

John Holloway Pavans and Fantasies from the Age of Dowland



ECM NEW SERIES

**Pavans and Fantasies
from the Age of Dowland**

John Holloway violin, viola

Monika Baer violin, viola

Renate Steinmann viola

Susanna Hefti viola

Martin Zeller bass violin

- | | | |
|---|--|--------|
| | John Dowland (1563–1626) | |
| 1 | Lachrimae Antiquae | 4 : 19 |
| | Henry Purcell (1659–1695) | |
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Thomas Morley (1557/58–1602)

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from “Canzonets for two voyces”

John Holloway, Monika Baer

John Dowland

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from “The Broken Consort”

John Holloway, Monika Baer, Martin Zeller

John Dowland

- 11 **Lachrimae Amantis** 4:27

William Lawes

- 12 **Fantasy in C for 5** 2:25

John Dowland

- 13 **Lachrimae Verae** 4:10







LACHRIMÆ,
OR SEAVEN TEARES
FIGVRED IN SEAVEN PASSIO-

nate Pauans, vvith diuers other Pauans, Galli-
ards, and Almands, set forth for the Lute, Viols, or
Violons, in five parts:

By Iohn Dowland Bachelor of Musicke, and I uter-
nult to the most Royall and Magnificent, *(Christian the fourth, King of*
Denmarke, Norway, Vandales, and Gotbes, Duke
of Sleswicke, Holsten, Stormaria, and Dithmarsch:
Earle of Oldenbuge and
Delmenbooth.

Aus Furit, aut Lachrimat, quem non Fortuna beaurit.



LONDON
Printed by Iohn VVindet, dwelling at
the Signe of the Crofse Keyes at Povvles Wharfe,
and are to be solde at the Authors house in Fetter-lane
neare Fleet-streete.

The hypnotic beauty of John Dowland's *Lachrimae Pavans* would have ensured their place in our musical lives in any event. Based on Dowland's famous song *Flow My Teares*, and in particular on the falling 4th figure which opens the song, the *Seven Pavans – Seaven Teares*, as Dowland called them – present an extraordinary exploration of the contrapuntal and harmonic possibilities offered by the theme, and in doing so lead us on a journey into ourselves. In his dedication, to Queen Anne of Denmark, Dowland writes: "...though the title doth promise teares – yet no doubt pleasant are the teares which Musicke weepes, neither are teares shed alwayes in sorrow, but sometime in joy and gladnesse". How well he seems to have understood the power of music to move us, to express otherwise inexpressible emotions! He called them "passionate pavans", and within the stately, constrained movement of the slow dance, passions are indeed to be found.

At a distance of more than four hundred years it is hardly possible to know what inspired Dowland to write this music at this moment in his life. Although it is usually described as "one of the greatest works in the canon of English chamber music", *Lachrimae* was begun in Denmark, where Dowland was one of a group of English musicians in the service of King Christian IV. Throughout his adult life he seems to have been consumed by his ambition to obtain a position at the English court. Already in 1594, on the death of one of Queen Elizabeth's lutenists, he applied unsuccessfully for the post, and, frustrated and bitter, decided to travel abroad. He later claimed that his Catholicism had led to the failure of his application, but there is plenty of evidence for Elizabeth's

pragmatic religious tolerance in musical matters, except when Catholic musicians were too public about their religion. More likely is that Dowland failed to get the backing of influential figures at court. Since an Act of Parliament in 1572 had effectively forbidden actors to work in England unless they were under the direct patronage of the queen or one of her prominent courtiers, many theatre companies spent the 1580s and 90s touring the Continent, taking musicians with them. Other musicians were undoubtedly attracted by the lucrative opportunities in the many, often (for musicians) more religiously open small courts and city states of northern Europe.

Dowland returned to England at the urging of a prominent courtier, one of Elizabeth's favourites, but once again the yearned for post at court eluded him. By the end of 1598 he was in Copenhagen, in a very well-paid position at the court of Christian IV. Being well-paid does not seem to have helped Dowland very much: by the time he was dismissed from the Danish court, he was almost penniless. He returned to England, famous throughout Europe for his compositions, and renowned as the foremost lutenist of his time. He found employment in the service of Lord Walden, a prominent courtier, but continued to complain bitterly of neglect. It seems that, as his friend Henry Peacham said: "He slipt many opportunities in advancing his fortunes", certainly constant complaint cannot have helped his cause at court. Ironically, when he finally, in 1612, was appointed one of the King's Lutes, his inspiration seems to have deserted him. Very few of his compositions can be dated after this time.

The *Lachrimae Pavans* are not only unusual for their quality: where many composers wrote such works as single pieces, and often coupled them with Galliards using related musical material, Dowland's set of *Seven Pavans* on a single theme is unique. Also highly unusual is the way in which they were published. Where such dance music was usually written or printed in sets of separate parts, *Lachrimae* is a folio volume with the parts for each piece distributed around each side of a single opening, as if to be played around a table from a single copy. There are five parts in conventional notation for bowed strings, plus a lute part in tablature. However, according to the title page the music is "set forth for the Lute, Viols, or Violons, in five parts". This sentence is of course open to different interpretations. The usual one nowadays is to treat the lute part as a kind of realised continuo part, and to perform the music with six players. However, the music is complete, and indeed decorated, in the lute part alone, and equally complete in the five bowed-string parts; and experiment proves that even five players cannot perform from one folio copy laid out on a table. Furthermore the setting can at least as plausibly be read as "for the Lute, or for Viols, or for Violons"—thus clearly offering the possibility of performance by five string players, without lute. To that we have added the less usual choice of violons not viols, and because of the low register of the upper voice we decided to use a small viola for that part, giving the instrumentation of four violas and bass violin. As has been said of Dowland, his greatest works are inspired by a deeply felt tragic concept of life, and a preoccupation with tears, sin, darkness and death. With that in mind, this choice

of instruments (rather than transposing the music into a higher key) made itself.

The rest of our programme is a selection, inevitably very limited, of English instrumental consort music from Dowland's lifetime – the hauntingly beautiful *Lament for two instruments* by Morley – through to Purcell's spectacular *Fantasy upon one Note*, part of the last great flowering of English 17th-century consort music. By placing these works between the *Lachrimae Pavans* we present a concert programme with strong contrasts of character and sound colour. (Of course one can programme one's CD Player to play the *Pavans* one after the other).

Many publications of consort music continued Dowland's instrumentation options – viols or violins – and the development in the range and technical character, especially of the upper parts, reflect the growing confidence of composers writing for violins. We can also hear a move towards two equal violin parts, away from the more usual 17th-century "violin" band of one violin and two or three violas above the bass violin. This process parallels developments in most of Europe, and the influence of English composers of the late 16th and early 17th centuries, and in particular the huge success of Dowland's music throughout Europe in the decades after his death, represent one of the rare moments of undeniable English importance in the history of European music.

John Holloway



Recorded March 2013
Radio Studio Zürich
Tonmeister: Andreas Werner
Cover photo: Jan Kricke
Liner photos: Barbara Li Sanli
Design: Sascha Kleis
Produced by Manfred Eicher

An ECM/SRF2 Kultur co-production
Executive producer (SRF): Roland Wächter



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ECM New Series 2189
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