



Deux-Elles

LATE NIGHT LUTE

MATTHEW WADSWORTH

lute and theorbo

Dowland Rosseter Johnson Goss
Piccinini Kapsberger

Late Night Lute

It was a rainy winter's evening in 2003. I was staying at a friend's apartment in south London, and a group of us were sat round the fire, talking late into the night. There was a lull in the conversation and I heard somebody flicking through the CD rack. "I need lute, late night lute," he said.

For me, 2003 was a big year. I had given my solo debut at London's Wigmore Hall, and my first solo CD (*14 Silver Strings*) had been released and was Editor's Choice in Gramophone. I decided that night that a *Late Night Lute* disc had to happen one day, but it would be many years before I knew what form it would take.

Over the next few years, I gave late night concerts in various festivals, usually an hour long set at 9 or 10 pm. I found that there is a special kind of listening that takes place later in the evening as the distractions die down outside. A programme began to form in my mind, something that could engage with that internal stillness.

It was in 2014 that everything came together. I had the great honour of playing a concert in the John Williams and friends series at the Sam

Wanamaker theatre at the Globe. Although it wasn't a late night concert, the Sam Wanamaker theatre is entirely lit by candles and is an incredibly intimate setting – perfect for lute. I did the first half alone, and the second half was dedicated to a new piece by Stephen Goss called *The Flower of Cities*. It is scored for two guitars, violin, bass and marimba. John Williams had asked that I be involved in the piece, so Steve kindly wrote me a solo, and through the rest of the piece I was to improvise at (hopefully) appropriate points. John was so pleased with the result that he later commissioned Steve to expand the theorbo solo into an entire piece. The new work is called *The Miller's Tale*, and it forms the centrepiece of this disc.

We recorded in a wonderful chapel in North Yorkshire. I wanted an acoustic that had warmth and intimacy but which also gave a glow to the sound of the lute. As it turned out, the nearby road made it too noisy to record during the day, so this *Late Night Lute* disc was in fact recorded in three late night sessions.

The programme begins with a strikingly beautiful *Prelude* by the Jacobean composer Phillip Rosseter (1568-1623). Its slow unwinding

descending bass line and rich harmonies have a magical way of drawing the listener into its sound world, a place that feels strangely both active and still.

The *Pavan* that follows is one of two pavans by John Dowland (1563-1626) which essentially bookend the recording. Although Dowland wrote some very weighty and melancholic pavans, this one, *A Dream (Lady Leighton's Pavan)* is tranquil and ethereal. Beginning on a D major chord and floating off to F major, it eventually reveals itself as a piece in G minor. As with much of Dowland's output, there are several versions of the piece and I've combined them here, sometimes borrowing ideas from an alternate version for the repeats.

Next comes Dowland's setting of the popular ballad tune *Fortune My Foe*, which leads us out of the dream world and into something more emotionally charged and intense.

Robert Johnson's (c1583-1633) magnificent C minor *Pavan* is one of only four pavans that have come down to us from this great rival of Dowland's. Although much of Johnson's music was written for the theatre, including

several Shakespeare plays, the few solo lute pieces which survive in various lute collections are worth their weight in gold. This one is especially dark and brooding, beginning in the lower register of the lute and building to a climax that uses the entire compass of the instrument, with a high descending passage in the treble over a pedal C in the bass (the lowest note on the 10-course lute). In contrast to his F minor and other C minor pavans, this one doesn't have composed divisions on the repeats. I decided to leave these bare so that the urgency of the piece could speak for itself.

After a pair of *Almaynes* by Johnson, we enter the world and characters of *The Miller's Tale*, from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

There are very few contemporary solo theorbo pieces, and even fewer good ones. This is partly because the theorbo (unless you happen to play it) is an incredibly confusing instrument to write for. For one thing, the strings are tuned reentrantly, with the top two strings sounding lower than the third string, which means that the hand positions familiar to a guitarist will yield some unexpected pitches. Stephen Goss rose to the challenge, though, and took up my

suggestion of tuning his guitar like the top 6 strings of the theorbo in order to explore the instrument's unique set of possibilities for melody and arpeggiation. Steve's musical language involves a lot of cross-string figurations (*campanella*), and he has adapted it for theorbo in a way that's perfectly idiomatic to the instrument. Another challenging aspect of writing for the theorbo comes from the eight open bass strings that sound below the fretted strings. Since there is nothing like this on the guitar, it took a lot of combined experimentation for the piece to use the bass register to its full potential.

This was a big journey into the unknown, and it was a privilege to work with such a fine and open-minded composer to bring this piece into existence. Working with a living composer always gives me fresh insight into how to approach historical performance, especially that of the 17th century, where there is often no definitive version to work from. Coming from a classical tradition, it is tempting to view the various versions of a given piece as standalone texts, to be chosen and then followed religiously. Working in person with a composer, on the other hand, gives me the chance to stretch the text in various ways and to see which liberties

work and which don't, and I've come to see a set of alternate versions of an older piece as a kind of composite "session" with the composer.

The Miller's Tale has six movements, with four character pieces framed by a prologue and epilogue. Each of the four inner movements represents a character from *The Miller's Tale*: John, Alisoun, Nicholas and Absolon. The prologue has an ethereal, dreamy quality, with a rhythmic freedom reminiscent of 17th-century French preludes. John is represented by an estampie, a late medieval dance and poetic form organised around a refrain. Alisoun is represented by a seductive chanson, followed by a blistering toccata for Nicholas. A tender serenade depicts Absolon, and the piece ends with a *moto perpetuo*-like epilogue, with a dramatic ascending scale in the bass of the theorbo at the end. *The Miller's Tale* received its world premiere on 6 March 2017 at London's Wigmore Hall. I feel incredibly privileged and proud to bring this piece to the musical world, and hope that I am not the last person to both play and record it.

Moving on, we hear three pieces by Alessandro Piccinini (1566-1638) which are centred

around a set of variations on the French tune *Une Jeune Fillette*. This is one of the longest and most difficult pieces for solo theorbo and I've framed it here with a toccata and a corrente, which use the same thematic material.

After this, the programme turns mellow again, with a hypnotic *Passacaglia* by Johannes Hieronymus Kapsberger (c1580-c1651). This ground bass leads gently back into the more intimate world of the lute, to one of Dowland's most beautiful and intricate pieces, Sir John Langton's *Pavan* (Varietie of lute lessons, 1610). There is a calm, positive feel throughout the whole piece. At every structural level, one feels a sense of balance, and Dowland's divisions on each of the repeated sections are full of the lyricism and fantasy that mark him out as one of the country's greatest masters.

The programme closes with *Mr. Dowland's Midnight*. Beautifully melodic and simple, it captures a feeling of satisfaction, like coming home after a long walk.

Instruments on this recording
10 course lute and 14 course theorbo
by
Klaus Jacobsen.

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Stephen Goss's music receives hundreds of performances worldwide each year and has been recorded on over 60 CDs by more than a dozen record labels, including EMI, Decca, Telarc, Virgin Classics, Naxos, and Deutsche Grammophon. His varied output includes orchestral and choral works, chamber music, and solo pieces. Steve writes communicative music that draws freely on a number of styles and genres.

Recent work includes several projects with the guitarist John Williams, who has recorded and toured Steve's Guitar Concerto (2012) with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Other commissions have come from guitarists David Russell, Miloš Karadaglić and several from Xuefei Yang, including chamber works with Natalie Clein and Ian Bostridge.

Steve is Chair of Composition at the University of Surrey, UK, and a Professor of Guitar at the Royal Academy of Music in London. He was born on 2nd February 1964.

www.stephengoss.net

"Stephen Goss draws on a variety of sources for his eminently listenable music. Despite the eclectic nature of his influences ... Goss's musical language comes across as brilliantly integrated."

- International Record Review



Matthew Wadsworth photo Chris Chrisdadoulou

Matthew Wadsworth has earned a reputation as one of the world's finest lutenists. Working in the UK, Europe and North America as a soloist and chamber musician, he has appeared at most major concert halls and festivals, and can often be heard on radio, both in live performance and recordings.

Matthew was born in 1974 and studied lute at London's Royal Academy of Music with Nigel North, after which he spent a year at the Royal Conservatory of Music in The Hague.

Matthew has recorded for Avie, Deux-Elles, Linn, EMI, Channel Classics and Wigmore Live. His CD recordings have all received international critical acclaim, and have been featured as Gramophone Editors Choice on several occasions. They include but are not limited to:

14 Silver Strings

- music for theorbo by Kapsberger and Piccinini, featuring harpsichordist Gary Cooper and gambist Mark Levy.

"You get the feeling that he's playing for himself and for you, but not for a big public. Gestures are subtle, with an expressive range which flatters sophisticated ears... perhaps because he always plays from the heart, there's an inner power and sincerity to his performances which make for compelling listening."

- International Record Review

Away Delights

- lute solos and songs by Robert Johnson, featuring soprano Carolyn Sampson.

When Laura Smiles

- lute solos and songs by Phillip Rosseter, featuring tenor James Gilchrist.

Masters of the Lute

- solo lute and theorbo, works by Dowland, Kapsberger, Piccinini, de Visee and Biber.

The Knight of the Lute

- solo lute music from Robert Dowland's Varietie of lute lessons, 1610.

Not Just Dowland

- a live recording from London's Wigmore Hall with soprano Carolyn Sampson.

For further information and to join the mailing list, please visit:

www.matthewwadsworth.com

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|-----------|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | Prelude 1:34 | Philip Rosseter |
| 2 | A Dream (Lady Leighton's pavan) 5:16 | John Dowland |
| 3 | Fortune My Foe 2:34 | John Dowland |
| 4 | Pavan in C minor 6:31 | Robert Johnson |
| 5 | Two Almaynes 3:55 | Robert Johnson |
| | The Miller's Tale | Stephen Goss |
| 6 | 1. Prologue 1:32 | 7 2. Estampie (John) 1:41 |
| 8 | 3. Chanson (Alisoun) 2:29 | 9 4. Toccata (Nicholas) 1:18 |
| 10 | 5. Serenade (Absolon) 1:27 | 11 6. Epilogue 1:16 |
| 12 | Toccata VI 3:19 | Alessandro Piccinini |
| 13 | Partite variate sopra quest'aria
francese d'etta l'alemana 4:59 | Alessandro Piccinini |
| 14 | Corrente Terza 1:52 | Alessandro Piccinini |
| 15 | Passacaglia 4:09 | Johannes Hieronymus Kapsberger |
| 16 | Sir John Langton's Pavan 5:52 | John Dowland |
| 17 | Mr Dowland's Midnight 2:01 | John Dowland |

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