

WIGMORE HALL

Sunday 14 April 2024
3.00pm

Drop not, mine eyes

Alexander Chance countertenor
Toby Carr lute

John Dowland (1563-1626)

Preludium

Flow, my tears (pub. 1600)

Can she excuse my wrongs (pub. 1597)

In darkness let me dwell (pub. 1610)

Captain Digory Piper, his Galliard (pub. 1605)

John Danyel (c.1564-1626)

Mrs M E her funeral tears for the death of her husband
*Grief, keep within • Drop not, mine eyes • Have all our
passions?*

Pavan

Thomas Ford

What then is love, sings Coridon (pub. 1607)

Fair, sweet, cruel (pub. 1607)

Thomas Campion (1567-1620)

The cypress curtain of the night (pub. 1601)

Never weather-beaten sail (pub. 1613)

I care not for these ladies (pub. 1601)

Robert Johnson (c.1583-1633)

Pavan in C minor

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

O solitude, my sweetest choice Z406 (1684-5)

Now that the sun hath veiled his light (An Evening
Hymn on a Ground) Z193 (pub. 1688)



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Has any composer better given voice to melancholia than **John Dowland**? His was an age (the turn of the 17th Century, straddling the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I) when public displays of private sorrow were in fashion, facilitated by wealthy patrons bringing musicians and poets into their homes – fitting venues for intimate, introspective art. Melancholia, in this sense, was more than simply misery and depression, but something approaching a status symbol. The lute song was the perfect, and uniquely English, medium for artistic expression of this kind, the lute having found its way from Moorish Spain to England in the 16th Century, and having trickled down the English classes (played by Henry VIII, Elizabeth I and their courtiers alike). John Dowland was the master of the form; his *First Book of Ayres*, published in 1597, marked the beginning of a brief but extraordinarily fruitful Golden Age of the lute song – its popularity aided in no small part by an increasingly busy printing press.

It would be facile to attempt to link Dowland's predilection for sadness in his music with a perceived unhappy personal life. For a start, we don't know enough about his life to make this assertion. Though he failed to gain a post as court lutenist to Elizabeth I in 1594 (likely because he had converted to Catholicism), he found renown abroad as lutenist to Christian IV in Denmark, and was eventually appointed one of James I's 'Musicians for the Lutes' in his own country. Thomas Fuller, in his *History of the Worthies of England* (1662), describes him as 'a cheerful person, passing his days in lawful merriment'.

Like many of the songs (or 'ayres') in Dowland's *First Book*, 'Can she excuse my wrongs' was originally printed as a four-part madrigal, to be performed informally in the homes of the middle classes. But the advent of the lute and its tablature enabled polyphonic music of this sort to be written out for one instrument, with the voice singing the melody – the main requirement being digital dexterity on the part of the lutenist. The song takes the form of a galliard, a sprightly dance popular with Elizabeth I, with lyrics believed by some to have been written by Robert, Earl of Essex, sometime love interest of the Queen. That the lyrics were later bolted on to the tune, with unusual word stresses often resulting, seems likely.

Dowland's genius is equally apparent in his instrumental work as in his vocal compositions; indeed the pieces are often one and the same. *Captain Digory Piper, his Galliard* is a melancholy galliard, lyricised as 'If my complaints could passions move'. It is a shining example of the bittersweet quality Dowland achieves by combining the jumping rhythms of the dance with his distinct dolefulness. The typical form in Renaissance lute music was to repeat each section ornamented in such a way as to fill in the gaps – known as divisions. This can be heard in this piece and also to great effect in John Danyel's *Pavan*.

It has been suggested that 'I saw my Lady weep' and 'Flow, my tears', which sit side by side in Dowland's *Second Book* (1600), were composed as a pair, with the latter intended to complete the former. Musically, the theory is an attractive one, as the first of the songs ends on the fifth, with the vocal

line ending on the leading-tone; 'Flow, my tears' then begins on the tonic, providing resolution. Both songs are sophisticated in their use of syncopation and chromaticism, while 'Flow, my tears' opens with a 'falling tear motif', a four-note descending scale likely borrowed from a madrigal.

While Dowland's development of his style would take him away from dances towards songs like the deeply through-composed, free-flowing and abruptly-ending 'In darkness let me dwell' (*A Musically Banquet*, 1610), his close contemporary **Thomas Campion** favoured, and indeed argued frequently for, a more succinct style of composition. He was a polymath in the Renaissance sense, as adept a poet (in both English and Latin) as he was a composer, which would explain his talent for word-setting. No bolted-on lyrics here, rather words perfectly suited to each note. His foreword to the reader of Rosseter's *Book of Ayres* (1601) provides fascinating insight into his compositional method: he compares 'Ayres in musicke' to 'Epigrams in Poetrie...in their chief perfection when they are short and well seasoned'. A style, then, quite different from Dowland: when you listen to each of 'The cypress curtain of the night', 'I care not for these ladies' and 'Never weather-beaten sail', you may notice that there is no point at which the lute plays without the voice.

Campion makes no secret of his mixing the divine with the profane: he writes 'Holy hymns with lovers' cares are knit both in one quire here' (*Second Book of Ayres*, 1613). The two songs by **Thomas Ford** fall firmly into the latter category. Both come from his *Musicke of Sundrie Kindes* (1607). The one, 'Fair, sweet, cruel', is a simple tale of unrequited courtship, told lightly. The other, 'What then is love, sings Coridon', goes slightly deeper, comparing Corydon's love of 'coy Phyllida' to a 'scanty dearth in fullest store', and a 'morning dewy rose...that which then flourish'd quickly dies', in its perennial futility.

If there was a composer to rival Dowland's facility with counterpoint and range of melancholic expression, it was **John Danyel**. Both held Bachelor's Degrees in Music from Oxford University, but Danyel seems to have been held in greater favour than Dowland at Court: he was 'Master of the Revels to the Queen', and one of her royal lutenists. Only one collection of his songs, published in 1606, survives. Dedicated to a Mrs Anne Greene (first 'privately compos'd', now 'publikely disclos'd'), it contains a remarkable song-triptych, written for a widow ('Mrs M E') on the death of her husband, whose lyrics meditate on the inadequacy of tears and sighs for mourning, and whose music, full of chromaticism and lute-voice counterpoint, matches anything written by Dowland, even if Campion may not have approved.

Dowland was often called the English Orpheus. Decades after he and his contemporaries had died, and the flowering of the English Lute song had passed, a new Golden Age of English music emerged, led by **Henry Purcell**, 'Orpheus Britannicus'. This programme ends with two of his songs on a ground bass..

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John Dowland (1563-1626)

Preludium

Flow, my tears (pub. 1600)

Anonymous

Flow, my tears, fall from your springs!
Exiled for ever, 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.

Can she excuse my wrongs (pub. 1597)

Anonymous

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 abus'd if thy sight be dim.
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.

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,
Or cut off delays if that die I 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.

In darkness let me dwell (pub. 1610)

Anonymous

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 moist'ned 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.

Captain Digory Piper, his Galliard (pub. 1605)

John Danyel (c.1564-1626)

Mrs M E her funeral tears for the death of her husband

Anonymous

Grief, keep within

Grief, keep within and scorn to show but tears,
Since joy can weep as well as thou,
Disdain to sigh, for so can slender cares,
Which but from idle causes grow.
Do not look forth, unless thou didst know how
To look with thine own face, and as thou art.
And only let my heart,
That knows more reason why,
Pine, fret, consume, swell, burst and die.

Drop not, mine eyes

Drop not, mine eyes, nor trickle down so fast,
For so you could do oft before
In our sad farewells and sweet meetings past.
And shall his death now have no more?
Can niggard sorrow yield no other store
To show the plenty of affliction's smart?
Then only thou, poor heart,
That know'st more reason why,
Pine, fret, consume, swell, burst and die.

*Please do not turn the page until the song and its accompaniment
have ended.*

Have all our passions?

Have all our passions certain proper vents,
And sorrow none that is her own,
But she must borrow others' complements
To make her inward feelings known?
Are joy's delights and death's compassion shown
With one like face and one lamenting part?
Then only thou, poor heart,
That know'st more reason why,
Pine, fret, consume, swell, burst and die.

Pavan

Thomas Ford

What then is love, sings Coridon (pub. 1607)

Anonymous

What then is love, sings Corydon,
Since Phyllida is grown so coy?
A flattering glass to gaze upon,
A busy jest, a serious toy,
A flower still budding, never blown,
A scanty dearth in fullest store
Yielding least fruit where most is sown.
My daily note shall be therefore —
Heigh ho, chil love no more.

'Tis like a morning dewy rose
Spread fairly to the sun's arise,
But when his beams he doth disclose
That which then flourish'd quickly dies;
It is a seld-fed dying hope,
A promised bliss, a salveless sore,
An aimless mark, and erring scope.
My daily note shall be therefore, —
Heigh ho, chil love no more.

Fair, sweet, cruel (pub. 1607)

Anonymous

Fair, sweet, cruel, why dost thou fly me,
Go not, oh go not from thy dearest.
Though thou dost hasten I am nigh thee;
When thou seem'st far then am I nearest.
O tarry then and take me with you.
Fie, fie, sweetest, here is no danger.
Fly not, oh fly not, Love pursues thee.
I am no foe nor foreign stranger.
Thy scorns with fresher hope renews me.
O tarry then and take me with you.

Thomas Campion (1567-1620)

The cypress curtain of the night (pub. 1601)

Thomas Campion

The cypress curtain of the night is spread,
And over all a silent dew is cast.
The weaker cares, by sleep are conquered:
But I alone, with hideous grief aghast,
In spite of Morpheus' charms, a watch do keep
Over mine eyes, to banish careless sleep.

Grief, seize my soul! for that will still endure
When my crazed body is consumed and gone;
Bear it to thy black den! there keep it sure
Where thou ten thousand souls dost tire upon!
Yet all do not afford such food to thee
As this poor one, the worsen part of me.

Never weather-beaten sail (pub. 1613)

Thomas Campion

Never weather-beaten Saile more willing bent to
shore,
Never tyred Pilgrims limbs affected slumber
more;
Then my weary spright now longs to flye out of my
troubled brest.
O come quickly sweetest Lord, and take my soule to
rest.
Ever-blooming are the joyes of Heav'ns high
paradice,
Cold age deafes not there our eares, nor vapour
dims our eyes;
Glory there the Sun out-shines, whose beames the
blessed onely see.
O come quickly glorious Lord, and raise my spright
to thee.

I care not for these ladies (pub. 1601)

Thomas Campion

I care not for these ladies that must be woo'd and
pray'd;
Give me kind Amaryllis, the wanton country
maid.
Nature Art disdaineth; her beauty is her
own.
Who when we court and kiss, she cries: forsooth, let
go!
But when we come where comfort is, she never will
say No.

If I love Amaryllis, she gives me fruit
and flow'rs;
But if we love these ladies, we must give golden
show'rs.
Give them gold that sell love; give me the nut-brown
lass,
Who when we court and kiss, she cries: forsooth, let
go!
But when we come where comfort is, she never will
say No.

These ladies must have pillows and beds by
strangers wrought.
Give me a bow'r of willows, of moss and leaves
unbought,
And fresh Amaryllis with milk and honey
fed,
Who when we court and kiss, she cries: forsooth, let
go!
But when we come where comfort is, she never will
say No.

Robert Johnson (c.1583-1633)

Pavan in C minor

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

O solitude, my sweetest choice Z406

(1684-5)

Katherine Philips after Antoine Girard de Saint-Amant

O solitude, my sweetest choice!
Places devoted to the night,
Remote from tumult and from noise,
How ye my restless thoughts delight!
O solitude, my sweetest choice!
O heav'ns! what content is mine,
To see these trees, which have appear'd
From the nativity of time,
And which all ages have rever'd,
To look today as fresh and green
As when their beauties first were seen.
O, how agreeable a sight
These hanging mountains do appear,
Which th'unhappy would invite
To finish all their sorrows here,
When their hard fate makes them endure
Such woes as only death can cure.
O, how I solitude adore!
That element of noblest wit,
Where I have learnt Apollo's lore,
Without the pains to study it.
For thy sake I in love am grown
With what thy fancy does pursue;

But when I think upon my own,
I hate it for that reason too,
Because it needs must hinder me
From seeing and from serving thee.
O solitude, O how I solitude adore!

Now that the sun hath veiled his light (An Evening Hymn on a Ground) Z193

(pub. 1688)

William Fuller

Now that the sun hath veil'd his light
And bid the world goodnight,
To the soft bed my body I dispose,
But where shall my soul repose?
Dear God, even in thy arms;
And can there be any so sweet security?
Then to thy rest, O my soul, and, singing, praise
The mercy that prolongs thy days! Halleluia.