WIGMORE HALL

Wednesday 4 November 2026
7.30pm

John Dowland: Another Retrospective

Thomas Dunford artistic director, lute
Jupiter Ensemble

Mélissa Petit mezzo-soprano
Lea Desandre mezzo-soprano
Hugh Cutting countertenor
Thomas Hobbs tenor
Florian Störtz bass

Myriam Rignol viola da gamba
Clémence Schlitz viola da gamba
Mathilde Vialle viola da gamba
Étienne Floutier viola da gamba
Nick Milne viola da gamba

John Dowland (1563-1626)

Come again, sweet love doth now invite from *The Firste Booke of Songes or Ayres of Fowre Parts* (pub. 1597)

Semper Dowland semper dolens (1604)

Behold a wonder here from *The Third and Last Booke of Songs or Aires* (pub. 1603)

A Dream (1610)

Go, crystal tears from *The Firste Booke of Songes or Ayres of Fowre Parts*

The Earl of Essex Galliard (1604)

Sorrow, stay from *The Second Booke of Songs or Ayres of 2, 4 and 5 parts* (pub. 1600)

Melancholy Galliard

Come away, come sweet love from *The Firste Booke of Songes or Ayres of Fowre Parts*

The King of Denmark's Galliard (1604)

Can she excuse my wrongs with Virtue's cloak? from *The Firste Booke of Songes or Ayres of Fowre Parts*

Lachrimae Antiquae (1604)

In darkness let me dwell (pub. 1610)

Interval

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Fine knacks for ladies from *The Second Booke of Songs or Ayres of 2, 4 and 5 parts*

A Fancy

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Captain Digorie Piper's Galliard (pub. 1605)

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Mr John Langton's Pavan (1604)

Time stands still from *The Third and Last Booke of Songs or Aires*

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Shall I strive with words to move from *A Pilgrimes Solace* (pub. 1612)

Flow, my tears from *The Second Booke of Songs or Ayres of 2, 4 and 5 parts*

Fortune my foe

Weep you no more, sad fountains from *The Third and Last Booke of Songs or Aires*

The Frog Galliard (1597)

Now, oh now I needs must part from *The Firste Booke of Songes or Ayres of Fowre Parts*

John Dowland Celebration

In this 400th anniversary year of his death, there are surely few who would question John Dowland's reputation as one of this country's finest composers, the major achievements in his favoured genres of song, lute solo and consort music ranking with the best of Byrd, Purcell, Elgar and Britten in theirs. His songs are now part of the universal musical fabric, transcending the ages with (as modern-day interpreter Sting has put it) an 'intimacy and apparent simplicity easily translated to audiences of today'.

Born in 1563, almost certainly in London, he gained experience travelling on the continent as a young man, including four years in the service of the English ambassador in Paris. A turning-point came in 1594 when his application for a vacant post among Queen Elizabeth's lutenists was unsuccessful, and in a mixture of frustration and annoyance he decided to return abroad. After working in Germany he journeyed on to Italy, where political events threatened to overtake him; while in France he had converted to Catholicism, and in Florence he found himself keeping company with a group of dissident English Catholic exiles. Taking fright, he wrote to the Queen's de facto secretary of state Sir Robert Cecil, protesting his loyalty. He returned to England in 1596 to try again for a court post, but without success.

Dowland must have considered at this point that it was time for him to make his mark in print, for between 1597 and 1604 he produced three *Bookes of Songes*, and the consort-music collection *Lachrimae*. Already by 1598, however, he had left England again, having accepted an invitation to be a lutenist at the court of Christian IV of Denmark. While not the English court position he craved, it was still a prestigious appointment. Christian was a discerning musical patron who employed a number of distinguished singers and players, and Dowland's salary was not just higher than that of the other musicians but comparable to that of a high-ranking court official.

Dowland returned to London sometime after 1606, and in 1610 his son Robert reported that his father was 'now graye, and like the Swan, but singing towards his end'. That his 47-year-old father was indeed still musically active was confirmed by the inclusion that same year of three songs (the incomparable 'In darkness let me dwell' among them) in Robert's anthology *A Musicall Banquet*, and then in 1612 when John himself published a fourth songbook under the title *A Pilgrimes Solace*.

Dowland's achievements lay in three principal areas, in each of which he excelled. As a lutenist he was acknowledged as one of Europe's supreme masters. 'Dowland to thee is dear, whose heavenly touch / Upon the lute doth ravish human sense', wrote the poet Richard Barnfield in the 1590s. Although 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 and varied of all bodies of work for the instrument.

Then there is his matchless output of songs, which raise him to the highest echelons of English songwriting. Though known above all for his talent for the lacrimose – exemplified by the searing 'In darkness let me dwell', 'I saw my lady weep' and 'Go, crystal tears' – his output covers a wide range of styles that embraces the comical and satirical, songs based on dance rhythms and numbers written for masques. Dowland also kept his options open concerning their manner of performance, publishing them in a format that allowed them to be presented as solo songs with lute accompaniment, or as partsongs, or by various combinations of voices and instruments – an adaptability reflected in this evening's concert.

Finally there is his consort music, concentrated into the wondrous *Lachrimae, or Seaven Teares* publication of 1604, without doubt one of the most important instrumental compositions of the English Renaissance. Set for five-part consort and lute, it has at its heart seven powerful explorations of the harmonic, rhythmic and melodic subtleties of his earlier *Lachrimae* lute pavan, known in its subsequent sung version as 'Flow my tears' but also so famous across northern Europe that many composers transcribed it or even just used its first four falling notes as a ready-made allusive symbol for tears and grief. *Lachrimae Antiquae* sets the original version of this famous piece. In addition to these seven pavans there are two more – *Mr John Langton's Pavan* and the punningly titled but superbly serious *Semper Dowland, semper dolens* (Always Dowland, always doleful) – but the rest of *Lachrimae* consists mainly of lighter items. Some of them would have been familiar to the public from their existing versions as lute solos, or songs, or both: *The Earl of Essex Galliard* uses the same tune as 'Can she excuse my wrongs?'; the *Frog Galliard* is the same as 'Now, oh now, I needs must part', and *Captain Digorie Piper's Galliard* also exists as the song 'If my complaints could passions move'. *Mr George Whitehead his Almand*, on the other hand, is not known from any other source and may have been specifically composed as a consort piece, perhaps for the violin band at the Danish court.

In October 1612 Dowland finally achieved his long-held desire of a position at court when an extra place was created for him among the lutenists of King James I. He promptly fell silent as a composer, and we know little of his activities in his last decade. Having been listed among the musicians at James's funeral in 1625, he died early the following year. 'Every land strives to exalt the renown of its own artists,' one continental observer had written in 1615. 'England puts Dowland first, honours and loves him.'

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John Dowland (1563-1626)

Come again, sweet love doth now invite from *The Firste Booke of Songes or Ayres of Fowre Parts* (pub. 1597)

Anonymous

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 sleeps are full of dreams,
My eyes are full of steams.
My heart takes no delight.
To see the fruits and joys that some do find.
And mark the storms are me assign'd.

Out alas,
My faith is ever true,
Yet will she never rue,
Nor yield me any grace:
Her 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 triumph laughs.

Semper Dowland semper dolens (1604)

Behold a wonder here from *The Third and Last Booke of Songs or Aires* (pub. 1603)

Anonymous

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.

A Dream (1610)

Go, crystal tears from *The Firste Booke of Songes or Ayres of Fowre Parts*

Anonymous

Go crystal tears, like to the morning show'rs
And sweetly weep into thy lady's breast.
And as the dews revive the drooping flow'rs,
So let your drops of pity be address'd,
To quicken up the thoughts of my desert,
Which sleeps too sound whilst I from her depart.

Haste restless sighs, and let your burning breath
Dissolve the ice of her indurate heart,
Whose frozen rigour like forgetful Death,
Feels never any touch of my desert:
Yet sighs and tears to her I sacrifice,
Both from a spotless heart and patient eyes.

The Earl of Essex Galliard (1604)

Sorrow, stay from *The Second Booke of Songs or Ayres of 2, 4 and 5 parts* (pub. 1600)

Sorrow, stay, lend true repentant tears,
To a woeful wretched wight,
Hence, despair with thy tormenting fears:
O do not my poor heart affright.
Pity, help now or never,
Mark me not to endless pain,
Alas I am condemned ever,
No hope, no help there doth remain,
But down, down, down, down I fall,
Down and arise I never shall.

Melancholy Galliard

Come away, come sweet love from *The Firste Booke of Songes or Ayres of Fowre Parts*

Anonymous

Come away, come sweet love,
The golden morning breaks;
All the earth, all the air
Of love and pleasure speaks.
Teach thine arms then to embrace,
And sweet rosy lips to kiss,
And mix our souls in mutual bliss.
Eyes were made for beauty's grace,
Viewing, rueing love's long pains,
Procured by beauty's rude disdain.

Come away, come sweet love,
The golden morning wastes,
While the sun from his sphere
His fiery arrows casts,
Making all the shadows fly,
Playing, staying in the grove
To entertain the stealth of love.
Thither, sweet love, let us hie,
Flying, dying in desire,
Winged with sweet hopes and heavenly fire.

Come away, come sweet love,
Do not in vain adorn
Beauty's grace, that should rise
Like to the naked morn.
Lilies on the river's side,
And fair Cyprian flowers new-blown,
Desire no beauties but their own;
Ornament is nurse of pride,
Pleasure, measure love's delight.
Haste then, sweet love, our wished flight.

The King of Denmark's Galliard (1604)

Can she excuse my wrongs with Virtue's cloak? from *The Firste Booke of Songes or Ayres of Fowre Parts*

Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex

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,
Thou 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,
The 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 be granting this,
Or cut off delays if that die I must.

Better a thousand times to die,
Than for to live thus still tormented:
Dear, but remember it was I
Who for thy sake did die contented.

Lachrimae Antiquae (1604)

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.

Interval

Fine knacks for ladies from *The Second Booke of Songs or Ayres of 2, 4 and 5 parts*

Anonymous

Fine knacks for ladies, cheap, choice, brave and new,
Good pennyworths, but money cannot prove,
I keep a fair, but for the fair to view
A beggar may be liberal of love,
Though all my wares be trash, the heart is true.

Great gifts are guiles and look for gifts again,
My trifles come as treasures from my mind,
It is a precious jewel to be plain,
Sometimes in shell the Orient's pearls we find.
Of others take a sheaf, of me a grain.

Within this pack pins, points, laces and gloves,
And divers toys fitting a country fair,
But in my heart, where duty serves and loves,
Turtles and twins, Court's brood, a heav'nly pair.
Happy the man that thinks of no removes.

A Fancy

Come, heavy sleep from *The Firste Booke of Songes or Ayres of Fowre Parts*

Anonymous

Come, heavy sleep, the image of true Death,
And close up these my weary weeping eyes,
Whose spring of tears doth stop my vital breath,
And tears my heart with Sorrow's sigh-swoll'n cries.
Come and possess my tired thought-worn soul,
That living dies, till thou on me be stole.

Come, shadow of my end, and shape of rest,
Allied to Death, child to his black-faced Night;
Come thou and charm these rebels in my breast,
Whose waking fancies do my mind affright.
O come, sweet Sleep, come or I die for ever;
Come ere my last sleep comes, or come never.

Captain Digorie Piper's Galliard (pub. 1605)

I saw my lady weep from *The Second Booke of Songs or Ayres of 2, 4 and 5 parts*

Anonymous

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 your joyful looks excels;
Tears kill the heart, believe.
O strive not to be excellent in woe,
Which only breeds your beauty's overthrow.

Mr John Langton's Pavan (1604)

Time stands still from *The Third and Last Booke of Songs or Aires*

Anonymous

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.

Whom Fortune, Love, and Time attend on,
Her with my fortunes, love, and time I honour will alone.
If bloodless Envy say Duty hath no desert,
Duty replies that Envy knows herself his faithful heart.
My settled vows and spotless faith no fortune can remove,
Courage shall show my inward faith, and faith shall try my love.

Mr George Whitehead his Almand (1604)

Shall I strive with words to move from *A Pilgrimes Solace* (pub. 1612)

Anonymous

Shall I strive with words to move,
When deeds receive not due regard?
Shall I speak, and neither please,
Nor be freely heard?

Grief alas though all in vain,
Her restless anguish must reveal:
She alone my wound shall know,
Though she will not heal.

All woes have end, though awhile delayed,
Our patience proving.
O that Time's strange effects
Could but make her loving.

Storms calm at last, and why may not she
Leave off her frowning?
O sweet love, help her hands
My affection crowning.

I wooed her, I loved her, and none but her admire.
O come dear joy, and answer my desire.

Flow, my tears from *The Second Booke of Songs or Ayres of 2, 4 and 5 parts*

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.

Fortune my foe

Weep you no more, sad fountains from *The Third and Last Booke of Songs or Aires*

Anonymous

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.

The Frog Galliard (1597)

Please do not turn the page until the work has ended.

Now, oh now I needs must part from *The Firste Booke of Songes or Ayres of Fowre Parts*

Anonymous

Now, oh now I needs must part,
Parting though I absent mourn.
Absence can no joy impart;
Joy once fled cannot return.
While I live I needs must love,
Love lives not when Hope is gone.
Now at last Despair doth prove,
Love divided loveth none.

Sad despair doth drive me hence;
This despair unkindness sends.
If that parting be offence,
It is she which then offends.

Dear when I from thee am gone,
Gone are all my joys at once,
I lov'd thee and thee alone,
In whose love I joyed once.
And although your sight I leave,
Sight wherein my joys do lie.
Till that death doth sense bereave,
Never shall affection die.

Sad despair doth drive me hence;
This despair unkindness sends.
If that parting be offence,
It is she which then offends.

Dear, if I do not return,
Love and I shall die together.
For my absence never mourn
Whom you might have joyed ever;
Part we must though now I die,
Die I do to part with you.
Him despair doth cause to lie
Who both liv'd and dieth true.