



Wednesday 20 October, 7.30pm

St George's Church

I, SPIE

The story of John Dowland and his brush with the Secret Service

by Clare Norburn

Dominic Marsh as John Dowland

Danny Webb as The Man (Sir Robert Cecil / Phelippes / Father Scudamore /
Topcliffe, the torturer)

Alice Imelda as The Woman (Maria x 2 / Future Mrs Dowland / Elizabeth I)

The Telling

Clare Norburn *soprano*

Emily Baines *recorders, bagpipes*

Giles Lewin *fiddle, bagpipes*

Alison Kinder *viols, recorders*

Jamie Akers *lute, cittern*

Nicholas Renton *director*

Clare Norburn *writer & producer*

Natalie Rowland *lighting designer*

Roisin Martindale *costume/prop assistant*

Emily Baines *music researcher*

Steph Williams *The Telling's administrator*

Sarah Baldwin *The Telling's intern & code-maker*

This performance is dedicated to the memory of our incomparable mezzo **Ariane Prüssner**

Running time approximately 1 hour 20 mins without an interval

The music

Thomas Campion 1567–1620

Campion

John Dowland 1563–1626

Dowland

Anonymous / Traditional English / Irish C16th

Anonymous collected/arranged by
Thomas Ravenscroft c.1582–c.1633

Anonymous English C16th

Anthony Holborne c.1545–1602

Anonymous English C17th

Text from *British Library, Roxburghe MS*

Campion

Dowland

Dowland

Holborne

Filippo Azzaiolo c.1530–1569

Dowland

Dowland

Dowland

Dowland

Holborne

Anonymous
text attributed to Anne Boleyn, 1536

Dowland

The Entry of Mania from *The Lords' Masque* (1613)

The Melancholy Man Full of Fear
from *The Lords' Masque* (1613)

Semper Dowland, Semper Dolens
from *Lachrimae* (1604)

Fine Knacks for Ladies
from *The Second Book of Songs or Ayres* (1600)

Sellengers Round

Martin Said To His Man
from *Deuteromelia* (1609)

The Earl of Essex Measures from *RCM M.S.III9*

Bona Speranza from *Pavans, Galliards, Almains and other Short Aeirs* (1599)

A Caveat for Cutpurses/Packington's Pound

Fain Would I wed a fair young man
from *The Fourth Book of Ayres* (1617)

Time Stands Still
from *The Third Book of Songs* (1603)

Earl of Essex Galliard from *Lachrimae* (1604)

Muy Linda from *Pavans, Galliards, Almains and other Short Aeirs* (1599)

Chi passa per sa strada from *Villotte alla Padoana* (1557)

Whoever passes down this street
and does not sigh, is blessed
and blessed are those
who can make things happen for real;
show yourself at the window or I will die right now.

Time Stands Still (reprise)

Can She Excuse My Wrongs
from *The First Book of Songs* (1597)

In Darkness Let Me Dwell (instrumental)
from *A Musically Banquet* (1610)

Come Heavy Sleep
from *The First Book of Songs* (1597)

Muy Linda (reprise)

O Death, Rock Me Asleep
from *BL Add MS 15117* (c. 1599)

Now, O Now, I Needs Must Part (The Frog Galliard)
from *The First Book of Songs* (1597)

The context

I, Spie is centred around an extraordinary letter which Dowland wrote to spymaster Sir Robert Cecil in 1595. At the time, Dowland was travelling Europe, having taken umbrage in having not secured a court post as a lutenist when one fell vacant. Cecil had signed Dowland's travel papers and probably told him to 'keep his eyes and ears open'. So when, as a Catholic Englishman, Dowland is approached by English ex-pats living in Florence and Rome, who are plotting to overthrow Queen Elizabeth I, Dowland dishes up the information on the plot and key players to Cecil. *I, Spie* imagines the gaps in what we know about Dowland's life at that time – what led to the moment of his writing that letter – but also what happened in the aftermath.

Being a Catholic informant in Elizabethan England was a dangerous business – no one entirely trusted you, even if your information was helpful. The 1580s had seen a series of Catholic plots and the terrifying threat of the Spanish Armada – and with the Queen ageing without any clear succession, by 1595 there was a febrile sense of panic and suspicion. In that context, it is no wonder that Dowland's letter reads like a man out of his depth: he sounds scared for his own life – and with good reason. Catholics who informed were not always fully trusted – many ended up on the gallows. But on the other hand, he does deliver the information and effectively foils the plot... Quite how involved in it all was he?

The Secret Service's practice of recruiting students from Oxford and Cambridge goes back to this period. It was often seen as fashionable and exciting for students to dabble in Catholicism; so there was a ready supply of potential recruits who had already shown Catholic leanings who could easily be turned as informers.

The origins of the modern Secret Service were formed during Elizabeth I's rule – initially under the direction of the inspirational Sir Francis Walsingham, who initially had to fund the service out of his own pocket. His death in 1590 caused a vacuum, and a fight for supremacy between Sir Robert Cecil and the Earl of Essex; so there was potential for double-dealing between followers of those two key players within the service itself.

What is not so certain is why Dowland takes so long to write to Sir Robert Cecil: the proof he forwards (a letter from Father John Scudamore) is dated four months before Dowland's covering letter to Cecil. And Dowland writes from Nuremberg, not Florence. Given this was a plot on the life of Elizabeth, that gap is a real question mark. We also don't know what happens to Dowland after writing that letter. Does he return to England? Or does he stay in Germany? He is certainly at Hesse in late 1596 when he receives a letter from Sir Henry Noel encouraging him to return – which almost certainly prompts his return in early 1597. Noel's letter can be interpreted in an interesting way if one assumes that Dowland had not yet returned to England. In that context, Noel's reassurances could in effect read that he is persuading Dowland that he is SAFE to return – that the authorities are not suspicious of his absence and that four-month gap....

What is fascinating is how contemporary the issues are about how far espionage should go in ensuring we are safe. I was also interested in what happens to a musician/composer who suddenly finds himself caught up in this world? How does informing sit with Dowland being an artist? All through the ages, musicians and writers have been caught up in espionage: the best known example of Dowland's age is Christopher Marlowe; but there is also Dowland's exact contemporary at Oxford, the composer Thomas Morley. And 50–60 years later, the playwright Aphra Behn, then the writer Daniel Defoe... What does it mean to be a writer/composer/performer and privately also a carrier of espionage secrets...?

In Dowland's case, hot on the heels of the period of the play comes his first major publication: his *First Booke of Songs* in 1597. In 1598 he finally achieves his lifetime ambition of a court position: not in England but in Denmark at the court of Christian IV, a position he holds for eight years. So, if my 'interpretation' (a word used by Sir Robert Cecil in the play) of the facts and the gaps between them is correct, then perhaps his brush with espionage was a wake-up call – to publish, to get out there and make things happen.

The performers

The Telling attempts to break new ground, where new writing/music collide.

In 2019 we undertook 28 performances and four public workshops. Between 27 March 2020 and late April 2021 our mezzo Ariane Prüssner delivered online singing workshops to 45–70 participants each week. We have performed at Buxton International Music Festival, Music at Oxford (three performances) Little Missenden Festival, Brighton Early Music Festival (four performances), Keele Concerts Society, Kingston Early Music, Totnes Early Music Society – and working with other groups including The Sixteen, we spearheaded our own Liverpool Early Music Festival.

We record for First Hand Records: our first CD *Gardens of Delight* was selected for BBC Music Magazine's playlist for April 2019 and our most recent CD *Secret Life of Carols* reached #25 in the Classical Charts in December 2019. David Mellor called it his 'absolute favourite' 2019 Christmas Album and it was in The Guardian, BBC Music Magazine, Daily Mail and Classic FM's 'Best Christmas Albums' lists.

'imaginative and eclectic'

The Guardian, Fiona Maddocks on *Secret Life of Carols* CD

'Siren-like voices ... an ardour to these performances that is hard to resist.'

BBC Music Magazine on *Gardens of Delight* CD

'unexpected delight from beginning to end, and really strongly recommended'

David Mellor, Classic FM / Daily Mail on *Secret Life of Carols* CD

During 2020/21 The Telling received critical praise for their online arthouse films of plays with music; most notably, *Vision* by Clare Norburn, which follows the extraordinary medieval Abbess Hildegard of Bingen played by Teresa Banham (RSC/Shared Experience) and was selected by The Guardian's Tim Ashley as one of the Top 3 online summer music highlights alongside the Salzburg and Edinburgh Festivals.

'An austere beautiful piece ... it really is wonderful, so do try and catch it.'

The Guardian, Tim Ashley

Love in the Lockdown also by Clare Norburn starring Alec Newman and Rachael Stirling is our most recent online play with music, rehearsed and filmed entirely over Zoom or on actors' and musicians' mobiles/recording devices from their own homes.

'an exploration of the boundaries between art and life ... intelligent ... does more than reflect overfamiliar pandemic situations back at us ... it finds new terrain'

The Guardian, Arifa Akbar

Clare Norburn is a singer, playwright and producer. She read music at Leeds University and studied singing at London College of Music. As a playwright, she has developed a new genre of concertplays including *Beethoven's Quartet Journey* (six concertplays to accompany a full cycle of his string quartets) for the Dante Quartet (2016), *Purcell, the Musical* (2018) for Ceruleo; and with director Nicholas Renton, *Breaking the Rules* (2015) for The Marian Consort, *Creating Carmen* (2019) for CarmenCo and *Galileo* (2020) for the Monteverdi String Band and The Marian Consort. With her medieval group The Telling, her *Empowered Women Trilogy* has had 22 performances and two of the concertplays were filmed during lockdown, with one being selected by The Guardian as an online classical highlight alongside the Salzburg and Edinburgh Festivals. Her most recent project, *Love in the Lockdown* (2021), is an online play with music in nine episodes, starring Alec Newman and Rachael Stirling. Her productions have toured UK festivals and LSO St Luke's, The Bridgewater Hall and St John's Smith Square.

As a singer Clare has sung as a soloist with many medieval ensembles including her own group The Telling, Mediva (finalists in the York International Young Artists Competition and selected for Southbank

Centre's Fresh Young Artists Series), Eclipse and Vox Animae, with whom she has recorded and performed medieval abbess, Hildegard of Bingen's music drama *Ordo Virtutum*. With these ensembles she has performed at the Purcell Room and The Bridgewater Hall and at leading festivals including Spitalfields Music, Brighton Festival, Newbury Spring Festival and Buxton International Festival. Together with Deborah Roberts, Clare co-founded Brighton Early Music Festival. She stepped down in 2017 after 15 years to concentrate on writing and singing. She is Artistic Director of Stroud Green Festival, North London's quirkiest acoustic music festival. She has trained and mentored young ensembles for RADA, Handel House, the Royal Academy of Music and the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. She also works as a freelance arts fundraiser.

Dr Emily Baines is a professional recorder player, lecturer and musical director working throughout Europe, also specialising in a wide variety of historical woodwinds. She trained at the University of Hull, the Koninklijk Conservatorium (The Hague) and the Guildhall School of Music & Drama where she wrote her doctoral thesis on the role of mechanical musical instruments as sources for 18th-century performance practice.

Emily performs regularly for many period instrument ensembles, contemporary groups, music festivals and theatres across Europe. Theatre work has included musician and musical director roles for Jericho House, English Touring Theatre, Barbican BITE, RSC, National Theatre and Shakespeare's Globe, including the Globe's premier Broadway transfers of *Twelfth Night* and *Richard III* in 2013 starring Mark Rylance and Stephen Fry. Her playing is regularly featured on radio, TV and film.

In addition to her performing schedule, Emily is a lecturer in Music at Brunel University London, Guildhall School of Music & Drama and Shakespeare's Globe Higher Education department, and is regularly invited to other universities and conservatoires to give guest lectures and lead practical workshops. Her first album as a soloist/director (with the ensemble Amyas) *The Ghost in the Machine*, showcasing her DMus research is due for release in October 2021 with First Hand Records.

Giles Lewin is an instrumentalist and singer specialising in the traditional music of Europe and the Middle East. He has always preferred informal to formal music-making, learning most of his Irish music in the pub and with the band Afterhours. Whilst he was a member of the early music ensemble The Dufay Collective, his interest in the Arab influences in medieval music led him to Cairo to study Arabic violin with Ashraf al Sarki. He is a founder member of the folk band Bellowhead and The Carnival Band, and works frequently with Maddy Prior. He also plays with the Oxford-based Egyptian group Maqaam. He has released two solo albums: *The Armchair Orienteer* (Park Records) and *Time's Chariot*.

Alison Kinder is a viol player in Chelys and The Linarol Consort. When she ventures into the 18th century she plays a beautiful 7-string viol named Flo, and when she thinks no one is looking she can occasionally be found playing baroque violin and assorted recorders. One of her favourite places to be is as the gamba player with Musica Secreta, where a recent highlight has been the newly discovered complete Lamentations of Jeremiah by Antoine Brumel. A keen teacher of both children and adults, Alison is a tutor on a number of early music courses and regularly leads workshops for the various Early Music Fora.

Critically acclaimed musician **Jamie Akers** was hailed as 'the great Scottish guitarist' by Classical Guitar Magazine and, in a Gramophone review, his playing was described as 'containing all the warmth, colour and expressive richness one could hope for.' He has performed with leading artists, ensembles and opera companies including Alison Balsom, Dame Emma Kirkby, I Fagiolini, Dunedin Consort, English National Opera, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre and Damon Albarn and released solo recordings of lute and romantic guitar music. He lectures in period plucked instruments and performance practice at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Throughout a varied career Jamie has explored music from a stylistic perspective, combining diligent research with expressive playing, to communicate the continuity of musical expression through the centuries.

Dominic Marsh's theatre work includes Macheath in *Dead Dog in a Suitcase and Other Love Songs* (Kneehigh/UK tour, Manchester Theatre Awards nomination for Best Actor); Gerald Bolingbroke in *Me and My Girl* (Chichester Festival Theatre), Maximilian Dressler in *Clockwork Canaries* (Theatre Royal Plymouth); Jean-René in *Romantics Anonymous* (Shakespeare's Globe); Tristan in *Tristan and Yseult* (Kneehigh/Shakespeare's Globe, UK, Ireland and USA tours); Sir James Stewart in *I am Thomas* (Told By an Idiot/National Theatre of Scotland); Roland Cassard in *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* (Kneehigh/Gielgud Theatre and Curve Theatre Leicester); Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice* (Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds); Fleet in *Mimi and the Stalker* (Theatre503); The Actor in *The Woman in Black* (West End); Lucentio in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Arviragus in *Cymbeline*, Curio in *Twelfth Night*, Tom Tucker in *HMS Pinafore*, Balthazar in *As You Like it* and *Oh! What a Lovely War* (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre); Prince Charming in *Cinderella* (Oxford Playhouse); King George III in *Longitude* (Greenwich Theatre); Jeff Waters in *Time's Up* (Shaftesbury Theatre); Richard Danus in *The Shell Seekers* (UK tour); Simon Bliss in *Hay Fever* (Haymarket Basingstoke); Jonathan Harker in *Dracula* (Derby Playhouse); *Racing Demon*, *Absence of War* and *Murmuring Judges* (Birmingham Rep); *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *Alice in Wonderland* (RSC); Harry in *Albert Herring* (Opera 80).

Television includes *Should We Bomb Auschwitz*, *The Royals*, *Coronation Street*, *DCI Banks*, *Doctors*, *Missing*, *Happy Birthday George!*, *Without Walls*. Films include *Chaplin*, *Lucky Stiff* and the short films *Our Name is Michael Morgan* and *The Undertow*.

Danny Webb is reprising his role in the second series of *Pennyworth*, prior to which he shot feature film *The Dig* for Netflix. Alongside his acclaimed performance in *King Lear* alongside Ian McKellen in London's West End, Danny's other stage credits include *Welcome Home*, *Captain Fox!* for the Donmar and *The Seagull*, directed by Matthew Dunster, for Regent's Park Open Air. Film credits include Alan Rickman's *A Little Chaos* for Lionsgate/BBC and *Residue* directed by Alex Garcia for Matador Pictures. TV credits include *The City and The City* and *SS-GB*, both for BBC One, *Liar* and *The Halcyon*, both for ITV, and *Humans* for Channel 4.

Alice Imelda trained at the Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance. Theatre includes: *Creating Carmen* (CarmenCo), *The Mad Ones* (BJW Productions/Derby Theatre), *Tell Me On A Sunday* (The Old Laundry Theatre), *Winter Holiday* (Metta Theatre), *Sense and Sensibility* (Theatre By The Lake), *Bold Girls* (Theatre By The Lake), *Too Much Punch For Judy* (The Gatehouse/Camden Fringe Festival), *Sixth Form Romeo* (Derailed Theatre), *Junkyard* (Headlong Theatre), *Three Wise Monkeys/Spitting Distance* (Bush Theatre), *The Lost Boy* (Catherine Wheels). Film includes *My Dinner with Hervé* (HBO/Red Castle).

Nicholas Renton began his career directing for theatre, then for television with films including *The Interrogation of John*, BBC hit *Hamish Macbeth* starring Robert Carlyle, and is best known for his BAFTA nominated *Mrs Gaskell's Wives and Daughters* for the BBC, scripted by Andrew Davies and Nick's third collaboration with Michael Gambon. Other directing credits include ITV's *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *The Ebb Tide*. *Night Flight* in which he directed Christopher Plummer and Edward Woodward in William Ivory's Lancaster bomber drama, John Hurt and Sheila Hancock in *Bait* and Ken Stott in *Uncle Adolf*. After making *A Room with a View* for TV, he directed *Little White Lie*, *When Harvey Met Bob*, and later, three stories in the BBC's *Musketeers* series and episodes of web crime drama *Snatch* which premiered on Crackle.

He has directed several of Clare Norburn's concert dramas including *Breaking the Rules* for The Marian Consort, *The Empowered Women Trilogy* and *Love in the Lockdown* for The Telling, and *Creating Carmen* for CarmenCo.

Natalie Rowland has worked extensively in dance and theatre and has specialised in site-specific productions. She has designed lighting for a number of early music productions and tours including Brighton Early Music Festival productions since 2011, such as Monteverdi's *Orfeo* in 2017. She lit the Monteverdi String Band's *Il Combattimento* production in Venice and at St John's Smith Square for the London Festival of Baroque Music.

She lit the 18-date UK tour (2016/17) of *Breaking the Rules* by Clare Norburn with The Marian Consort, directed by Nicholas Renton; a tour of *Dr Dee's Daughter* by recorder consort Palisander and puppetry company Rust and Stardust; and Ensemble Molière's production of Rameau's *Pygmalion*. She also worked on Clare Norburn's Purcell concert/play *Burying the Dead* with baroque ensemble Ceruleo, directed by Thomas Guthrie. She was guest lighting designer for the Baroque at the Edge festival 2019 at LSO St Luke's.

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**** BBC Music Magazine

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performance **** / recording ***** BBC Music Magazine

This performance of *I, Spie* is supported by a grant from Continuo Foundation, Angel Early Music and donors and crowdfunders.

The Telling is hugely grateful to these funders. We are taking the entire risk on this performance (we are not taking a fee from Brighton Early Music Festival) and our Arts Council bid was unsuccessful – so we simply wouldn't be here tonight performing for you without our funders and donors. Thank you so much!

But we are still £1,000 short on our target for the tour.

If you are able to give, **please support the appeal** – appeal forms will be available at the show.



Supported using public funding by
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Brighton Early Music Festival gratefully acknowledges support from Arts Council England and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport through the Culture Recovery Fund.