



LAWO
CLASSICS

John Dowland
The First Booke of Songes

Berit
Norbakken

Solmund
Nystabakk

John Dowland

The First Booke of Songes or Ayres

John Dowland's (1563—1626) *First Booke of Songes or Ayres* caused a commotion; no other songbook of this kind was ever printed more than once—and this one was printed six times in Dowland's lifetime. Interestingly, print is also the main reason why this book became so widely known, and used, in modern times. Thanks to the number of copies produced, its survival was all but guaranteed, whereas entire bodies of music of other composers only ever circulated in manuscript form. By building a career as a composer of printed works in his own time, Dowland laid the foundation for his posthumous fame quite efficiently. Perhaps the scope of his printed output is partly due to his misfortune, failing for so long to obtain the position as court lutenist in England; after securing the post in 1612, he never published again.

John Dowland's lute songs are iconic both as a body of music, and because of the many "hit tunes" among them—of which several of the most famous are contained in the *First Booke*. Although modern audiences know these songs from recordings and concert performances, the songbooks in which they were first brought to the public imply a rather different mode of music experience and consumption. Printed with four-part settings of each piece on a double page, a quartet of singers can all read from the same book when it is laid flat on a table. In such a situation,

the performers are also the audience; the musical experience occurs through participation rather than by merely listening.

In contrast to the privacy of domestic music making, many of the songs in Dowland's *First Booke* originated, and were probably first performed, in court circles, and the (mostly anonymous) authors of their lyrics were courtiers. Many of the melodies appear to predate the song settings, as instrumental versions are documented well before the appearance of the songbook in 1597. Some scholars support this theory with the argument that the verse of the lyrics does not always match the tunes very well—*Can She Excuse My Wrongs* being but one example. On the other hand, the friction between the rhythm of the words and that of the tune often proves quite inspiring, requiring us, the performers, to intervene and make decisions in order for the phrasing to make sense.

The lute parts of Dowland's printed songbooks are aimed at non-professional performers who needed a fully written-out tablature to be able to accompany the songs. Interestingly, many of the lute parts are rather virtuosic, and certainly carefully crafted, requiring at least near-professional skills from the performer. Nevertheless, period sources seem to indicate that professional players would have used only the tune and bass line to

work out an adequate accompaniment, a practice that borders on the semi-improvised *basso continuo* which soon became the new standard during the 17th century. This recording takes Dowland's lute parts as starting points, with varying degrees of freedom and variation, entering into a subtle dialogue with the voice. As Thomas Campion recommended in the preface to his songbook from 1601:

For the note and tablature, if they satisfie the most, we have our desire, let expert masters please themselves with better.

The First Booke of Songes

_____ I.

1. Unquiet thoughts your civill slaughter stint,
and wrap your wrongs within a pensive heart:
and you my tongue that makes my mouth a mint,
and stamps my thoughts to coine them words by art:
Be still, for if you ever do the like,
I'le cut the string that makes the hammer strike.
2. But what can stay my thoughts they may not start,
Or put my tongue in durance for to die?
When as these eyes, the keyes of mouth and heart,
Open the locke where all my love doth lie;
I'le seal them up within their lids forever,
So thoughts and words and looks shall die together
3. How shall I then gaze on my mistresse eyes?
My thoughts must have some vent: els heart will break.
My tongue would rust as in my mouth it lies,
If eyes and thoughts were free, and that not speake.
Speake then and tell the passions of desire;
Which turns mine eyes to floods, my thoughts to fire.

_____ II.

1. Who ever thinks or hopes of love for love:
Or who, belov'd, in Cupid's lawes doth glorie:
Who joyes in vowes, or vowes not to remove:
Who by this light god hath not been made sorry:
Let him see mee eclipsed from my sun,
With dark clouds of an earth quite overrunne.

2. Who thinks that sorrowes felt, desires hidden,
Or humble faith in constant honour arm'd
Can keepe love from the fruit that is forbidden,
Who thinks that change is by intreatie charmd,
Looking on me let him know love's delights
Are treasures hid in caves but kept by Sprights.

_____ III.

1. My thoughts are wing'd with hopes, my hopes with love
Mount love unto the moone in clearest night
And say as she doth in the heavens move,
In earth so wanes and waxeth my delight:
And whisper this but softly in her eares
Hope oft doth hang the head, and Trust shed teares
2. And you my thoughts that some mistrust do carry
If for mistrust my mistresse do you blame,
Say though you alter, yet you do not varie,
And she doth change, and yet remaine the same:
Distrust doth enter hearts, but not infect,
And love is sweetest seasoned with suspect
3. If she, for this, with clouds do maske her eyes,
And make the heavens dark with her disdaine,
With windie sighs, disperse them in the skies,
Or with thy teares dissolve them into rain;
Thoughts, hopes, and love returne to me no more
Till Cynthia shine as she hath done before.

_____ IV.

1. If my complaints could passions move
Or make Love see wherein I suffer wrong:
My passions were enough to proove,
That my despairs had govern'd mee too long
O Love, I live and die in thee,
Thy grieffe in my deepe sighes still speaks:
Thy wounds do freshly bleed in mee,
My heart for thy unkindness breakes:
Yet thou dost hope when I despaire
And when I hope, thou mak'st me hope in vaine.
Thou saist thou canst my harmes repaire,
Yet for redresse, thou letst me still complaine.
2. Can love bee rich, and yet I want?
Is love my judge, and yet I am condemn'd?
Thou plentie hast, yet me dost scant:
Thou made a God, and yet thy power contemn'd
That I do live, it is thy power:
That I desire it is thy worth:
If Love doth make men's lives too sowre
Let me not love, nor live henceforth.
Die shall my hopes, but not my faith,
That you that of my fall may hearers be
May here despaire, which truly saith,
I was more true to Love than Love to me.

_____ V.

1. Can shee excuse my wrongs with vertues cloak?
Shall I call her good when she proves unkind?
Are those cleer fiers which vanish into smoke?
Must I praise the leaves where no fruit I find?
No no: where shadows do for bodies stand,
Thou maist be abusde 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 orecome her will,
The love will be thus fruitless ever

2. Was I so base, that I might not aspire
Unto those high joyes which she holds from me?
As they are high, so high is my desire:
If she this denie, what can granted be?
If she will yeeld to that which reason is,
It is reasons will that love should be just.
Deare make me happie still be granting this,
Or cut off delays if that die I must.
Better a thousand times to die,
Then for to live thus still tormented:
Deare but remember it was I
Who for thy sake did die contended.

_____ VI. (The Frog Galliard)

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

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

2. Deare, when I am from thee gone,
 Gone are all my joyes at once,
 I loved thee and thee alone,
 In whose love I joyed once:
 And although your sight I leave,
 Sight wherein my joyes doe lie,
 Till that death do sense bereave,
 Never shall affection die
Sad despair doth drive me hence, etc.

3. Deare, if I do not returne,
 Love and I shall die together,
 For my absence never mourne,
 Whom you might have joyed ever:
 Part we must though now I die,
 Die I do to part with you,
 Him despaire doth cause to lie,
 Who both lived and dieth true.
Sad despair doth drive me hence, etc.

____ VII.

1. Deare, if you change, I'le never chuse againe.
 Sweet, if you shrinke, I'le never thinke of love.
 Faire, if you faile, I'le judge all beautie vaine.
 Wise, if too weake, more wits I'le never prove.
 Deare, sweet, faire, wise, change, shrinke, nor be not weake:
 and on my faith, my faith shall never breake.

2. Earth with flowers shall sooner heaven adorne,
 Heaven her bright stars through earth's dim globe shall move,
 Fire heate shall loose, and frosts of flames be borne,
 Aire made to shine as blacke as hell shall prove:
 Earth, eaven, fire, aire, the world transform'd shall view,
 Ere I prove false to faith, or strange to you.

____ VIII.

1. Burst forth, my teares, assist my forward grieve,
 And shew what pain imperious love provokes.
 Kinde tender lambes, lament love's scant reliefe,
 And pine, since pensive care my freedome yokes.
 O pine, to see me pine, my tender flockes.

2. Sad pining care, that never may have peace,
 At beauties gate in hope of pitie knocks;
 But mercy sleepes while deep disdain increase,
 And beautie Hope in her faire bosome locks.
 O grieve to hear my grief, my tender flocks.

3. Like to the winds my sighs have winged beene,
 Yet are my sighes and sutes repaid with mocks:
 I pleade, yet she repineth at my teene:
 O ruthlesse rigour harder then the rocks,
 That both the shepherd kils, and his poor flocks.

____ IX.

1. Go crystall teares, like to the morning show'rs
 And sweetly weepe into thy Ladies breast.
 And as the dewes revive the drooping flowers
 So let your drops of pitie be addrest,
 To quicken up the thoughts of my desert,
 Which sleeps too sound whilst I from her depart

2. Haste, restless sighs, and let your burning breath
 Dissolve the Ice of her indurate heart
 Whose frozen rigour like forgetfull death,
 Feeles never any touch of my desert:
 Yet sighes and teares to her I sacrifice,
 Both from a spotlesse heart and patient eyes.

_____ X.

1. Think'st thou then by thy faining
Sleepe, with a proud disdainning,
Or with thy craftie closing,
Thy cruell eyes reposing,
To drive me from thy sight,
When sleepe yeelds more delight,
Such harmlesse beautie gracing.
And while sleepe fained is,
May not I steale a kisse,
Thy quiet armes embracing
2. O that thy sleepe dissembled,
Were to a trance resembled,
Thy cruell eyes deceiving,
Of lively sense bereaving:
Then should my love requite
Thy love's unkind despite,
While furie triumpht boldly
In beauty sweet disgrace:
And liv'd in sweet embrace
Of her that lov'd so coldly.
3. Should then my love aspiring,
Forbidden joyes desiring,
So far exceed the dutie
That vertue owes to beautie?
No, Love seek no thy blisse,
Beyond a simple kisse,
For such deceits are harmlesse,
Yet kisse a thousand fold
For kisses may be bold
When lovely sleep is armlesse

_____ XI.

1. Come away , come sweet love,
The golden morning breakes.
All the earth, all the aire,
Of love and pleasure speakes.
Teach thine armes then to embrace,
And sweet rosie lips to kisse,
And mix our soules in mutuall blisse.
Eyes were made for beauty's grace,
Viewing, ruing love's long pains
Procur'd by beautie's rude disdain
2. Come away , come sweet love,
The golden morning wastes
While the Sun from his spere,
His fierie arrowes casts:
Making all the shadows flie,
Playing, staying in the grove,
To entertaine the stealth of love.
Thether sweet love let us hie,
Flying, dying, in desire,
Wing'd with sweet hopes and heav'nly fire.
3. Come away , come sweet love,
Do not in vain adorne
Beautie's grace , that should rise,
Like to the naked morne:
Lillies on the river's side,
And fair Cyprian flowres new blowne,
Desire no beauties but their owne.
Ornament is nurse of pride,
Pleasure measure love's delight,
Haste then sweet love our wished flight.

_____ XII.

1. Rest awhile, you cruell cares,
Be not more severe then love.
Beauty kils and beautie spares,
And sweet smiles sad sighs remove:
Laura, faire queen of my delight,
Come grant me love in love's despite,
And if I ever faile to honor thee,
Let this heavenly light I see,
Be as darke as hell to me.
2. If I speake, my words want weight,
Am I mute, my heart doth breake,
If I sigh, she feares deceit,
Sorrow then for me must speake:
Cruell, unkind, with favour view
The wound that first was made by you:
And if my torments fained be,
Let this heavenly light I see,
Be as darke as hell to me.
3. Never houre of pleasing rest,
Shall revive my dying ghost,
Till my soule hath repesest
The sweet hope which love hath lost:
Laura, redeeme the soule that dies,
By furie of thy murdering eyes:
And if it proves unkind to thee,
Let this heavenly light I see,
Be as darke as hell to me.

_____ XIII.

1. Sleep, wayward thoughts, and rest you with my love:
Let not my love be with my love diseases'd.
Touch not, proud hands, least you her anger move:
But pine you with my longings, long displeas'd.
Thus while she sleeps, I sorrow for her sake:
So sleeps my love, and yet my love doth wake.
2. But, O the furie of my restlesse feare!
The hidden anguish of my flesh desires!
The glories and the beauties that appeare,
Betweene her brows neere Cupid's closed fires
Thus while she sleeps, moves sighing for her sake:
o sleeps my Love, and yet my love doth wake.
3. My love doth rage, and yet my Love doth rest:
Feare in my love, and yet my love secure:
Peace in my love, and yet my love oppresst,
Impatient, yet of perfect temperature,
Sleepe, daintie love, while I sigh for thy sake:
So sleeps my Love, and yet my love doth wake.

_____ XIV.

1. All ye, whom love or fortune hath betraid,
All ye, that dream of blisse, but live in griefe,
All ye, whose hopes are evermore delaid,
All ye, whose sighs or sicknesse wants reliefe:
Lend eares and teares to mee, most haplesse man,
That sings my sorrowes like the dying Swanne.
2. Care that consumes the heart with inward paine,
Paine that presents sad care in outward view,
Both tyrant-like enforce me to complaine,
But still in vaine: for none my plaints will rue.
Teares, sighes and ceaseless cries alone I spend:
My woe wants comfort, and my sorrow end.

_____ XV.

1. Wilt thou unkind thus reave me
Of my heart, of my heart, and so leave me?
*Farewell: Farewell,
But yet or ere I part (O cruell)
Kisse me sweet, sweet my jewell.*
2. Hope by disdaine growess cheerelesse,
Feare doth love, love doth feare, beautie peerelesse.
Farewell...
3. If no delayes can move thee,
ife shall die, death shall live, still to love thee.
Farewell...
4. Yet be thou mindfull ever,
Heat from fire, fire from heat, none can sever.
Farewell...
5. True love cannot be changed,
Though delight from desert be estranged.
Farewell...

_____ XVI.

1. Would my conceit that first enforst my woe,
Or els mine eies which still the same increase,
Might be extinct, to end my sorrowes so,
Which now are such as nothing can release:
Whose life is death, whose sweet each change of sowre,
And eke whose hell reneweth every houre.

2. Each houre amidst the deepe of hell I frie,
Each houre I wast and wither where I sit:
But that sweet houre wherein I wish to die,
My hope alas may not injoy it yet,
Whose hope is such, bereaved of the blisse,
Which unto all save me allotted is.
3. To all save mee is free to live or die,
To all save mee remaineth hap or hope,
But all perforce, I must abandon I,
Sith Fortune still directs my hap aslope
Wherefore to neither hap nor hope I trust,
But to my thralles I yeeld, for so I must.

_____ XVII.

1. Come againe: sweet love doth now invite
Thy graces that refraine,
To do me due delight,
To see, to heare, to touch, to kisse, to die,
With thee againe in sweetest sympathy.
2. Come again, that I may cease to mourne
Through thy unkind disdaine,
For now left and forlorne:
I sit, I sigh, I weepe, I faint, I die
In deadly paine and endless miserie.
3. All the day the sun that lends me shine,
By frownes doth cause me pine,
And feeds me with delay:
Her smiles, my springs, that makes my joy to grow,
Her frownes the winter of my woe.

4. All the night my sleepes are full of dreames,
My eyes are full of streames.
My heart takes no delight,
To see the fruits and joys that some do find,
And marke the stormes are mee assignde.

5. But alas, my faith is ever true,
Yet will she never rue,
Nor yield mee any grace:
Her eyes of fire, her heart of flint is made,
Whom teares nor truth may once invade.

6. Gentle Love, draw forth thy wounding dart,
Thou canst not pearce her heart;
For I, that doe approve,
By sighs and tears more hot then are thy shafts:
Did tempt while she for triumphs laughs.

____ XVIII.

1. His golden locks Time hath to silver turnde.
O time too swift, O swiftnesse never ceasing!
His youth 'gainst time and age hath ever spurnd,
But spurnd in vaine, youth waneth by increasing:
Beautie, strength, youth are flowers but fading seene,
Dutie, Faith, Love are roots and ever green.

2. His helmet now shall make a hive for Bees,
And lovers' sonets turne to holy psalmes.
A man at armes must now serve on his knees,
And feed on prayers which are age's almes:
But though from Court to cottage he depart,
His Saint is sure of his unspotted heart.

3. And when he saddest sits in homely Cell,
He'll teach his swaines this Caroll for a song:
Blest be the hearts that wish my Sovereigne well,
Curst be the soule that thinks her [him] any wrong.
Goddess [Ye Gods], allow this aged man his right,
To be your beadsman now, that was your knight.

____ XIX.

1. Awake, sweet love, thou art returnd:
My hart, which long in absence mournd,
Lives now in perfect joy.
Let love, which never absent dies,
Now live for ever in her eyes,
Whence came my first annoy.
Only herself hath seemed faire:
She only I could love,
She only drave me to despaire,
When she unkind did prove.
Despaire did she make me wish to die;
That I my joyes might end:
She only, which did make me flie,
My state may now amend.

2. If she esteeme thee now aught worth,
She will not grieve thy love henceforth,
Which so despaire hath proved.
Despaire hath proved now in mee,
That love will not unconstant be,
Though long in vaine I loved.
If she at last reward thy love,
And all thy harmes repaire,
Thy happinesse will sweeter prove,
Raisd up from deepe despaire.
And if that now thou welcom be,
When thou with her dost meete,
Shee all this while but playde with thee,
To make thy joyes more sweete.

_____ XX.

1. Come heavie sleepe, the image of true death;
And close up these my weary weeping eies:
Whose spring of tears doth stop my vitall breath,
And tears my hart with sorrows sighswoln cries:
Com and posses my tired thoughts, worne soule,
That living dies, till thou on me be stoule.
2. Come shadow of my end, and shape of rest,
Allied to death, child to blackefac'd night:
Come thou and charme these rebels in my breast,
Whose waking fancies doe my mind affright.
O come sweet sleepe; come, or I die ever:
Come ere my last sleep comes, or come never.

_____ XXI.

1. Away with these selfe loving lads,
whom Cupids arrowe never glads:
Away poore soules that sigh and weepe
in love of them that lie and sleepe,
For Cupid is a medow god,
and forceth none to kisse the rod.
2. God *Cupids* shaft like destinie,
Doth either good or ill decree:
Desert is borne out of his bow,
Reward upon his foot doth go,
What fooles are they that have not knowne
That love likes no laws but his owne?

3. My songs they be of Cynthias praise,
I weare her ring on hollidaies,
On every tree I write her name,
And every day I reade the same:
Where honor Cupids rivall is,
There miracles are seene of his.
4. If Cinthia crave her ring of me,
I blot her name out of the tree,
If doubt do darken things held dear,
Then well fare nothing once a year:
For many run but one must win,
Fooles only hedge the Cuckoo in.
5. The worth that worthinesse should move
Is love, which is the bowe of love,
And love as well the fo[r]ster can,
As can the mighty Noble-man:
Sweet Saint, 'tis true you worthy be,
Yet without love nought worth to me.



Berit Norbakken

Soprano

Berit Norbakken is one of Scandinavia's leading sopranos. Her vocal versatility and flexibility have allowed her to master a repertoire ranging from Baroque to contemporary, including folk music. She regularly appears in performances of oratorios, passions and masses, and continues her work with leading ensembles, orchestras, and conductors in major concert halls all over the world.

She is the recipient of the renowned Rolf Gamlengs Award for her concerts and many recordings, which have garnered high critical acclaim both in Norway and abroad.

Norbakken appeared at the Sydney Opera House, the Tokyo Opera City Concert Hall, at the Cincinnati May Festival as well as in several programmes touring throughout Europe.

She completed her artistic PhD project through The Norwegian Artistic Research Programme in May 2024.

Solmund Nystabakk

Lute

From the rural churches of Northern Norway to the baroque palaces of Venice, from the Molde Jazz Festival to the Wiener Musikverein and the Tampere Biennale, lutenist and guitarist Solmund Nystabakk has performed a repertoire spanning from early music and classical to pop and folk music, contemporary music, and free improvisation.

He has also composed music for several theatre productions, participated in numerous recording sessions, and completed his PhD project in 2020 at the Norwegian Academy of Music and at UiT—The Arctic University of Norway, on the performance of 16th and 17th-century lute songs. Nystabakk is a member of Ensemble NeoN, which has won the Spellemann Award twice.

AS A DUO, Norbakken og Nystabakk have, in the course of just a few years, established themselves as one of the most exciting early music projects in Norway, performing at several festivals as well as in self produced concerts. Their work is characterized by close ensemble playing, outstanding musicianship, and an inventive, open minded approach to the repertoire.

Credits

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Solmund Nystabakk performs on the following instruments:
7-course lute in G by Lars Tørresen (2023) after Hans Frei
7-course lute in F by Martin Shepherd (2017) after Venere

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John Dowland 1563–1626

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