

## **I Fagiolini - Colossal Baroque!**

**New album and launch concert of  
Benevoli's Missa Benevola for four choirs  
at St-Martin-in-the-Fields on 4 October**



### **I Fagiolini: From Venice (to Rome) with Love**

**Monteverdi** Motets for solo voice, duets and ensemble  
**Benevoli** Missa Benevola (for four choirs)  
**Carissimi** Jephthe

**I Fagiolini**  
**Choral Scholars of St Martin-in-the-Fields**  
**The Lyons Mouth**  
**Robert Hollingworth** conductor

***"Benevoli's Mass is remarkable... Sonic bliss... awash in gloriousness...  
both subtle and shocking... Like Italian sunshine... musical magic."***  
**Gramophone, October 2023**

Launching its second album celebrating Benevoli on the CORO label, **I Fagiolini** returns to **St Martin-in-the-Fields**, London's home for choral and baroque music, on **4 October** to champion **Benevoli's Missa Benevola for four choirs**. Written to rival Venice and glorify Rome's magnificent basilicas, Benevoli's Missa Benevola will be juxtaposed with **Monteverdi's Motets** and **Carissimi's Jephthe** for its programme **From Venice (to Rome) with Love**. I Fagiolini is joined by the **Choral Scholars of St Martin-in-the-Fields** and **The Lyons Mouth** to create a magnificent, surround-sound aural spectacle. I Fagiolini's premiere recordings of Benevoli's dazzling multi-choral music champion a crucial lost figure of 17<sup>th</sup>-Century Italian music.

**"Radiant...glorious...ecstatic"**  
**BBC Music Magazine Recording of the Month**



Maestro of the Cappella Giulia at St Peter's in the Vatican, Benevoli wrote 8 mammoth-scale masses to rival the magnificent polyphonic choral music of Venice. While Venetian sacred music in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century re-focussed on perfect miniatures, in Rome Benevoli reinvigorated the multi-choir style for maximum surround-sound effect.

Conductor Robert Hollingworth commented:

*"Benevoli's Missa Benevola is a Marian mass composed in the 1640s for 4 choirs - for either Michelangelo's recently-completed St Peter's Basilica or perhaps more likely Santa Maria Maggiore. Considering that in Benevoli's day, the choirs would have been expected to sight-read the music, these must have been quite adrenaline-fuelled performances. We are thrilled to be performing this awe-inspiring work with augmented forces to maximise the sonic spectacle."*

Four choirs singing together would have presented many logistical challenges, not least finishing at the same time. The choirs had to be kept together by a maestro whose beat was relayed to sub-conductors. One Roman peculiarity of these multi-choir pieces was a technique called "holding the mule" (Tenere la Mula) in which the sopranos split over the four choirs sang a very slowly changing melody (the notes stubbornly refusing to change) above much faster music in the lower parts.

A bold statement of Counter-Reformation triumphalism, these multi-choir masses were so successful that they were still being performed 100 years later and might well have inspired Handel, in particular the Halleluiah chorus from *Messiah*. Robert Hollingworth's new editions provide an opportunity to re-examine Benevoli's music alongside his contemporaries.

Giacomo Carissimi was born in the same year as Benevoli. He worked initially at Assisi Cathedral then as maestro of the German College in Rome. *Jephthe* was written by 1648. The original manuscript was lost but the only surviving copy in existence is in the hand of his pupil Marc-Antoine Charpentier. The final chorus is regarded as a pinnacle of 17th-century choral music, its triple suspensions ('lamentamini') and pacing of harmonic tension a true marvel.

Using forces considerably larger than the norm, **Colossal Baroque** has been an enduring fascination for Hollingworth ever since championing Tallis' *Spem in Alium* and Striggio's **Mass in 40 parts** in immersive surround-sound performances.

The concert marks the continuing release of I Fagiolini's albums in its highly praised series of Benevoli multi-choir masses on **CORO**. The Partnership will see two more Benevoli albums over the next two years as the group looks towards its **40th anniversary in 2026** (and founder-director **Robert Hollingworth's 60th birthday**.) The **eight-album deal with CORO** mirrors the group's touring programmes.



In tandem, CORO is also re-releasing three of I Fagiolini's acclaimed albums previously available on the Decca label: the Gramophone-Award-winning **Alessandro Striggio - Mass in 40 Parts; 1612 Italian Vespers** released in 2023; and **Amuse Bouche**. These complementary strands celebrate some of I Fagiolini's most important recordings whilst also continuing Hollingworth's mission to look at neglected repertoire and areas of performance practice which substantially change the way the music is heard.

## I Fagiolini

I Fagiolini's large-scale recording projects include world premieres of Striggio 'Mass in 40 Parts', Viadana Vespers, works by the Gabrielis and now Benevoli's 'Colossal Baroque' multi- choir masses. Consort premieres include Byrd, Tomkins, Croce, Striggio, Francaix, Milhaud and Joanna Marsh.



The ensemble's innovative work is now as much online as it is live, including collaborative cross-art projects on stages around the world and short (multi award-winning) music videos with Polyphonic Films. Search: *Goosed!* and *The Stag Hunt*. The group's YouTube series, **SingTheScore**, combines serious analysis with off-the-wall humour while *Choral Chihuahua*, presented by Robert Hollingworth, Nicholas Mulroy and Eamonn Dougan, is the top UK choral podcast and is now in its ninth season.

Signature projects include the fully immersive *The Full Monteverdi* and *Betrayal* (dir. John La Bouchardière); *Tallis in Wonderland* (with live and recorded voice); *Simunye*, the South African collaboration; and *How Like An Angel* with Australian contemporary circus company CIRCA for the 2012 Cultural Olympiad and also at Perth International Arts Festival, Lincoln Center, New York and in cathedrals across Europe. The group's French 20th-century *Amuse-Bouche* included the first recording of Jean Francaix's 12-voice *Ode a la Gastronomie* (also on YouTube). Monteverdi programmes from *L'Orfeo* (dir. Tom Guthrie) with masks and puppets and 1610 & 1641 Vespers; and *Leonardo - Shaping The Invisible*, with Prof. Martin Kemp and projections of Leonardo's art and designs.

I Fagiolini is an Associate Ensemble at the University of York and celebrates its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2026 with, 'We're not Dead Yet'! More at [www.ifagiolini.com](http://www.ifagiolini.com)

---

**For more information on any of the above, please contact:**

**Nicky Thomas Media**

Unit 12 The Stableyard, Broomgrove Rd, London SW9 9TL

+44 (0)20 3714 7594 | +44 (0)7768 566 530

[info@nickythomasmedia.com](mailto:info@nickythomasmedia.com)

[www.nickythomasmedia.com](http://www.nickythomasmedia.com)