

John Dowland - The English Orpheus (1992)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Awake, Sweet Love*
2. *Can She Excuse My Wrongs?*
3. *All Ye Whom Love*
4. *Dear, If You Change*
5. *Semper Dowland Semper Dolens*
6. *Mister Dowland's Midnight*
7. *Sorrow, Stay!*
8. *Die Not Before Thy Day*
9. *Mourn! Mourn!*
10. *Woeful Heart*
11. *Now Cease, My Wandering Eyes*
12. *Behold A Wonder Here*
13. *The Lowest Trees*
14. *Me, Me, And None But Me*
15. *Farewell, Too Fair*
16. *Earl Of Derby His Galliard*
17. *Mistress Winter's Jump*
18. *Stay, Time*
19. *Shall I Strive*
20. *Thou Mighty God*

Emma Kirkby (Soprano) Anthony Rooley (Lute) Anthony Rooley (Orpharion)

John Dowland (1563-1626) was a poet and the greatest lutenist of his day. Famed throughout Europe as "the English Orpheus" for his artistry and skill, he held a variety of court positions—notably an eight-year stint as lutenist at the Danish court, for which he was paid a princely salary—and published four collections of songs.

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The defining disappointment of Dowland's life was his failure to secure a position at the court of Elizabeth I. His conversion to Catholicism in the course of early studies in France may have been the deciding factor in this loss of opportunity. But contemporary writings leave no doubt of his technical and musical supremacy in the eyes of his fellow-citizens. A Barnfield sonnet compares the musician Dowland with the poet Spenser, each as the highest representative of his particular muse.

The First Booke of Songes or Ayres of foure partes with Tableture for the Lute (1597) was an instant and precedent-setting success. It went into five printings in Dowland's lifetime, setting off a wave of similar efforts from other major lutenist/composers such as Morley, Pilkington, Johnson, and Danyel—many imitating the format of Dowland's initial offering: 21 songs and an instrumental piece.

In the cover copy of the original edition, Dowland invites purchasers to view the songs as solo, ensemble, or instrumental works. Most of the lyrics are unattributed. Some may be Dowland's own—he was an accomplished wordsmith—and others he selected from among the finest poetry of that poetry-rich age. Composer Peter Warlock, in his study *The English Ayre*, left an appropriate summary comment on the legacy of Dowland the composer:

"He chose for musical setting some of the most perfect lyrics that have ever been written in the English language, yet never did he fail to re-create the full beauty of the poet's thought in music; and though Byrd and others of his contemporaries excelled in larger forms of composition, no one has left us a musical legacy of more intrinsic loveliness than John Dowland."

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