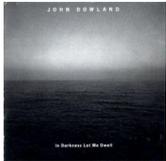


John Dowland - In Darkness Let Me Dwell (1999)

Written by bluesever

Wednesday, 12 February 2014 16:59 -

John Dowland - In Darkness Let Me Dwell (1999)



1. Weep You No More 2. Sad Fountains 3. In Darkness Let Me Dwell 4. Lachrimae Verae
5. From Silent Night 6. The Lowest Trees Have Tops 7. Flow My Tears 8. Come Heavy Sleep
9. Fine Knacks For Ladies 10. Flow My Tears 11. Now, Oh Now I Needs Must Part 12.
Lachrimae Tristes 13. Go Crystal tears 14. Lachrimae Amantis John Potter - tenor Maya
Homburger - baroque violin Stephen Stubbs - lute John Surman - soprano saxophone and
bass clarinet Barry Guy - double-bass

A fascinating project initiated by Hilliard Ensemble tenorist John Potter with producer Manfred Eicher, which re-examines the beautiful songs of the great sixteenth century composer from a present-day perspective. Potter: "This is the first time anyone's approached Dowland not from an 'early music' angle, but simply as music. We're working with Dowland as though he were still with us." The subject matter of the songs, with despair and 'alienation' uppermost, is entirely pertinent for our times, and the exceptional ensemble ranged around John Potter restores an improvisational flexibility to the music.

"The essential impulses of music are song and dance, and the great examples of each always feel 'contemporary'. And it is songs and dances, rather than the larger structures that they can sustain, that were exactly the province of John Dowland: he brought to them a degree of art – visionary directness and skilful subtlety – which makes them timeless. His songs with accompaniment not only speak to us as poignantly as song ever can, but also opened the way to the development of the 19th century lied and mélodie, while his body of music for viols and lute cultivates qualities of texture and expressiveness that make it a major early landmark of chamber music.

Again, it speaks as directly to us as any later chamber music, shortcircuiting any sense of chronology. So on both counts, Dowland belongs to the group of artistic giants born in the 16th

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century – among them Monteverdi, Gesualdo, Schütz, Shakespeare, Cervantes and Velázquez – who fashioned the genres and set the standards for our creative world, with implications that we are still working through four centuries later.

The concerns behind Dowland's music remain our own – all those tears point to his age's preoccupation with 'melancholy', mirroring our preoccupation with 'depression', while European divisions of religion and politics caused him to spend many years of exile from England in Italy, Germany and Denmark, making him an artist fuelled by a sense of what we now think as 'alienation'. What his age knew, and we sometimes lose sight of, is that meditating on a beautiful expression of sadness can help to provide a thoroughly uplifting sense of consolation.”
---Robert White

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