

WIGMORE HALL 125

Saturday 28 March 2026
7.30pm

Dowland 400th Anniversary Weekend

Iestyn Davies countertenor
Thomas Dunford lute
Daisy Bevan soprano
Thomas Hobbs tenor
Neal Davies bass-baritone

John Dowland (1563-1626)

From *The Third and Last Booke of Songs or Aires* (pub. 1603)

Behold a wonder here • I must complain •

Lend your ears to my sorrow • What poor astronomers are they •

When Phoebus first did Daphne love

The Frog Galliard (1597)

From *The Third and Last Booke of Songs or Aires*

Me, me and none but me • The lowest trees have tops •

By a fountain where I lay • Time stands still •

Say, love, if ever thou didst find

Interval

From *The Third and Last Booke of Songs or Aires*

What if I never speed? • It was a time when silly bees could speak •

Fie on this feigning • Love stood amazed

Lachrimae

From *The Third and Last Booke of Songs or Aires*

O what hath overwrought • Farewell too fair • Weep you no more,

sad fountains • Come when I call • Farewell, unkind, farewell



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In February 1603, Dowland registered the publication of his *Third and Last Booke of Songs or Aires*, signing himself 'Bachelor in Musicke, and Lutenist to the most high and mightie CHRISTIAN the fourth by the grace of God king of Denmark and Norway'. It was a position he had held since 1598, and which made one of the highest paid servants, musical or otherwise, at the Danish court – fitting, perhaps, for a composer who in his earlier years had gathered experience in France, Germany and Italy, and in recent times fostered his reputation abroad with his first two songbooks, published in 1597 and 1600 respectively. 'My first two books of aires speed so well', he wrote in his preface, 'that they have produced a third, which they have fetcht far from home, and brought even through the most perilous seas, where having escapt so many sharpe rocks, I hope they shall not be wrackt on land by curious and biting censures'.

Dowland had always craved a position at the English court, however, and his failure to land one when a lutenist vacancy arose there in 1594 continued to rankle. Yet Christian was happy for his 'Dulandt' to visit England, which he did in 1601 to buy instruments and recruit musicians for the Danish court, and in the summer of 1603, this time 'on his own business'. This may have been connected to the distribution of the *Third and Last Booke*, or to the latest reprint of the *Firste Booke*, or to preparation for printing of the consort-music collection *Lachrimae, or Seven Teares* that came out the following year. His wife and children had remained in London while he was in Denmark, and it was also around this time that he purchased a new house for them in Fetter Lane. Queen Elizabeth had died in March, and the composer may have felt there was a glimpse of a new opening at court – after all, the new queen, wife of James I, was Christian's sister Anne.

After the more formal constructions (often fitting words to existing dance-forms) of the *Firste Booke* and the intense expressive complexity of through-composed songs such as in the *Second*, the *Third and Last Booke* shows a slight relaxation of emotion, as well as a willingness to admit more a carefree aspect in songs such as 'What poor astronomers are they', 'By a fountain where I lay' and 'When Phoebus first did Daphne love'. The latter is one of a number of songs in the collection that seem to offer barely concealed praise to Queen Elizabeth, still alive at the time of the book's preparation. 'Say, love, if ever thou didst find' is another, as is 'Time stands still', a song whose sublime simplicity (its exquisite melody plays out within a span of just five notes) allows it to touch the modern ear with a directness that defies the ages. Dowland may have been hoping to win royal favour with rich gifts such as these, though harder to explain in that case would be

the inclusion of 'It was a time when silly bees', whose satirical words, possibly by the Earl of Essex, seem to refer to another of his temporary self-exiles from court during his fractious relationship with the queen – sentiments the composer may well have associated with his own employment frustrations. Two songs look to have dramatical origins: 'Farewell, unkind, farewell' seems to show a play-specific situation of a young girl preparing to elope, while the dialogue 'Come when I call' is hard to make sense of unless it be drawn from some masque or other.

Other songs temper Dowland's famous melancholy, whether with resignation in 'Me, me and none but me' and 'Lend your ears to my sorrow', or cynicism in 'Fie on this feigning' and 'What poor astronomers are they'. Yet the Dowland of anguish, grief and tears, of sustained emotion articulated in aching lyric lines, is there in 'Weep ye no more, sad fountains' and the dramatic 'Love stood amazed', with its agonised melodic leap at the words 'aghast in heaven'. The majority of Dowland's song-texts are anonymous – most likely they were written by aristocratic and gentlemanly dilettantes who offered him patronage – but the beautiful 'I must complain' has words by the poet-composer Thomas Campion.

Dowland's *Third and Last Booke*, like its predecessors, was printed in such a way that the songs could be performed in a variety of scorings, some as solo lute-songs, and some as four-and five-part songs. Today's performances will reflect these options.

Dowland's fame during his lifetime rested as much on his lute-playing as on his compositions; 'Dowland to thee is dear, whose heavenly touch / Upon the lute doth ravish human sense', wrote the poet Richard Barnfield in the 1590s. Though he published very few of his 100-odd solos himself, their presence in numerous printed and manuscript collections of the time places them among the most significant of all bodies of work for lute. The two pieces in this programme set two of Dowland's most famous tunes: the *Frog Galliard* is the one he used for the song 'Now, o now, I needs must part' in the *First Booke of Songes* (the name may be a reference to Queen Elizabeth's last suitor, the Duc d'Alençon, whom she called her 'little frog'); while *Lachrimae* is the pavan that became both the song 'Flow my tears' in the *Second Booke* and the subject of the superb set of consort pieces that bears its name, and which will be performed as part of this Dowland festival tomorrow morning.

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John Dowland (1563-1626)

From *The Third and Last Booke of Songs
or Aires* (pub. 1603)

Behold a wonder here

Anon.

Behold a wonder here –
Love hath receiv'd his sight,
Which many hundred years
Hath not beheld the light.

Such beams infused be
By Cynthia in his eyes,
At first have made him see
And then have made him wise.

Love now no more will weep
For them that laugh the while,
Nor wake for them that sleep,
Nor sigh for them that smile.

So pow'rful is the beauty
That Love doth now behold,
As love is turn'd to duty
That's neither blind nor bold.

Thus beauty shows her might
To be of double kind,
In giving Love his sight
And striking Folly blind.

I must complain

Thomas Campion

I must complain, yet do enjoy, enjoy my love,
She is too fair, too rich in beauty's parts
Thence is my grief for nature while she strove
With all her graces and divinest arts,
To form her too, too beautiful of hue,
She had no leisure, she had no leisure,
No leisure left to make her true.

Lend your ears to my sorrow

Anon.

Lend your ears to my sorrow
Good people that have any pity:
For no eyes will I borrow
Mine own shall grace, my doleful ditty:
Chant then my voice though rude like to my rhyming,
And tell forth my grief which here in sad despair
Can find no ease of tormenting.

Cold as ice frozen is that heart,
Where thought of love could no time enter.
Such of life reap the poorest part,
Whose weight cleaves to this earthly centre.
Mutual joys in hearts truly united,
Do earth to heavenly state convert,
Like heaven still in itself delighted.

What poor astronomers are they

Anon.

What poor astronomers are they,
Take women's eyes for stars!
And set their thoughts in battle 'ray,
To fight such idle wars;
When in the end they shall approve
'Tis but a jest drawn out of Love.

And Love itself is but a jest
Devised by idle heads,
To catch young Fancies in the nest,
And lay them in fools' beds;
That being hatched in beauty's eyes
They may be fledged ere they be wise.

But yet it is a sport to see,
How Wit will run on wheels!
While Wit cannot persuaded be,
With that which Reason feels,
That women's eyes and stars are odd
And Love is but a feignèd god!

But such as will run mad with Will,
I cannot clear their sight
But leave them to their study still,
To look where is no light!
Till time too late, we make them try,
They study false Astronomy!

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

When Phoebus first did Daphne love

Anon.

When Phoebus first did Daphne love,
And no means might her favour move,
He crav'd the cause. The cause, quoth she
Is, I have vow'd virginity.
Then in a rage he sware, and said,
Past fifteen none, none but one should live a maid.

By this they get sweet mother's name,
And are not barren which were blame,
Besides by this procure they can
The world a child, the prince a man.
Now Stoick tell me if in this,
That anything be done a-miss.

The Frog Galliard (1597)

From *The Third and Last Booke of Songs or Aires*

Me, me and none but me

Anon.

Me, me and none but me, dart home O gentle death,
And quickly, for I draw too long this idle breath:
O how I long till I may fly to heaven above,
Unto my faithful and beloved turtle dove.

Like to the silver Swan, before my death I sing:
And yet alive my fatal knell I help to ring.
Still I desire from earth and earthly joys to fly,
He never happy liv'd, that cannot love to die.

The lowest trees have tops

Sir Edward Dyer

The lowest trees have tops, the ant her gall,
The fly her spleen, the little spark his heat;
And slender hairs cast shadows though but small,
And bees have stings although they be not great;
Seas have their source, and so have shallow springs,
And love is love in beggars and in kings.

Where waters smoothest run deep are the fords;
The dial stirs, yet none perceives it move;
The firmest faith is in the fewest words;
The turtles cannot sing and yet they love,
True hearts have eyes and ears, no tongues to speak;
They hear and see and sigh, and then they break.

By a fountain where I lay

Anon.

By a fountain where I lay,
All blessèd be that blessèd day!
By the glimm'ring of the sun,
O never be her shining done!
When I might see alone,
My true love's fairest one,
Love's dear light!
Love's clear sight!
No world's eyes can clearer see
A fairer sight none, none can be.

Fair with garlands all a-dress'd,
Was never nymph more fairly bless'd.
Blessed in the high'st degree,
So may she ever blessed be.
Came to this fountain near,
With such a smiling cheer,
Such a face,
Such a grace!
Happy, happy eyes that see,
Such a heav'nly sight as she.

Then I forthwith took my pipe,
Which I all fair and clean did wipe.
And upon a heav'nly ground,
All in the grace of beauty found.
Played this roundelay,
'Welcome, fair Queen of May,
Sing, sweet air,
Welcome fair,
Welcome be the shepherd's Queen,
The glory of all our green!'

Time stands still

Anon.

Time stands still with gazing on her face.
Stand still and gaze, for minutes, hours and years to her
give place.
All other things shall change but she remains the same.
Till heavens changed have their course and Time hath
lost his name.
Cupid doth hover up and down, blinded with her fair eyes.
And Fortune captive at her feet contemned and
conquered lies.

Say, love, if ever thou didst find

Anon.

Say, love, if ever thou didst find
A woman with a constant mind?
None but one.
And what should that rare mirror be?
Some goddess or some queen is she;
She, she, she, and only she,
She only queen of love and beauty.

But could thy fiery poison'd dart
At no time touch her spotless heart,
Nor come near?
She is not subject to Love's bow;
Her eye commands, her heart saith no,
No, no, no, and only no;
One no another still doth follow.

How might I that fair wonder know,
That mocks desire with endless no.
See the moon
That ever in one change doth grow,
Yet still the same, and she is so;
So, so, so, and only so,
From heav'n her virtues she doth borrow.

To her then yield thy shafts and bow,
That can command affection so:
Love is free;
So are her thoughts that vanquish thee.
There is no queen of love but she,
She, she, she, and only she
She only queen of love and beauty.

Interval

From *The Third and Last Booke of Songs or Aires*

What if I never speed?

Anon.

What if I never speed?
Shall I straight yield to despair,
And still on sorrow feed
That can no loss repair?

Or shall I change my love?
For I find pow'r to depart,
And in my reason prove
I can command my heart.

But if she will pity my desire and my love requite,
Then ever shall she live my dear delight.
Come, come, come, while I have a heart to desire thee,
Come, come, come, for either I will love or admire thee.

Oft have I dreamed of joy,
Yet I never felt the sweet,
But tired with annoy,
My griefs each other greet.

Oft have I left my hope
As a wretch by fate forlorn,
But Love aims at one scope,
And lost, will still return.

He that once loves with a true desire never can depart,
For Cupid is the king of ev'ry heart.
Come, come, come, while I have a heart to desire thee,
Come, come, come, for either I will love or admire thee.

It was a time when silly bees could speak

Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex

It was a time when silly bees could speak,
And in that time I was a silly bee,
Who fed on time until my heart 'gan break,
Yet never found the time would favour me.
Of all the swarm I only did not thrive,
Yet brought I wax and honey to the hive.

Then thus I buzzed when time no sap would give:
Why should this blessed time to me be dry,
Sith by this time the lazy drone doth live,
The wasp, the worm, the gnat, the butterfly?
Mated with grief I kneeled on my knees,
And thus complained unto the king of bees:

My liege, gods grant thy time may never end,
And yet vouchsafe to hear my plaint of time,
Which fruitless flies have found to be a friend,
And I cast down when atomies do climb.
The king replied but thus: Peace, peevish bee,
Thou'rt bound to serve the time, the time not thee.

Fie on this feigning

Anon.

Fie on this feigning,
Is love without desire,
Heat still remaining,
And yet no spark of fire?
Thou art untrue, nor wert with fancy movèd,
For Desire hath pow'r on all that ever lovèd.

Truth is not placèd
In words and forcèd smiles,
Love is not gracèd
With that which still beguiles,
Love or dislike, yield fire, or give no fuel,
So may'st thou prove kind, or at the least less cruel.

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

Love stood amazed

Anon.

Love stood amazed at sweet beauty's pain:
Love would have said that all was but vain,
And gods but half divine,
But when Love saw that beauty would die:
He all aghast to heavens did cry,
O gods, what wrong is mine.

Then his tears bred in thoughts of salt brine,
Fell from his eyes, like rain in sunshine,
Expelled by rage of fire:
Yet in such wise as anguish affords,
He did express in these his last words
His infinite desire.

With pity moved the gods then change love
To Phoenix shape,
Yet cannot remove his wonted property,
He loves the sun because it is fair,
Sleep he neglects, he lives but by air,
And would, but cannot die.

Lachrimae

From *The Third and Last Booke of Songs or Aires*

O what hath overwrought

Anon.

O what hath overwrought
My all amazed thought?
Or whereto am I brought,
That thus in vain have sought,
Till Time and Truth hath taught,
I labour all for nought?

The day I see is clear,
But I am ne'er the near,
For grief doth still appear
To cross our merry cheer.
While I can nothing hear,
But winter all the year.

Cold, hold,
The sun will shine warm,
Therefore now fear no harm.
O blessed beams,
Where beauty streams,
Happy, happy light to love's dreams.

Farewell too fair

Anon.

Farewell too faire,
Too chaste but too, too cruel.
Discretion never quenched fire with swords:
Why hast thou made my heart thine anger's fuel,
And now would kill my passions with thy words.
This is proud beauty's true anatomy,
If that secure severe in secrecy,
Farewell, farewell.

Weep you no more, sad fountains

Anon.

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.

Come when I call

Anon.

First Voice:

Come when I call, or tarry 'til I come,
If you be deaf I must prove dumb.

Second Voice:

Stay a while my heavn'ly joy,
I come with wings of love,
When envious eyes time shall remove.

First Voice:

If thy desire ever knew the grief of delay,
No danger could stand in thy way.

Second Voice:

O die not, add this sorrow to my grief
That languish here, wanting relief.

First Voice:

What need we languish?
Can love quickly fly:
Fear ever hurts more than jealousy.

Both Voices:

Then securely envy scorning,
Let us end with joy our mourning,
Jealousy still defy,
And love till we die.

Farewell, unkind, farewell

Anon.

Farewell, unkind, farewell, to me no more a father,
Since my heart, my heart holds my love most dear.
The wealth which thou dost reap another's hand must
gather,
Though my heart, my heart still lies buried there.
Then farewell, then farewell, O farewell,
Welcome, my love, welcome, my joy forever.

'Tis not the vain desire of human fleeting beauty,
Makes my mind to live through my means do die.
Nor do I Nature wrong, though I forget my duty:
Love not in the blood but in the spirit doth lie.
Then farewell, then farewell, O farewell,
Welcome, my love, welcome, my joy forever.