

Cain Budds, guitar

Lisa Maxedon, soprano

Program Notes by Jackson Harmeyer

Tonight's concert highlights the music of the English composer **John Dowland (1563-1626)**, a contemporary of William Shakespeare who was in his day respected as one of his country's foremost players of the lute. The lute, a pear-shaped instrument similar to the modern guitar, descends from an Arabic instrument known as the *'ud* which was introduced to Europe by the Moors during their seven-century occupation of Spain. The lute then flourished throughout Europe until the eighteenth century when it was finally superseded by the guitar. Throughout the centuries, this instrument has inspired works by Johann Sebastian Bach, the German virtuoso Silviu Leopold Weiss, the French lutenist Denis Gaultier, and many others. Most of the music John Dowland wrote was for this, his own instrument, and his compositions include nearly one hundred solo lute pieces and about that same number of songs with an added vocalist. Our concert tonight features several works in both categories, beginning with the latter. Later tonight, we shall also hear one of Bach's suites for lute. These



John Dowland

classics, as played on guitar, shall be paired with new works by two contemporary composers, Dušan Bogdanović and Carlo Domeniconi, whose music has been inspired by age-old folk traditions.

The main collections of songs by Dowland are his three *Bookes of Songes*, published in 1597, 1600, and 1603, respectively. A total of sixty-four songs are gathered in these volumes, including the five performed tonight by guitarist **Cain Budds** and soprano **Lisa Maxedon**. The songs of Dowland, like those of many of his contemporaries, have a rustic simplicity about them which contributes to their beauty rather than detracting from it. Our first song, for example, "Come again, sweet love, doth now invite," follows a simple, strophic pattern in which the music for each of its three verses remains the same although the text changes. Each verse, however, gains a different emotional character as the performers vary their inflections to suit the changing texts. The text of "Come again" reflects on loneliness and a longing to be reunited with a lover. The song is notable for its ascending, climaxing refrain which, in the first and second stanzas, contrasts two connotations of the phrase "to die" – literally, as brought on by loneliness, and also metaphorically, according to a common Renaissance euphemism.

Our second song, "Shall I sue, shall I seek for grace," is of a more contemplative character as underlined by the lute accompaniment. The first stanza asks only questions, answered finally in the second stanza with less than sympathetic responses. "Awake, sweet love" is a happier tune than either of the first two songs. Its focus is the reunion of a lover and her love – in fact, the rebirth of love itself with their reunion. This love, so new, however, does not come without memories of the lovers' time apart, and this reluctance is the topic of the later stanzas. The protagonist of our fourth song, "Sleep, wayward thoughts," faces a different challenge: although she is wide awake with feelings of love, she is unable to act on her desires as her lover yet sleeps. The text, especially in the second stanza, plays on the ability of the word "love" to refer to both the inner emotion and its outer object, the beloved. Accordingly, the vocalist adds frustration to music paired with the former, while treating music paired with the latter more gently.

Our final song, "Flow, my tears," is by far Dowland's most famous. In its day, it was well-known both in England and in continental Europe, especially in its form for solo lute, *Lachrimae Pavan*. Dowland himself wrote variations on its theme as did many other composers. In fact, its melancholic mood became widely associated with his artistic image, so that his motto

became “*Semper Dowland, semper dolens*” – Latin for “Always Dowland, always doleful” – although he seems to have been cheerful and sociable in person. The song’s melancholic character comes across musically as well as textually. The four-note descending motif which opens the song has been likened to the falling of tears. Further falling motifs reinforce the dreary mood established by this first one, the texture cascading downwards every time there emerges a glimmer of hope. Meanwhile, the text provides mournful imagery, including such remarks as “No nights are dark enough for those that in despair their lost fortunes deplore” and “From the highest spire of contentment my fortune is thrown.”



Dušan Bogdanović

Following the songs, we hear two further pieces by Dowland played on solo guitar. Both pieces belong to a genre known in its era as the “fantasie” or “fancye” and frequently rendered as “fantasy” by today’s musicians. In Elizabethan England, these terms denoted a specifically instrumental genre that was without the formal restrictions possessed by other genres. Additionally, the lute fantasy was typically more flexible and improvisatory than a fantasy for bowed string instruments which was often of a contrapuntal nature. At least seven lute fantasies by Dowland survive, including the two heard tonight. The latter fantasy, called *Forlorn Hope*, captures much of the same melancholy already heard in “Flow, my tears.” It is built on a descending chromatic bass line, possibly inspired by the fierce chromatic harmonies displayed in the madrigals of Dowland’s Italian contemporary, the composer Carlo Gesualdo.

We move beyond the music of Dowland for the second half of our concert. The Yugoslavian-born guitarist and composer **Dušan Bogdanović (born 1955)** takes inspiration from the classical, jazz, and world music idioms, all of which he is active in as a performer and recording artist. Bogdanović studied at the Geneva Conservatory where the celebrated Argentine composer Alberto Ginastera was among his teachers. After years teaching in California, he has returned to the Geneva Conservatory where he is now professor of guitar. His theoretical text *Polyrhythmic and Polymetric Studies for Guitar*

(1990) is well-regarded for its insights into improvisation, a topic he has also discussed in relation to performance practice in the Renaissance. His composition *Diferencias Diferentes* for solo guitar was published in 1994 and appears on his album *Unconscious in Brazil* which also features five of his *Polymetric Studies* and several purely-improvised *Intimations*. Bogdanović regards *Diferencias Diferentes* as a “cross-temporal fertilization” in which music by the sixteenth-century Spanish composer Luis de Narvaez is melded with his own twentieth-century idiom.

The contributions for lute made by **Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)** are sometimes overshadowed by the many other masterpieces in the German composer’s vast catalogue. Bach, however, composed for the instrument throughout his life and seems to have been particularly motivated in his later years through contact with the Dresden lutenists Silvius Leopold Weiss and Johann Kropffgans. There is evidence that these lutenists played at Bach’s house in nearby Leipzig at least once in 1739. It was around this time and perhaps for one of these skilled lutenists that Bach produced his Suite in C minor, BWV 997, for solo lute. This Suite, like those for cello and the partitas for violin, consists primarily of short dance movements, preceded here by a *Prelude* and *Fugue* pair. The *Prelude* has the improvisatory character of a fantasy whereas the extensive *Fugue* which follows is contrapuntal as one would expect. The third movement is an unhappy *Sarabande* which, melodically, calls to mind the final chorus of the *St. Matthew Passion*; the sarabande, a slower dance genre, was associated with Spain but today is suspected to have originated in Spain’s American colonies. A resolute *Gigue* follows; this faster, galloping dance genre originated with the common folk of England where it was known as a jig. The Suite then concludes with a variation marked *Double*, a characteristically Baroque way of indicating an embellishment on the melody just heard.



Carlo Domeniconi

Concluding tonight's program is a work by the Italian guitarist and composer **Carlo Domeniconi (born 1947)** whose music, like that of Bogdanović, has drawn on inspirations from around the world. To this effect, he has insisted that classical guitarists look beyond what has traditionally been called "classical" and has sought to expand the palette available to these musicians through his own wide-ranging compositions. His *Variations on a Turkish Folksong*, Op. 15 was composed in 1982 after an influential four-year residency at the Istanbul University State Conservatory where he taught classical guitar. Its theme, presented in an unadorned form at the work's outset, is the Turkish song "I am travelling down a long narrow path" which Domeniconi had learned from the blind folk singer Asik Veysel during his stay. The variations which follow show Domeniconi blending Turkish traditions with Western compositional practices in a manner that avoids the empty novelty to which lesser attempts often succumb. Michel Lydon of *Soundboard* magazine summarizes well this composer's achievement when he writes "Domeniconi's music seeks repeatedly the synthesis of East and West. He seems able to take the quintessence of different cultures and tell them anew."

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About Jackson. Jackson Harmeyer is a composer, music scholar, and advocate of music. Jackson graduated *summa cum laude* from the Louisiana Scholars' College located in Natchitoches, Louisiana in May 2013 after completing his undergraduate thesis "Learning from the Past: The Influence of Johann Sebastian Bach upon the Soviet Composers." As series director of the successful Abendmusik Alexandria chamber music series from May 2014 to April 2016, Jackson played a vital role in the renewal of interest in chamber music across Central Louisiana. This interest has encouraged the creation of the annual Sugarmill Music Festival and the new series Nachtmusik von BrainSurge, both of which Jackson remains active in as concert annotator and creative consultant. He also blogs at MusicCentral where he shares concert experiences, gives listening recommendations, posts interviews with contemporary composers, and offers insights into his own compositions. As a composer, Jackson has worked to integrate the vocabulary and grammar of modern music into pieces which are not only innovative but also engaging to the general listener. In fall 2016, Jackson began graduate studies in musicology at the University of Louisville where he has recently been awarded the Gerhard Herz Scholarship in recognition of his accomplishments. His current research interests include French spectral music and the compositions of Kaija Saariaho. He also sings with the University of Louisville Chorus and participates in the School of Music Composition Seminar. Learn more about Jackson Harmeyer, his scholarship, and his compositions at www.JacksonHarmeyer.com.