and by Classic FM Magazine as 'unmissable'.

Subsequent releases include Poulenc's *Gloria*, described by Gramophone Magazine as 'a performance of real distinction ... simply incredible', and Bruckner's *Mass in E Minor*, described by the Daily Telegraph as 'a glorious disc'. Gramophone Magazine named the disc Editor's Choice, with the words 'Put simply, we're unlikely to hear choral singing as fine as this for a good few years to come'.

For further information or to join Polyphony's mailing list, please visit www.polyphony.co.uk or email info@polyphony.co.uk