

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a woman standing in a forest. She is wearing a long, light-colored dress and a dark, heavy shawl or cloak. Her hair is blowing in the wind. The forest floor is covered in fallen leaves and twigs, and the trees are tall and thin, creating a vertical pattern of light and shadow. The overall mood is somber and atmospheric.

OPHELIA'S GARDEN
ENGLISH LUTE DUETS
MICHAEL GONDKO & NIGEL NORTH

The wonderful sound of two lutes played together has been part of musical life since the 15th century. Italian lutenists often played in duos where the *discantor* played the solo, melodic part, and the *tenorista* the accompaniment. By the 16th century in England, the most common way of combining two lutes had developed this old practice into what was called a Treble and Ground. One lute played a single melodic line (often with fast divisions) while the other lute played the harmonic accompaniment or lower voices. In Elizabethan England, this was music to play and enjoy, at home, at court for dancing and to provide quality entertainment for an elite audience. Treble and Ground duets were also wonderful mediums for teacher and pupil.

In Elizabethan England, **John Johnson** was the absolute king of the lute duet and, in particular, the Treble and Ground form. Johnson was a court lutenist from 1577 (part of a lute trio with Mason and Cardell) but from 1581 he became lutenist to Queen Elizabeth, until his death in 1594. John Johnson was the master of extended Trebles with Grounds. *Sellinger's Round* and *Chi Passa* are fine examples of Johnson's skill in this art. Johnson's two Pavan and Galliard pairs (*Flat*

and *La Vecchia*) are representative of the Treble and Ground texture where the two lutes alternate roles.

The other main compositional form at this time was the equal duet: both lutes playing contrapuntally, providing a rich sound with many voices and opportunities for dialogues and imitation. The opening pieces of Dowland fall into this category. The setting of the ballad tune, *Roland or My Lord Willoughby's Welcome Home*, is in a third popular duet form, related to the equal duet: a pre-existing solo piece has a second part written to go with it, a *contrepartie*.

After John Johnson's death in 1594, **John Dowland** left England and travelled to Germany and Italy, where he met many other musicians and impressed many royal courts with his music and lute playing. Through these European connections, Dowland's music spread in popularity throughout Europe. At some point he must have met his compatriot Thomas Simpson, who worked in Germany (including Heidelberg from 1608 to 1615) and later in the Danish court where Dowland had also served. Simpson's published music includes

several works of Dowland rearranged for string ensemble. Many of these pieces are also known as lute solos, but a few have no concordances and must be based on lost solo works of Dowland. The *Paduan* (Thomas Simpson, *Taffel-Consort*, Hamburg, 1621) is one of these unique sources. It has much dialogue and imitation between the 1st and 2nd violins, and the most likely original scoring would have been 2 (or maybe 3) lutes. It was this that led us to open the CD with our new version of Dowland's Pavan found in Simpson's publication.

The popular, famous duets by **Thomas Robinson** first appeared in his *Schoole of Musicke*, published in London in 1603. Probably intended for the growing amateur lutenist population, they include examples of all three duet types: two dedicated trebles (*The Queen's Goodnight* and *Twenty Ways Upon The Bells*), an alternating Treble and Ground (*A Toy*), and two equal duets (*A Fantasie* and *A Plain Song*).

William Byrd was a keyboard player and composer, and he was not known to have played the lute. The Euing Lute Book, (c.1595) contains an arrangement for solo lute of Byrd's magnificent set of variations on

the ballad *Will you go walk the woods so wild*. We have invented a new duet version of the same, giving us a more successful way to bring out all the imitations between the *cantus* and *tenor* voices found throughout the piece.

Two other new duets: The anonymous keyboard piece *My Lady Carey's Dump* from the court of Henry VIII adapts well into a Treble and Ground duet as does the Preston *Upon Lamire*. **Thomas Preston** was an English organist and composer who died the same year Dowland was born. In his keyboard piece *Upon Lamire*, the ground is made ▶



up of the first three notes of the famous *tenor*, *La Spagna*, played in two voices in canon, while the treble part is of a unique and significantly different style to anything else on this recording or in the lute repertoire of the time.

We were very happy when the Welsh composer **Stephen Goss** agreed to write us a new piece, and this recording is the debut of *Ophelia's Garden* written in 2025. It is based on Ophelia's speech in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (written c. 1601, published in 1603) Act 4, Scene 5 where she hands out flowers from her garden/pleasance:

“There’s rosemary, that’s for remembrance. Pray you, love, remember. And there is pansies, that’s for thoughts. There’s fennel for you, and columbines. There’s rue for you, and here’s some for me. We may call it herb of grace o’ Sundays. O, you must wear your rue with a difference! There’s a daisy. I would give you some violets, but they wither’d all when my father died.”

Ophelia's Garden is through-composed with each section based on one of the flowers with their related

symbolism: Rosemary (remembrance), Pansies (thoughts), Fennel (false flattery), Columbines (forsaken love), Rue (abortion herb), Daisy (purity and innocence) and Violets (melancholy and early death).

John Danyl lived almost the exact same years as John Dowland and, like Dowland, was a wonderful composer of songs to the lute. From 1612 he was employed at the English court of James I and lived through until Charles I came to the throne. His extended, extraordinary and virtuosic treble on the *Passymeasures Galliard* is a highlight of the lute duet repertoire. Gentle music making at home as amateurs would have enjoyed c. 1600 is represented by *De La Tromba Pavan* (by **Richard Allison**), and two anonymous favourites, *Drewwies Accordes* and *La Rossignol*. The sparsely ornamented *Fancy* by a certain **Mr Marchant** (who may be identical with the man who reportedly “*taught the princes [Elizabeth] to play upon the virginalles*”) occupies a place of its own in the repertoire due to its chordal texture. It may, in fact, be an intabulation of an otherwise unknown vocal composition. ■

Nigel North



In **Michal Gondko's** “deft and fluid” (*Early Music Today*) lute playing “phrases come across like extempore thoughts chasing each other across the imagination, an effect many try for but very few succeed” (*Lute News*). One of the leading lutenists of his generation, he pursues his artistic goals as a soloist, musical director and ensemble musician particularly fascinated with European polyphonic art music of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. He is founder and

artistic co-director of La Morra, an ensemble widely recognised for its renditions of the late medieval and early Renaissance repertoire, as confirmed by such marks of musical distinction as the Diapason d’Or, the Jahrespreis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik, the American Musicological Society’s Noah Greenberg Award, as well as Gramophone and International Classical Music Award nominations. He is also recipient of Fryderyk, the Prize of the Polish Society ▶

of the Phonographic Industry (ZPAV). His first solo album, *Polonica* (Ramée/Outthere Music, 2015), won him international critical acclaim. On his most recent solo album, *Mortua dulcemente* (Ramée/Outthere Music, 2021), he explores the sound of a unique historical instrument, the so-called “Presbyter” lute, possibly built in the 1590s. He has shared the stage with such musicians as Dame Emma Kirkby and Jordi Savall, and regularly performs lute duets with Nigel North. His musical path began in his

hometown Warsaw, Poland, where he studied classical guitar. Early experiences with the lute (under the guidance of Marcin Zalewski) inspired him to pursue a full-time career in early music. After moving to Basel, Switzerland, in 1997, he graduated from the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, where he studied lute with Hopkinson Smith. Concert tours have since taken him to most European countries, as well as to the USA, the countries of the Middle East, China and Japan.



Born in London, England, **Nigel North** has been playing the lute for over 50 years, since the age of 15. Teaching and playing have gone hand in hand and he has been Professor of Lute at the Historical Performance Institute (formerly Early Music Institute), Indiana University, Bloomington (USA) 1999-2024. From July 2024 he was thrilled to return to Europe, and now lives in Gent, Belgium. Previous positions include The Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London (1976-1995), Hochschule der Künste, Berlin (1993-1999) and the Royal Conservatory, Den Haag (2006-2009). Initially inspired at the age of seven by the early 60's instrumental pop group *The Shadows*, Nigel North studied classical music through the violin and guitar and eventually discovered his real path in life, the lute. Nigel is basically self-taught on the lute and was inspired by Michael Schäffer, Gustav Leonhardt and the Jazz duo, *Tuck and Patti*. The music of Bach has always been his first love in music, especially after a dream at age 12 in which Bach handed him a lute. After hearing one of Nigel's Bach recitals in London, Julian Bream recalled in 2002: "I

remember going to a remarkable recital, one which I wish I had the ability to give: it was one of Nigel North's Bach recitals, and I was bowled over by how masterful and how musical it was. A real musical experience, something you don't always get from guitar and lute players and which, in general, is pretty rare." Nigel North wrote *Continuo Playing on the Lute, Archlute and Theorbo* (Faber, 1986 and Indiana University Press). More recently in 2024, Le Luth Doré (Paris) published *Bach on the Lute, Volumes 1 & 2*. (Transcriptions for baroque lute of BWV 1001-1006, 1007-1012 and the complete works for lute, BWV 999-1006a.) In 2026, *Playing with Patterns on the Lute: A Study and Method for Playing Sixteenth-Century Divisions* (Oxford University Press) and a new edition of the complete lute works of John Dowland (Le Luth Doré). Recordings include a four CD boxed set *Bach on the Lute* (Linn Records), four CDs of the lute music of John Dowland (Naxos), four CDs of music by Sylvius Weiss (BGS) and 2 CDs of music by Francesco da Milano (BGS). Most recently (April 2023) a double CD of Bach's complete works for lute and other new transcriptions (Deux-Elles). ■

DXL1224

JOHN DOWLAND (1563-1626)

1	Paduan*	5:45
2	Round Battle Galliard*	1:32
3	Complaint*	2:17
4	My Lord Willoughby's Welcome Home	1:35

JOHN JOHNSON (FL 1579-94)

5	Flat Pavan and Galliard: I. Pavan	2:05
6	Flat Pavan and Galliard: II. Galliard	1:31
7	Sellinger's Round (treble: MG)	1:52

THOMAS ROBINSON (FL 1589-1609)

8	Twenty Ways Upon The Bells (treble: MG)	1:37
9	A Fantasie	2:30
10	A Toy	1:26

WILLIAM BYRD (C. 1540-1623)

11	The Woods So Wild*	4:37
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JOHN JOHNSON

12	La Vecchia Pavan and Galliard: I. Pavan	2:06
13	La Vecchia Pavan and Galliard: II. Galliard	1:30
14	Chi Passa (treble: NN)	3:43

THOMAS PRESTON (DIED AFTER 1559)

15	Upon Lamire (treble: NN)*	2:49
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ANONYMOUS

16	My Lady Carey's Dump (treble: NN)*	2:36
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STEPHEN GOSS (B. 1964)

17	Ophelia's Garden (2025)**	5:35
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MR. MARCHANT (FL 1588-1611)

18	A Fancy	2:33
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JOHN DANYEL (C. 1564-C. 1626)

19	A Fancy	1:54
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ANONYMOUS

20	A Fancy (Drewries Accordes)	1:44
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THOMAS ROBINSON

21	A Plain Song	2:04
22	The Queen's Goodnight (treble: NN)	1:23

RICHARD ALLISON (C. 1560-C. 1614)

23	De La Tromba Pavan	3:18
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JOHN DANYEL

24	Passymeasures Galliard (treble: MG)	4:09
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ANONYMOUS

25	La Rossignol	2:43
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Total playing time: 65:10

* arranged or reconstructed by Nigel North

** written for Michał Gondko & Nigel North

Recording engineer, producer & editor John Taylor | Co-Producers Michał Gondko, Nigel North | Instruments 8-course lutes by Malcolm Prior (Norwich, 2025) after Vendelio Venere (Wendelin Tieffenbrucker) (Padua, 1592), a matching pair commissioned especially for this recording.

Photos Damian Drewniak (cover), Sigrid T'Hoof (performers), Malcolm Prior (instruments) | Cover and booklet design Tim A'Court

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