PRESS RELEASE
For immediate release

**Streetwise Opera and The Sixteen present the**

**world premiere of *The Passion* in association with HOME**

**Directed by Penny Woolcock with a new finale by Sir James MacMillan**

**Friday 25 March (7pm) and Saturday 26 March (6:30pm) at Campfield Market, Manchester**

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* Fully-staged opera production of Bach’s iconic oratorio *St Matthew Passion*
* Site-specific staging in Manchester’s historical Campfield Market
* Directed by award-winning director Penny Woolcock
* Includes a new ‘resurrection’ finale composed by celebrated composer Sir James MacMillan with libretto by Streetwise Opera performers
* Part of HOME from HOME, a season of site-specific theatre in Manchester

Streetwise Opera, the award-winning charity that runs music programmes with people who have experienced homelessness, and The Sixteen, world-renowned ensemble, present *The Passion*, an opera world premiere for Easter weekend 2016.

*The Passion* is a fully-staged, abridged version of Bach’s iconic oratorio *St Matthew Passion*, culminating in a brand new ‘resurrection’ finale written by acclaimed composer Sir James MacMillan with libretto by Streetwise Opera performers. The site-specific promenade production will be performed on 25 and 26 March 2016 in the imposing Victorian iron and glass surroundings of Manchester’s Campfield Market.

At the heart of the project is a compelling collaboration between two of the most respected arts organisations in the UK and internationally – Gramophone and RPS Music award-winners Streetwise Opera and Classical Brit Award-winners The Sixteen. The combination of Streetwise Opera's work staging high-quality opera productions with homeless people and The Sixteen's reputation as one of the world's most celebrated and well-known choirs brings an exciting dimension to the production. As well as *The Passion* performances, the project involves a year-long programme of activities between the two organisations, including four singers from The Sixteen attending Streetwise Opera’s Manchester music workshops.

Award-winning director Penny Woolcock, whose work includes films *From the Sea to the Land Beyond* and *One Mile Away* and stage productions of *Doctor Atomic* and *The Pearl Fishers* with English National Opera and Metropolitan Opera, also brings a unique perspective to *The Passion*’s traditional narrative. Following the story of the last two days of Jesus’s life, audience members will be guided around Campfield Market, with multiple performers playing the leading role as a poignant reminder of Jesus’s vulnerability and universality.

*The Passion* is performed in association with HOME, Manchester’s international centre for contemporary visual art, theatre and film, as part of HOME from HOME, a season of site-specific theatre in the city.

James MacMillan says: ‘Streetwise Opera’s work is such a wonderful way to use the gift of music to transform people’s lives and make people happy. It has been a delight working on this project and writing a new piece of music for *The Passion*. Rehearsing with the performers in the early stages of their preparation was a moving experience.'

Penny Woolcock says: ‘This is absolutely a dream project for me – beautiful music, a timeless story, great performers and social justice.’

Matt Peacock, CEO, Streetwise Opera, says: ‘Streetwise Opera's work strives for both artistic and social impact through collaborations between the greatest professional artists and ensembles and our inspiring cast. To be working with The Sixteen, Penny Woolcock, Sir James MacMillan, HOME, the Booth Centre and a number of other social welfare agencies in Manchester is a dream come true.'

Harry Christophers, Founder and Conductor, The Sixteen, says: ‘Streetwise Opera is quite simply an inspiration. The vitality, enthusiasm and talent of the performers really shines through and is testament to the organisation’s transformative work. We are so excited to be working with them.’

Walter Meierjohann, Artistic Director: Theatre, HOME, says: ‘This is a landmark production for Easter 2016, directed by the brilliant Penny Woolcock. Here at HOME, we work with exciting artists and partners to produce questioning and ambitious artistic projects to involve audiences with new and extraordinary theatrical experiences. It’s therefore especially thrilling to be collaborating with the vibrant cast from The Sixteen and performers who have experienced homelessness from Streetwise Opera Manchester.’

*The Passion* puts the homeless people of Manchester at the heart of the production. Homelessness is increasing in Manchester and across the UK, and a number of cities have protest camps where homeless people are demonstrating about their rights and against cuts to welfare.

Streetwise Opera works with two groups in Manchester – one at the Booth Centre, a day centre for homeless people, and another in the community, for people who have been re-housed and other vulnerable adults. Alongside *The Passion* project, Streetwise Opera is working with the Booth Centre, Manchester City Council and homeless people to pilot Brazil's revolutionary Homeless People's Movement and give homeless people a voice in policy decisions.

Tickets for *The Passion* are priced at £22 / £15 concessions. For more information and booking, visit [www.homemcr.org/streetwise-the-passion](http://www.homemcr.org/streetwise-the-passion). A limited number of free access tickets are also available for people who have experienced homelessness.

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**For further information and to arrange interviews, please contact Laura Dodge (Marketing and Communications Manager, Streetwise Opera) on** **LD@streetwiseopera.org** **/ 020 7730 9551, or Claire Willis (Director, ElevenTenths PR) on** **claire.willis@eleventenths.co.uk** **/ 07951 600362.**

**Notes to editors:**

**Streetwise Opera** is an award-winning charity that uses music to help people who have experienced homelessness make positive changes in their lives. It runs music programmes in homeless centres and arts venues across England, and stages critically-acclaimed opera productions (★★★★★ ‘Awe-inspiring’ *The Times*) in collaboration with leading artists from the worlds of opera, theatre, contemporary classical music and film. *The Passion* is Streetwise Opera’s tenth production in a series of new opera commissions and stagings since 2002.

After 35 years of worldwide performance and recording, **The Sixteen** is recognised as one of the world’s greatest ensembles. Comprising both choir and period instrument orchestra, The Sixteen’s total commitment to the music it performs is its greatest distinction. A special reputation for performing early English polyphony, masterpieces of the Renaissance, bringing fresh insights into Baroque and early Classical music and a diversity of 20th and 21st-century music, is drawn from the passions of conductor and founder Harry Christophers CBE.

**Penny Woolcock** is an award-winning director working across fiction film and documentary, art installation and staged opera. She has a special interest in creating quality work with those who live on the margins.

**Sir James MacMillan** is one of today’s most successful composers and is internationally active as a conductor.His music is programmed extensively throughout the world and he has won awards including the Gramophone Contemporary Music Record of the Year Award and a Classical Brit Award. He is also the founder and Artistic Director of the Cumnock Tryst Festival. In 2015, he was given a knighthood in the Queen's Birthday Honours.

**HOME**, Manchester’s international centre for contemporary visual art, theatre and film, opened its doors in May 2015. Designed by Dutch architects Mecanoo, HOME was formed from the merger of two of Manchester’s best-loved cultural organisations, Cornerhouse and the Library Theatre Company. HOME's theatres are a platform for questioning and ambitious artistic projects that involve audiences with new and extraordinary theatrical experiences. As well as *The Passion*, its 2015/16 theatre and dance season includes in-house productions *The Oresteia*, directed by Blanche McIntyre, and *Inkheart*, adapted from Cornelia Funke’s best-selling fantasy adventure novel for children, for Christmas 2015; *Barbarians: A trilogy by Hofesh Shechter* in January; William Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* (co-production with the Young Vic) in February; Samuel Beckett’s *Endgame* (co-production with Citizens Theatre, Glasgow) in February/March; *Summer. Autumn. Winter. Spring.* (co-production with Quarantine) in March/April; and Complicite’s *The Encounter* in March.