



CADIZ

BRILLIANT
CLASSICS

Francis Cutting

LUTE MUSIC

Domenico Cerasani *lute*

Francis Cutting 1550-1596
Lute Music

1. Sir Walter Raleigh's Galliard	1'37	11. Pavan Sans Per	3'16
2. The Squirrel's Toy – Cutting's Comfort	1'56	12. Galliard	1'58
3. Mrs. Anne Markham's Pavan	4'46	13. Greensleeves	3'12
4. Galliard	1'47	14. Galliard	1'35
5. Quadro Pavan	2'22	15. Jig – Toy	2'37
6. My Lord Willoughby's Welcome		16. Walsingham	2'59
Home (Dowland/Cutting)	3'09	17. Galliard	1'50
7. Galliard		18. Sir Fulke Greville's Pavan	4'42
(on Go from my Window)	1'47	19. Galliard	1'37
8. Pavana Bray (Byrd/Cutting)	4'42	20. Almain	2'00
9. Galliard	1'45	21. Galliard	1'55
10. Almain	1'24	22. Packington's Pound	2'51

Domenico Cerasani *lute*

Francis Cutting (1550-1596) is one of the major lute composers of Elizabethan England, but the facts of his biography are sparse and not very secure. Time and place of his birth are unknown, but it is possible that his cradle stood somewhere in East Anglia around the middle of the sixteenth century. From 1571 onwards Francis Cutting rented one of the tenements adjoining Arundel House, the London residence of the Howard family. He must have lived there at least from March 1582 onwards, because from then on we find records of the baptisms of his children in the register of the local parish church of Saint Clement Danes. He and his wife Elizabeth had at least ten children; two others, born in the 1570s, were possibly Elizabeth's children from an earlier marriage. Their son Thomas, born in November 1583, would later become a professional lutenist.

Francis Cutting died on one of the first days of 1596; he was buried at Saint Clement Danes on the seventh of January. He did not leave a will, so perhaps his death was unexpected. Elizabeth followed him to the grave shortly after in September 1597. From her will we learn that the Cutting family was quite well-to-do. This supports the suggestion, first made by Diana Poulton, that Cutting was not a professional musician; as a matter of fact, in some documents he is referred to as 'gentleman'. It seems likely that he was a servant as well as a tenant of the Howards; the fact that Lord Thomas Howard still owed Elizabeth £20 in 1597 may be an indication that Cutting had been employed by him. For Cutting, this patronage must have been problematic, due to the unfortunate life of Philip Howard (1557–1595), first Earl of Arundel, who in 1584 converted to Roman Catholicism. In Elizabethan England, this was tantamount to high treason. He was fined and imprisoned for life in 1585.

With such a patron, it is not difficult to see that Cutting could not have played a prominent role in the most important musical circles of London, those of the court and its associated noble houses. This marginal position could explain the fact that his lute works, although of high quality and produced in considerable number, were not widely circulated. Most of them have been handed down in just a handful of sources,

namely in three manuscripts for solo lute that were written by Matthew Holmes, and in *A new Booke of Tabliture*, published in London by William Barley in 1596.

Matthew Holmes was a precentor and singer at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, and from 1597 at Westminster Abbey until his death in 1621. Between c.1588 and c.1605 he wrote three important manuscripts with lute music, now preserved in Cambridge University Library: Dd.2.11, Dd.5.78 and Dd.9.33. In these collections, we find no less than 46 pieces by Cutting, ten of them in two versions. This quantity, and the overall high quality of the transcripts, suggest that Holmes must have had easy access to Cutting's music, possibly even a direct connection with the composer. Perhaps Holmes' move from Oxford to Westminster, the near vicinity of Cutting's relatives, facilitated the acquisition of these compositions.

The second most important source for Cutting's music is *A new Booke of Tabliture*, printed from woodblocks in 1596. This book includes eleven (or possibly twelve) of his works, three of which are found nowhere else. In the past, the book has been condemned by scholars as a crude product, offering an arbitrary choice of pieces, in readings that are 'at best inaccurate and at worst contemptible'. However, this low opinion of *A new Booke* was probably mainly caused by Dowland's preface in his *First Booke of Songes* (1597), in which he writes that 'there have bin divers Lute-lessons of mine lately printed without my knowledge, false and unperfect', obviously referring to Barley's publication of the preceding year. This denouncement of *A new Booke* by Dowland was of course motivated by his anger that others profited from his work. The scholar John Ward defended the quality of Barley's lute book by showing that it contains a rich array of excellently composed works, carefully edited with full additions of graces and playing signs. It is clear that the book was published under the supervision of a qualified lutenist, who indeed is mentioned implicitly albeit anonymously in Barley's preface.

Ward suggested that Barley's editor could have been no other than Francis Cutting. Cutting contributed more pieces to the book than any other composer, and his name

is the only one that is spelled out in full, whereas all others appear as initials. To this can be added that the Barley setting of Dowland's *Lachrimae Pavan*, which in its divisions differs markedly from other versions of this piece, clearly shows traits of Cutting's musical style, and was probably arranged by him – presumably another reason for Dowland's anger. *A new Booke* therefore seems to constitute a primary source for Cutting's music.

Cutting's known output of 50 pieces for the lute consists of 14 pavans, 23 galliards, three almans, four toys, four sets of variations on ballad tunes, one intabulation of a vocal work and one treble and ground duet. As such, they represent the usual English repertory of the late 1580s and early 1590s, although fantasies are conspicuously missing. However, Cutting's music distinguishes itself in some ways from that of other lutenists of his day. His propensity to couple pavans to galliards, with both pieces sharing tonal scheme, identical motives at the opening of strains and recurring bass lines, is only matched by John Johnson; it seems that c.1590 this practice was already somewhat outdated. Another individual trait of Cutting's output is the large number of works that are in one way or another based on works of other composers. He transcribed pieces for voice and for keyboard by William Byrd and Thomas Morley and rearranged existing lute works by John Dowland, John Johnson and Alfonso Ferrabosco I.

As already mentioned, Cutting was probably an amateur, not a professional lutenist. Still, his works show the hand of a skillful musician and composer. His music is characterized by a preference for a 'learned' polyphonic fabric, although he also wrote light pieces using simple homophony. In the pavans and galliards we often see a complex interplay between chordal and imitative writing. Harmonically, Cutting's music is sometimes forward-looking, with its extensive use of sequences and occasional flashes of harmonic daring. In his oeuvre, especially in his pavans, a development of his musical style may be discerned, from pieces with an essentially two-part structure with long chains of semiquavers in the divisions, via three-part

works characterized by imitative counterpoint in short motifs, to even fuller four-part pieces with longer polyphonic lines. In the latter, a lute with an added seventh course is required.

Francis Cutting's compositions surely rank among the best of the Elizabethan 'Golden Age'. The serious mood of his pavans, the vitality of his galliards, the gaiety of his almaines and toys, together with his personal harmonic idiom and his inventiveness in using counterpoint, imitation and sequences, are all sure signs of a gifted and often inspired composer. It is only right that finally a complete recording is dedicated to his music.

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Born in the Italian region of Abruzzo, **Domenico Cerasani** graduated in classical guitar at the Musikhochschule in Hannover with Frank Bungarten. He decides then to dedicate himself to the early plucked instruments, studying with Massimo Lonardi at the ISSM in Pavia, where he obtained the Master of Music with distinction. In the following years he completed a Master at the Musikhochschule in Trossingen with Rolf Lislevand, specialising in chamber music with the highest mark, followed by important international experiences, both as soloist and in chamber music ensembles and orchestras. He recorded several solo albums, including a Fernando Sor recording and one dedicated to an early lute music source, the Raimondo Manuscript. Currently he teaches guitar and lute at the Musikschule in St. Gallen, trying

to develop teaching methods based on empathy. He is furthermore graduated in classical philology. Always fascinated by research in music, he published several articles on musicological topics and is working on his PhD dissertation at the University of Bern on the baroque guitarists of Bologna, a city where he finds very interesting documents and enjoys the best ice creams together with Valentina.

*Special thanks to Alma Zeccara
for the musical supervision and the human support*