1. Os Justi
2. Vigilate
3. Kyrie from the Mass for Four Voices
4. Cantate Domino
5. O Magnum Mysterium
6. Magnificat Primi Toni
7. Warum ist das Licht gegeben?
8. Go Down Moses
9. O Clap Your Hands
10. Das Agnus Dei
11. Wir glauben an einen Gott
Fest- und Gedenksprüche
12. i Unsere Väter hofften auf dich
13. ii Wenn ein starker Gewappneter
14. iii Wo ist ein so herrlich Volk
15. Steal Away
16. Abendlied
17. The Lamb
18. Agnus Dei from the Mass for Four Voices

Producer Nicholas Parker
Engineer Mike Hatch, Floating Earth Productions
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Andrea Haines
Soprano
Emily Dickens
Soprano
Chris Wardle
Countertenor
Barnaby Smith
Countertenor
Charles MacDougall
Tenor
Robert Smith
Tenor
Paul Smith
Baritone
Dingle Yandell
Bass
A Choral Tapestry reflects VOCES8's diverse musical influences. The album aims to present both the music itself and the personalities involved in its creation and performance. In an exploration of complementary and contrasting sound worlds, harmony, text and vocal forces, VOCES8 creates a sonic tapestry, weaving together individual voices and music to create this performance. The ensemble enters into a dialogue with the music, seeking to present its vision whilst allowing the listener freedom for individual engagement. For the recording's commissioned artwork, VOCES8 invited the artist to visualise its response to this performance in the hope of further stimulating the listener's interaction with this inspirational music.

The simple F major chords that open this recording have an interesting history. Bruckner's motets are part of the Cecilian Movement of reform that advocated the revival of Gregorian chant and Renaissance polyphony within the Catholic Mass. Composed in the Lydian mode and concluding with a plainsong alleluia, Oss Justi is a compositional masterpiece that satisfies all the technical, stylistic, melodic and harmonic requirements of the movement. Also drawing upon historical influences, Das Agnus Dei and Wir glauben an einen Gott are taken from Reger's eight Geistliche Gesänge. In the context of A Choral Tapestry, a new sound world is created by Reger's adoption of the Lutheran chorale-like texture with a romantic harmonisation. Composed in 1879, Brahms' motet Warum ist das Licht gegeben is the central work of A Choral Tapestry. The music comprises a combination of words from the Bible and Martin Luther, much like J.S. Bach's Motets. In fact, Op.74 from which the motet is taken is dedicated to the Bach scholar Philipp Spitta. VOCES8 considers the influence of Bach on Brahms' mastery of form and counterpoint, choosing to perform the opening movement by alternating tutti chordal interjections of 'Warum' with solo counterpoint. The motet concludes with the Doric chorale Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin, the Lutheran translation of the Nunc Dimittis. Written for double chorus, Brahms' Fest und Gedenksprüche (Op. 109) were first performed in 1889 on the day Brahms was made a freeman of Hamburg. Brahms' Venetian-style antiphony creates an uplifting magnificence and grandeur that captures the patriotic sentiment of national festivals, exactly the occasions for which Op. 109 was intended.

Two African-American spirituals follow Brahms' and Reger's Lutheran chorale textures. In Go Down Moses the description of God's command for Moses to demand the release of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt represents the relationship between slave and slave-master. The drama of Tippett's F minor setting is achieved in the contrast between the powerful unison, singing God's command to 'Let my people go', the bass's solo narration and the solo soprano's anguished cry for release, Steal Away, by contrast, is a message of hope and aspiration. An arresting bass solo announces God's call to a new world whilst a searching solo soprano ascends an octave to a high E, ever closer to 'home'. In direct contrast to Tippett's sombre F minor, this setting of Steal Away is in F major, a bright key with transcendentally connoting, creating a sound world that perfectly illustrates the essence of this text. A similar sentiment is expressed in the beautiful melodic counterpart and shimmering homophony of Victoria's O Magnum Mysterium. The motet unfolds organically towards triple-time alleluias with a resulting stillness that perfectly expresses the awesome text. In Palestreña's Magnificat Primi Toni antiphonal interplay between two SATB choirs communicates the rejoicing worship of the Magnificat. With increasing momentum the musical phrases are passed between the four-part choirs before the voices unite in a grand eight-part finale for the concluding Amen.

Also a song of joy, the comprehensive presentation of compositional techniques in Orlando Gibbons' anthem O Clap Your Hands displays great skill, fitting for its premiere at the composer's doctoral graduation ceremony. In line with the English Cathedral choral tradition, Gibbons writes for eight individual voices in sections of complex polyphony, double-choir antiphony and detailed word painting that illustrate each verse of Psalm 47. Published in Byrd's 1589 Cantiones Sacrae, his motet Vigilate is thrilling in its dramatic madrigalism. VOCES8 delivers the motet's cautionary text with flair and drive, a colour which can also be found in Monteverdi's 1620 madrigalian setting of Psalm 95, Cantate Domino. This Psalm's description of music and singing is brought to life through Monteverdi's joyful antiphony, instrumental-like textures and vocal melismas.

The Kyrie and Agnus Dei from William Byrd's four-part Mass frame A Choral Tapestry. Unlike his Protestant writing, these Catholic works are in Latin and embody the complex compositional techniques reminiscent of music discouraged by the Reformation. The contrast between Byrd's introspective and melodic counterpart in the Mass, and Gibbons' joyful declamation of Psalm 47 in the language of the Anglican congregation, reveals a required difference in style and message that is evident within Byrd's own Catholic and Protestant compositions. The earliest of Byrd's Mass settings, and inspired by his own fervent Catholicism, the four-part Mass is particularly expressive. The Agnus Dei is preceded by John Taverner's song of innocence, The Lamb, and Rheinberger's Abendlied, a prayerful comittal to the evening. VOCES8 considers the intense and pleading suspensions of 'dona nobis pacem' that close the Agnus Dei to be a truly fitting conclusion to A Choral Tapestry.
Magnificat Primi Toni

Das Agnus Dei
O Lamm Gottes, unschuldig,
O Lamb of God, pure and holy,
Schöpfer Himmels und der Erden,
Who on the cross didst suffer,
Wir glauben an einen Gott,
WIR GLAUBEN AN EINEN GOTT
am Stamm des Kreuzes geschlachtet,
Who on the cross didst suffer,
all zeit gefunden duldig,
Ever patient and lowly,
Sonst müßten wir verzagen.
Else had despair reigned o'er us:
Have mercy on us, O Jesus.
Maria, der reinen, auserkoren,
Of the tender he was born,
By his word and command all things were made.

Fest- und Gedankenprüche
I. Unsere Väter hofften auf dich. In thee have our fathers hoped
und da sie hofften, halfst du ihnen aus,
they have hoped, and thou hast delivered them.
Zu dir schreien sie und würden erreten,
They cried to thee and were saved.
sie hofften auf dich und wurden nie zu Schanden,
they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.
Der Herr wird seinem Volk Kraft geben.
Der Lord will bless his people with peace.

Steffan Away
Steffan away to Jesus,
Steffan away home,
I ain't got long to stay here.
My Lord, He calls me,
Green trees o' bending,
Poor sinner stand a trembling,
The trumpet sounds within my soul,
I ain't got long to stay here.

Die Aufklärung
Bleib bei uns, denn es will Abend werden und der Tag hat sich genährt.
Bide with us, for evening shadows darken, and the day will soon be over.

The Lamb
Little Lamb, who made thee? Dost thou know who made thee?
Gave thee life and bid thee feed. Give thee clothing of delight,
Gave thee a tender voice. Makest all the vales rejoice.
Dost thou know who made thee?

The international award-winning octet, VOCES8, has established itself at the forefront of British a cappella. Performing a repertoire ranging from Renaissance polyphony to unique Jazz and Pop arrangements, the group has been praised for stunning performance, exquisite singing and the creation of a sound that spans the entire range of vocal colour. // Founded in 2003 by ex-choristers of Westminster Abbey, VOCES8’s career has developed both in the classical choral scene and the world of a cappella with an annual touring schedule that takes the group to Europe, the USA, Africa and Asia. Highlights include performances at the Royal Festival Hall, the Wigmore Hall, Tel Aviv Opera House and the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing. // With an ongoing programme of recordings and live broadcasts VOCES8 is heard regularly on international television and radio including Deutschlandradio Kultur, ARTE TV and the BBC. // VOCES8 plays a key role in the education work of the non-profit foundation VOCES CANTABLES MUSIC. The group leads innovative workshops as part of larger outreach projects in two hundred schools throughout the UK and internationally. VOCES8’s education work extends to workshops and master-classes for people of all ages and abilities with the aim of inspiring creativity through music. // VOCES8 has received support from Arts Council England, the Musicians Benevolent Fund and The Worshipful Company of Musicians.

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