



(LEMS 8011)

JOHN DOWLAND LUTE SONGS

Russell Oberlin, Countertenor

Joseph Iadone, Lute

The lute song is a poem, most frequently of a special kind, sung by one person to the accompaniment of the lute. The verse form is usually quite intricate, and in most cases runs to several stanzas. The subject can be any one of a number of things, but the paramount, classic, most frequent subject is a love complaint.

These elements which go to make up the lute song all have their source in a Muslim world whose power and richness of thought, particularly as it flourished in Moorish Spain, both fascinated and alarmed Western Europe for over five hundred years. That world was a warrior society where love was given an exalted place and where in secular poetry love was the most important single subject. The poetry itself was dazzling in its intricacy rhyme structure and formal organization. All of these things together made a pattern which was new to Europe and which exercised a glamour over the minds of poets, and through them upon their contemporaries, from Sicily to England, from the first troubador Guilem, Count of Poitou and Duke of Aquitaine, to Shakespeare, from the late 11th to the early 17th century.

The Europeans during this period were deeply affected by the idea of the great importance of love, and this is most evident in their poetry and literature. A susceptibility to love's extreme power expressed by means of verse and music, was the index of mental

refinement, of quickness and nobility of spirit in knights and gentlemen; and so the writing of love complaints – and writing poems almost invariably meant singing them – was cultivated to an intense degree by everyone who wished to participate in this most exalted realm of humane activity.

Upon this principle the troubadours, centered at first around courts in southern France and later in northern France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Sicily, produced one of the greatest repertoires of song in Europe. This principle is avowed in the very word for the German version of the troubadour, *minnesinger*, which means one who sings of love. Poets developed a variety of new intricate lyric forms, and the subject par excellence of these was love, its glory, its virtue, its dolour. Several instruments were used by these travelling musicians. The pipe, drum, and cymbals were probably native, but the rebab and the oud, bowed and plucked instruments respectively, were Moorish and in the course of time became the viol and lute of the Renaissance. By the time the troubadour Movement died out, the form, style, subject, and instrument of the lute song had passed into the fabric of European life.

The lute was probably established in England by the 14th century and reached its full form (save for later experimental alterations) by 1500. It was of course only one of many popular instruments used by Englishmen for domestic music-making. Robert Puttenham writes in the *Art of Poesie* (1589): “Songs for secret recreation and pastime in chambers with company or alone, were the ordinary musicke’s amorous: such as might be sung to the lute, citheron, or harpe.” But the lute was given pride of place among these. The cittern (a member of the guitar family) was for “barber’s musick,” while of the lute it was written,

Her Matter’s of such High Concern
No Common Folks can it discern;
‘Twas ne’er intended for the Rude
And Boisterous-Churlish-Multitude;
But for Those Choice-Refined-Spirits
Which Hrsb’nly-Raptures oft Inherits.

(Thomas Mace, *Musick’s Monument*, 1676)

The English were notoriously fond of music in those days, performed it constantly, made exceptionally fine instruments, and had a high opinion of their native musicians which was generally seconded by the rest of Europe.

It is often said (with pious awe) the English school of lutenists song-writers sprang up, turned out some thirty volumes of songs and died, all within the space of the fifteen years between 1597 and 1612. This is an absurd notion which arose, perhaps, from a careless interpretation of the Italian vogue which swept England in the second half of the 16th century and in music produced a great number of imitations, and from an inability to assess the history of English music printing from anything but a 20th century standpoint. Lute players, among other instrumentalists, were entertained at court throughout the reign of Henry VIII, himself an excellent musician. The first lute instruction book of which we

have record – and it was only the third book of instrumental music of any kind – was printed in England in 1565, the second in 1567, and the third in 1568. Though the first published lute song appeared in England so far as is known in 1596, the fact is that throughout this time music manuscripts circulated almost as freely as books. Music shops sold music in manuscript, music lovers were constantly taking down copies of what they liked, and as a consequence even after centuries of neglect today there is enough lute music lying around to make scholars quite uneasy – they reckon, for example, three times as much for solo lute alone as for the virginals. Before 1540 we find Sir Thomas Wyatt writing,

My lute awake! Perform the last
Labor that thou and I shall wast,
And end that I have now begon;
For when this song is sun and past,
My lute be still, for I have done,...

Which with its eight stanzas is a love complaint sung to the lute – in every respect a pure example of the English lute song as it appeared before the widespread establishment of music publishing.

It would be more accurate to think of Dowland and his colleagues as coming at the end of a long and rich tradition of song-writing, signaling the last flashes of a vitality which was steadily being supplanted. His time saw the rise of the professional music-maker and the virtual end of the amateur composer. Technical simplicity was giving way to virtuosity, domestic music to public music, the lute same amongst dilettantes to the harpsichord, counterpoint to solo work, polyphony to monody – Sir Tristram to the businessman.

Dowland, perhaps the most eminent lutenist, singer, and lute-song composer of his time, was born in 1563, probably in Ireland. He came to London at an early age, and when he was 17 or 18 he was given a place in the entourage of the ambassador to France. It was probably on this trip that he became a convert to Catholicism. In 1582 he returned to England, in 1588 he took his degree of Bachelor of Music at Oxford in company with Thomas Morley. Because he was a Catholic, Dowland failed to get a hoped-for appointment as one of Queen Elizabeth's court musicians. In disappointment he went abroad again to travel in France, Italy, Germany, and the Low Countries, where he managed to get some compositions published. In 1595 Dowland disembarassed himself of his new found faith, returned to England, and published his first book of songs in 1597. The title is worth quoting in full as it is so characteristic of the lute-song publications of this period:

The First Booke of songs or Ayres of foure parts, with Tableture for the Lute so made, that all the parts together, or either of them severally, may be sung to the Lute, Orpherian, or Viol de gambo. Composed by John Dowland, Lutenist and Bachelor of Musick in both Universities.

Another famous lutenist song-writer, Thomas Campian, contributed a laudatory epigram in Latin. This was the most popular work of its kind to appear. It reached five editions in Dowland's life-time.

For the next eight years Dowland enjoyed an appointment as lutnist at the court of the Danish King Chistian IV in Elsinore. He kept close connections with London, however, and in 1600 published his Second Booke of Songs or Ayres, and his Third and Last Booke in 1603. Who wrote the words of these songs is not known, possibly Dowland himself. Dowland was discharged of his appointment in 1606, and when he returned to England he found some trouble getting a comfortable post. It seems that in his absence abroad rival musicians has pre-empted the field, leaving him sort shrift.

But in 1612 Dowland solaced himself with A Pilgrims Soclace, his last book of songs, and in the same year he received an appointment as one of King James' musicians for the lute, which sustained him until his death in 1626.

Thomas Fuller accorded him a place among the Worthies of England (1662) and wrote:

“He was the rarest musician that his age did gehold; having traveled beyond the seas, and com[ounded] English with foreign skill in that faculty, it is questionable whether he excelled in vocal or instumental music. A cheerful person he was, passing his days in lawful merriment.”

Altogether Dowand wrote 8 “songs or ayres,” a score or so of lute solos, a couple of hymns, and a book of polyphonic pieces for lute and viols.

A NOTE ON THE PERFORMANCE

The lute used for this recording was made in 1934 by Hermann Hauser of Germany. It conforms to the performer's specifications, which were derived from a careful study of old instruments and their music. It is of a size and shape that Dowland would often have used for solo work and accompaniment. The pear shaped shell is maple wood. There are 7 courses, the first three nylon, the last four gold wound, all made for Mr. Iadone by Albert Augustine. The tuning is D G c f a d'g'.

TRACKS AND TIMES:

1. Come again, sweet love doth now invite (First Book of Songs), for 4 voices & lute - 4:33
2. Thou mighty God (A Pilgrimes Solace), sacred song - 6:50
3. Can she excuse my wrongs (First Book of Songs), for 4 voices & lute - 2:26
4. Semper Dowland semper dolens, pavan for lute, P 9 - 4:25
5. Flow not so fast ye fountains (Third Book of Songs), for 4 voices & lute - 3:05
6. I saw my lady weep (Second Book of Song), for 2 voices & lute - 4:45
7. Weep you no more, sad fountains (Third Book of Songs), for 4 voices & lute - 3:53
8. Shall I sue, shall I seek for grace? (Second Book of Songs), for 4 voices & lute - 2:13
9. Flow, my tears, fall from your springs (Second Book of Songs), for 2 voices & lute -

4:27

10. Lachrimae antiquae (from "Lachrimae"), for 5 viols/violins & lute - 3:59

11. Far from the triumphing court (A Pilgrimes Solice), for voice, lute & bass viol - 1:50

12. Lady if you so spite me (A Musical Banquet), for voice, lute & bass viol - 2:16

13. In darkness let me dwell (A Pilgrimes Solace), for voice, lute & bass viol - 3:25

THE SONGS AND LYRICS

1. COME AGAIN! SWEET LOVE DOTH NOW INVITE

Come again!

Sweet love doth now invite,

Thy graces that refrain,

To do me due delight,

To see, to hear, to touch, to kiss, to die,

With thee again in sweetest sympathy.

Come again!

That I may cease to mourn,

Through thy unkind disdain:

For now left and forlorn,

I sit, I sigh, I weep, I faint, I die,

In deadly pain and endless misery.

All the day

The sun that lends me shine

By frowns do cause me pine,

And feeds me with delay;

Her smiles my springs that makes my joys to grow;

Her frowns the Winters of my woe.

All the night

My seeps are full of dreams,

My eyes are full of streams;

My heart takes no delight

To see the fruits and joys that some do find,

And mark the storms are me assigned.

Out alas!

My faith is ever true;

Yet will she never rue,

Nor yield me any grace.

Here eyes of fire, her heart of flint is made,

Whom tears nor truth may once invade.

Gentle Love,

Draw forth thy wounding dart,

Thou canst not pierce her heart,

For I that do approve,

By sighs, and tears more hot than are thy shafts,

Did tempt, while she for mighty triumphs laughs.

“Come again! Sweet love doth now invite” is from the First Booke. The tune is uncommonly tender and good-humored, but not without overtones of Dowland’s characteristic melancholy – “semper Dowland, semper dolens.”

2. THOU MIGHTY GOD

A)

Thou mighty God, that rightest every wrong,
Listen to Patience in a dying song.
When Job had lost his children, lands
And goods,
Patience assuaged his excessive pain;
And when his sorrows came as fast as
Floods,
Hope kept his heart till comfort came again.

B)

When David’s life by Saul was often
Sought,
And worlds of woes did compass him
about,
On dire revenge he never had a thought,
But in his griefs Hope still did help him out.

C)

When the poor cripple by the pool did lie
Full many years in misery and pain,
No sooner he on Christ had set his eye,
But he was well, and comfort came
Again.
No David, Job, nor cripple in more grief;
Christ, ive me Patience and my hope’s
Relief.

a) “Thou Mighty God” b) When David’s life” c) “When the poor cripple” – this triptych of religious songs exhibits an aspect of Dowland and of Elizabethan song-writing which is often overlooked. All three are from his fourth book, A Pilgrimes Solace.

3. CAN SHE EXCUSE MY WRONGS?

Can she excuse my wrongs with Virtue's
cloak?
Shall I call her good when she proves unkind?
Are those clear fires which vanish into
smoke?
Must I praise the leaves where no fruit I find?
No, no; where shadows do for bodies stand

That may'st be abused if thy sight be dim;
Was I so base, that I might not aspire
Unto those high joys which she holds from
me?

As they are high, so high is my desire.
If she this deny, what can granted be?
If she will yield to that which reason is,
It is reason's will that love should be just.
Dear, make me happy still by granting this,
Cold love is like to words written on sand,
Or to bubbles which on the water swim.
Wilt thou be thus abused still
Seeing that she will right thee never?
If thou canst not o'ercome her will,
Thy love will be thus fruitless ever.

Or cut off delays if that I die must.
Better a thousand times to die
Than for to love thus still tormented:
Dear, but remember it was I
Who for thy sake did die contented.

“Can she excuse my wrongs,” from the First Booke, is a very model of a lute-accompanied love-complaint in the final stage of its five-century development. His piece was a favorite for twenty years. Dowland himself made an arrangement of it for viols and ute (“The Earl of Essex Galliard”), and other arrangements for a variety of instruments appear in manuscripts in England and on the continent. In the top line of the accompaniment in the third section one can hear the popular Elizabethan tune “Shall I go walk in the woods so wild.”

4. SEMPRE DOULAND, SEMPRE DOLENS (LUTE SOLO)

Roughly 2000 solo lute pieces are estimated to remain from the period 1540-1620, Many of them as technically as demanding as this.

5. FLOW NOT SO FAST, YE FOUNTAINS

Flow not so fast, ye fountains;
What needeth all this haste?
Swell not above your mountains,
Nor spend your time in waste.
Gentle springs, freshly your salt tears
Must still fall dropping from their spheres.

Weep they apace whom Reason
Or ling'ring Time can ease.
My sorrow can no Season,
Nor aught besides, appease.
Gentle springs, freshly your salt tears
Must still fall dropping from their spheres.

Time can abate the terror
Of every common pain;
But common grief is error,
True grief will still remain.
Gentle springs, freshly your salt tears
Must still fall dropping from their spheres.

“Flow not so fast ye fountains: is a fine example of Dowland’s most elaborate style. It was published in the Third and Last Booke in the year of Queen Elizabeth’s death and is in perfect consonance with the spirit of gloom which was darkening all forms of English thought as the Elizabethan age drew to a close.

6. I SAW MY LADY WEEP

I saw my lady weep,
And Sorrow proud to be advanced so
In those fair eyes where all perfections
Keep.
Her face was full of woe;
But such a woe (believe me) as wins more hearts,
Than Mirth can do with her enticing
parts.

Sorrow was there made fair,
And Passion wise, tears a delightful
Thing;
Silence beyond all speech a wisdom rare,
She made her sighs to sing,
And all things with so sweet a sadness
move
As made my heart at once both grieve and
love.

O fairer than aught else,
The world can show, leave off in time to
Grieve.
Enough, enough, your joyful looks excels;
Tears kills the heart, believe

O strive not to be excellent in woe,
Which only breeds your beauty's overthrow.

This song, from the Second Booke, is dedicated "to the most famous Anthony Holborne," who was an excellent composer of lute, viol, and keyboard music. Note the abrupt transition in harmony upwards a half tone on the words "her face was full of woe." Taste changed so radically after Dowland's death that the eminent Dr. Burney, casting his refulgent glance backwards a hundred and eight years later, called this sort of thing ignorant and barbarous.

7. WEEP YOU NO MORE, SAD FOUNTAINS

Weep you no more, sad fountains;
What need you flow so fast?
Look how the snowy mountains
Heaven's sun doth gently waste.
But my sun's heavenly eyes
View not your weeping
That now lies sleeping,
Softly, now softly lies
Sleeping

Sleep is a reconciling,
A rest that Peace begets.
Doth not the sun rise smiling
When fair at e'en he sets.
Rest you then, rest, sad eyes,
Melt not in weeping
While she lies sleeping;
Softly, now softly lies
Sleeping.

"Weep you no more sad fountains," from the Third and Last Booke, is another of Dowland's most famous songs. One of the fascinations of this piece is the counterplay between the independent rhythms of the voice and the lute part on the words "That now lies sleeping, softly now softly lies sleeping."

8. SHALL I SUE?

Shall I sue, shall I seek for grace?
Shall I pray shall I prove?
Shall I strive to a heav'nly joy,
With an earthly love?
Shall I think that a bleeding heart
Or a wounded eye,
Or a sigh can ascend the clouds

To attain so high?

Silly wretch, forsake these dreams
Of a vain desire;
O bethink what high regard
Holy hopes do require.
Favour is as fair as things are,
Treasure is not bought,
Favour is not won with words,
Nor the wish of a thought.

Pity is but a poor defence
For a dying heart;
Ladies' eyes respect no moan
In a mean desert.
She is too worthy far
For a worth so base,
Cruel and but just is she
In my disgrace.
Justice gives each man his own,
Though my love be just
Yet will not she pity my grief,
Therefore die I must.
Silly heart then yield to die
Perish in despair,
Witness yet how fain I die,
When I die for the fair.

9. FLOW MY TEARS

Flow, my tears, fall from your springs!
Exiled forever, let me mourn;
Where night's black bird her sad infamy
sings,
There let me live forlorn.

Down vain lights, shine you no more!
No nights are dark enough for those
That in despair their lost fortunes deplore.
Light doth but shame disclose.

Never may my woes be relieved,
Since pity is fled;
And tears and sighs and groans my weary
days

Of all joys have deprived.

From the highest spire of contentment
My fortune is thrown;
And fear and grief and pain for my deserts
Are my hopes, since hope is gone.

Hark! you shadows that in darkness
dwell,
Learn to contemn light.
Happy, happy they that in hell
Feel not the world's despite.

This was far and away the most popular composition of the period. Dozens of arrangements of this song exist set for all manner of instruments and combinations. There are two arrangements of it in the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, one by Farnaby and one by Byrd. Dowland himself used it as the root melody for the "Lachrimae Pavans," a collection of instrumental pieces for viols and lute which was published five years later. Though this song was not published until the Second Booke of 1600, it was composed sometime before 1594, and it is mentioned in plays in familiar terms as late as 1629.

10. LACHRIMAE ANTIGUAE PAVAN (LUTE SOLO)

This is a virtuoso lute arrangement made by Dowland of the foregoing song.

11. FAR FROM TRIUMPHING COURT BY SIR HENRY LEA

Far from triumphing Court and wonted glory
He dwelt in shady unfrequented places,
Time's prisoner now, he made his pastime
story;
Glady forgets Court's erst-afforded graces.
That goddess whom he served to heaven is
gone,
And he on earth in darkness left to moan.

12. LADY, YOU SO SPITE ME BY SIR HENRY LEA

Lady, if you so spite me,
Wherefore do you so oft kiss and delight me,
Sure that my heart oppress'd overcloyed,
May break thus overjoy'd?

If you seek to spill me,
Come kiss me, sweet, and kill me.

So shall your heart be eased,
And I shall rest content and die, well pleased.

13. IN DARKNESS LET ME DWELL (LUTE SOLO)

In darkness let me dwell, the ground shall
sorrow be;
The roof despair to bar all cheerful light from me;
The walls of marble black that moistened
still shall weep;
My music hellish jarring sounds to banish
friendly sleep.
Thus wedded to my woes, and bedded to my tomb
O, let me living die, till death do
come.

“Far from triumphing court,” “Lady if you so spite me,” “In darkness let me dwell” –
These are the three songs published in *A Muscicall Banquet*, a collection made by
Dowland’s son Robert in 1610. The words to the first two were written by Sir Henry
Lea. These three songs show Dowland experimenting boldly with harmony and
displacement of rhythm throughout his career.

THE NOTES BY WILLIAM PINCARD
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JOSEPH IADONE

Mr. Iadone plays the lute in a manner which is believed to be truer to the Elizabethan
style than is usually heard nowadays. Instead of sounding the string with his fingernail he
uses the fleshy part of the finger with the aim of striking both strings of each course at
once. Moreover, he does not rest the little finger of his right hand on the wood of the
capable of subtler variations of tone quality. Mr. Iadone has consulted original
manuscript sources to prepare for a performing edition of the lute pieces.

RUSSELL OBERLIN

Russell Oberlin, Thomas Hunter professor of music and director of the Collegium
Musicum at Hunter College, is an internationally acclaimed singer widely recognized as
America’s foremost countertenor. A graduate of the Juilliard School of Music, Oberlin was
a founding member of the legendary New York Pro Musica. He had recorded extensively,
given recitals, and appeared as soloist with leading orchestras throughout this country and
abroad. Operatic roles include appearances at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden,
where he sang the part of Oberon in the London premier of Benjamin Britten’s “*A
Midsummer Night’s Dream*.” A senior Fulbright research scholar, Oberlin has taught
and lectured extensively in the U.S. and England.

CREDITS

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