Songs in Divers Humours
for voice and lute

David Protheroe
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Introduction

This is my second collection of lute songs. The first, "Sonnets and Epigrams" was published by the Lute Society in June 2019.

I've called this collection "in divers humours" not only because the songs reflect varying moods, but because I've taken differing approaches to the lute accompaniment: sometimes lyrical with the lute expressing its own motifs in response to the voice, or elsewhere chordal, where the rhythmic figure in the lute part colours the mood of the song.

The first five songs are settings of Elizabethan lyrics, four sonnets and one song from a play. The sonnet hasn't been set to music as much as other verse forms (witness the large number of twentieth century settings of songs from Shakespeare's plays but few settings of his sonnets), but in my view the narrative structure of the sonnet lends itself well to the lute song.

There are settings of two modern poets with connections with the current lute world, Helen Overell and Glen Weir.

Finally, I've set two nonsense poems by Edward Lear, based on tunes I wrote when I was seventeen.

Vocal part

The pull-out vocal part has a keyboard transcription of the accompaniment to aid singers unfamiliar with lute tablature. It also includes the texts of the poems at the end for reference.

The songs suit a medium voice (they generally range c'-d" or c'-e") at written pitch, which assumes a lute in G, though of course they can be sung higher or lower with lutes at other pitches. The duck and the kangaroo is a dialogue for contralto (duck, b-c") and bass (kangaroo, B♭ -c").

The songs should be sung expressively to bring out the meaning of the text, even where I haven't marked the dynamics or expression. Tempo indications are approximate, but too slow is usually better than too fast.

Spelling and punctuation are modernised in the Elizabethan texts; the later texts follow the original.

Lute part

The lute part is written in tablature for a six-course in renaissance tuning, except song 2 (Fair ye be, but cruel) which needs a seventh course, though the bass D can be played an octave higher instead.

Fingering is sometimes marked: otherwise the right hand generally follows renaissance practice and alternates thumb and index finger. The left hand should aim to sustain notes where possible: the keyboard version gives an indication of how notes might be sustained. In the tablature, lines indicate where a note should be held or released if it isn't obvious.

There are some non-standard articulation marks: accents in Cope, Steeple Aston to mimic the quill, staccatos in Calico pie to suggest the scampering mice, and grace notes in The duck and the kangaroo to convey the bouncing kangaroo.

The book has been typeset with Francesco Triboli's Fronimo 3.0 tablature software.

David Protheroe, Farnham, November 2020 (with revisions August 2021).
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1. Shall I then silent be?

Edmund Spenser
- Amoretti: Sonnet 43  a)

DAVID PRO ThEROE

Shall I then silent be, or shall I speak? and if I speak, her wrath re-

new I shall; And if I silent be, my heart will break, or cho-ked be with o-ver-

flow-ing
gall. What ty-ran-

ny is this, both my heart to thrall, and eke my tongue with proud re-

straint to tie. That neither

I may speak nor think at all, but like a stu-

pid stock in sil-

ence die! Yet I my

a)

b)

pp}

co

mf

ed
a) On each day in spring 1594, Edmund Spenser wrote an amoret, or love sonnet, to his future wife Elizabeth Boyle, often referring to the church reading for that day.


Elizabeth would surely have construed Edmund's flippant mistranslation (morus = moronic, arbor = piece of wood).

c) my heart with silence... speak: i.e. though silent, I will communicate through my poems.
2. Fair ye be, but cruel
Edmund Spenser
- Amoretti: Sonnet 56

7th course in D

not fast, but with suppressed fury

Fair ye be, but cruel
Hunts after blood: when

be, sure, but

beast, strong-

beats on it strongly

Fair

Fair

as is a

as is a

as is a

as is a

sure, but

cruel and unkind,

beats on it strongly

Hunts after blood: when

that with greed-

prostrate;

Finding a tree a-

that with greed-

ness...
Fair ye be, sure, but hard and obstinate,

as is a rock amidst the raging floods; 'Gainst which a ship, of

succour desolate, doth suffer wreck both of herself and goods. That ship, that tree, and

that same beast am I whom ye do wreck, do ruin, do

ruin, ye do ruin and destroy
3. Echo's lament for Narcissus

Ben Jonson
- Cynthia's Revels: act I scene ii

DAVID PROTHEROE

Plaintively

\[\text{Slow, slow, fresh fount keep time with my salt tears; Yet slower, yet, O faintly, gentle}\]

\[\text{springs! List to the heavy part the music bears, Woe weeps out her di-}\]

\[\text{vision, when she sings. Droop herbs and flowers; Fall grief in}\]

\[\text{showers; Our beauties are not}\]
ours.

O, I could still, like melting snow upon some craggy hill,

Drop, drop, drop, drop,
4. In praise of music and poetry

Richard Barnfield
- Poems in Divers Humours

4. In praise of music and poetry

DAVID PROtheroe

If music and poetry agree, as they must needs, (the

Sister and the brother), then must the love be great twixt thee and me, because thou lov'st the

one, and I the other. Dowland to thee is dear, whose heav'n-ly touch up-on the

lute doth ravish human sense. Spenser to me, whose deep conceit is such, as pass-ing all conceit needs no de-

Richard Barnfield
- Poems in Divers Humours

4. In praise of music and poetry

DAVID PROtheroe
a) "In praise of music and poetry" was dedicated by Barnfield "to his friend, Master R.L.", possibly the poet Richard Linche. It was wrongly attributed to Shakespeare in the anthology "The Passionate Pilgrim" (1599).
b) the tune here is a snatch from Dowland's "His Golden Locks".
Joyfully

O laud the Lord, the might lift God of hosts commend,
Exalt His Your greatest

Joyfully

With all your might lift His al-

power, ad-

vance on His ho-

liness: Make trumpets' noise in

brushly

laud all the Lord, might-

God His al-

hosts commen-

ness:

Exalt His Your greatest

shrill-est notes as-

cend: Make lute and lyre His loved fame ex-

press: Him let the

gently

b)
Let ring- ing tim- brets so His hon- our sound,

Let sound- ing cym- bals so His glo- ry ring, That in their tunes such me- lo- dy be

found, as fits the pomp of most tri- umphant King. Con- clude: by

all that air, or life en- fold, let high Je- ho- vah high- ly be ex- tolled.

a) in the 16th century Protestant tradition, psalms were frequently translated into English verse forms ("metrical translation"). Philip and Mary Sidney, brother and sister, translated the psalms in order, a project completed by Mary after Philip's death after Psalm 43. Their translations circulating in manuscript were widely admired: a copy was presented to Queen Elizabeth. This is the last psalm, Psalm 150 "Laudate Dominum", in the form of a sonnet.

b) tabret: a small tabor (drum)

c) conclude: this is not just the closing couplet of this psalm, but of the Sidneys' marathon task in translating all the psalms.
6. Cope, Steeple Aston
Helen Overell

DAVID PROThEROE

I-ma-gine this, the last stitch put in place, thread fas-tened,

ac-cented

trimmed, pins re-moved, need-les coun- ted in, the gar- ment fi-nished,

light—

backed with li- nen, sto- ries told, sewn on in gold, in e- ve- ry sort of hue—
eve- ry one crowds round to

mar- vel; here, an an- gel robed in green, wings ha- loed, sea- ted on a horse plays the lute—
The Steeple Ashton Cope is a surviving example of medieval embroidery from the 1330s which includes an enchanting depiction of an angel on horseback playing the lute. Helen Overell's poem about it was published in Lute News in 2019.

The Steeple Ashton Cope (detail) ©Victoria and Albert Museum, London
7. My ladye lay in cooling waters

Glen Weir a)

DAVID PROThEROE

Dreamily

1. My ladye lay in cooling waters

Float,ing, stretch'd, with sil-ken skin;

Perfect breasts, her

dark haire flow-ing, Mercy!

How my head did spin.

to coda

CODA

(6.) Forget you this day, by the poole.

CODA

+In subsequent verses, adjust the underlay in bars 7 and 9 so the most important word comes on the high note

a) This setting of his courtly poem as a lute song was commissioned by Glen Weir, a lute society member living in Adelaide.
1. My ladye lay in cooling waters,
   Floating, stretch'd, with silken skin;
   Perfect breasts, her dark hair flowing,
   Mercy! How my head did spin.

2. My ladye sat in cooling waters;
   Placed my hand upon her breast;
   With a sigh she gently kissed me,
   Would I ever touch the rest?

3. My ladye stood in cooling waters,
   Circled by my eager arms;
   In soft moonlight, her figure glowing,
   Such sweet delights flow'd from her charms.

4. My ladye lay in cooling waters
   Swooning, soft with angel face;
   Could it be that I am dreaming?
   Then awake without her grace.

5. My ladye walked from cooling waters
   Followed I, to show my heart;
   She turned to me, her dark eyes flashing,
   'Tis the end? Or but the start?

6. My ladye dress'd near cooling waters
   Donning silks and flowing tulle;
   Said I to her, I cannot ever
   Forget you this day, by the poole.
8. Calico pie
Edward Lear
- Nonsense Songs, Stories, Botany, and Alphabets

DAVID PROThEROE

mf

1. Ca- li- co Pie, the lit- tle birds fly
    Down to the ca- li- co tree, Their

mf

wings were blue, And they
    sang "Til- ly- loo!" Till a-
    way they flew, And they ne- ver came back to

mp

ne- ver came back, they ne- ver came back, They ne- ver came back to
    me!

mp

lit- tle fish swam, Ov- er the syl- la- bub
    sea, He took off his hat, To the
    sole and the sprat And the Wil- le- by- wat, But he

mp

ne- ver came back to
    me! He ne- ver came back, He ne- ver came back, He ne- ver came back to

pp (staccato)
32. Cali-co Ban, the little mice ran to be ready in time for tea; Flip-pe-ty flup, they drank it all up, and danced in the cup, But they never came back to me! They never came back, they never came back, They never came back to me! They

39. 

4. Cali-co Drum, the grass-hop-pers come, the but-ter-fly, bee-tle and bee, Over the ground, a-round and a-round, With a hop and a bound, But they never came back to me! They

45. 

52. 

57. plaintively

never came back, they never came back, They never came back to me!
9. The duck and the kangaroo
(a dialogue)

Edward Lear
- Nonsense Songs, Stories, Botany, and Alphabets

DAVID PROTHEROE

The duck

1. Said the duck to the kangaroo, 'Good gracious! how you hop!

with bounce

O-ver the fields and the wa-ter too, as if you would ne-ver stop! My life is a bore in this nas-ty pond, and I

long to go out in the world be-yond! I wish I could hop like you!' said the duck to the kan-ga-roo.

2. 'Please give me a ride on your back!' said the

*grace notes on the beat, a semitone below main note

1. Said the duck to the kangaroo, 'Good gracious! how you hop!'
I would sit quite still, and say nothing but "Quack!" the whole of the long day through! And we'd go to the Dee, and the Jelly Bo Lee, O-ver the land and o-ver the sea: Please take me a ride! O do!' said the duck to the kangaroo.

3. Said the kangaroo to the duck, This re-
quires some little reflec-tion Per-haps on the whole it might bring me luck and there seems but one objec-tion, which
is, if you'll let me speak so bold, Your feet are un-pleasantly wet and cold, And would probably give me the room-

The duck

tiz' said the kangaroo.

4. Said the duck, 'As I sate on the rocks, I have thought over that completely, and I bought four pairs of worsted socks which fit my web-feet neatly. And to keep out the cold I've bought a cloak, And every day a cigar I'll smoke, All to follow my own dear true
love of a kangaroo.

5. Said the kangaroo, I'm ready

slower

all in the moon-light pale; But to balance me well, dear duck sit steady and

*Play these arpeggios slowly

The duck

who so happy, —O who, as the duck and the kangaroo?