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Will the Real Deal Stand?: Comparison of Vocal Production on Dowland's *Come Again, Sweet Love*.

Come Again! Sweet Love

John Dowland

First Booke of Songes or Ayres, 1597, revised 1613.

Come again! sweet love doth now invite  
Thy graces that refrain  
To do me due delight,  
To see, to hear, to touch, to kiss, to die,  
With thee again in sweetest sympathy.

Come again! that I may cease to mourn  
Through thy unkind disdain;  
For now left and forlorn  
I sit, I sigh, I weep, I faint, I die  
In deadly pain and endless misery.

All the day the sun that lends me shine  
By frowns do cause me pine  
And feeds me with delay;  
Her smiles, my springs that makes my joys to grow,  
Her frowns the Winters of my woe.

All the night my sleeps are full of dreams,  
My eyes are full of streams.  
My heart takes no delight  
To see the fruits and joys that some do find  
And mark the storms are me assign'd.

Out alas, my faith is ever true,  
Yet will she never rue  
Nor yield me any grace;  
Her eyes of fire, her heart of flint is made,  
Whom tears nor truth may once invade.

Gentle Love, draw forth thy wounding dart,  
Thou canst not pierce her heart;  
For I, that do approve  
By sighs and tears more hot than are thy shafts  
Did tempt while she for triumph laughs.

How would “Come Again! Sweet Love” have sounded during its first life? Four hundred years later, has the song evolved and is it allowed to? Or is its evolved life a victim of social, academic, and musical tastes? Some songs survive the relentless grindstone of time because inherent in their compositional design is something relatable and human. Even without knowing the Elizabethan poetic practice of disguising sexual pleasures behind words about dying, “Come Again! Sweet Love” conveys its enticing sensual vein through short melodic sequences framed by breathless rests.

I will investigate four recordings of tenors of varied backgrounds paired with lutenists performing “Come Again! Sweet Love.” Their delivery and reception show signs of taste in both directions. The first recording is of Covey-Crump and Lindberg. Rogers Covey-Crump sings with his delicately trained high tenor voice with the Hilliard Ensemble, a British male vocal quartet. Born in 1944, Rogers singing developed as a boy chorister at Oxford and Albans, England.<sup>1</sup> Jakob Lindberg began as a Beatles’ strumming guitar player and converted to Scottish lute and Italian chitarrone playing. He teaches at the Royal College of Music in London, collaborates with professional early music groups, and directs early opera.<sup>2</sup> The second recording is of Hill and Rooley. Martyn Hill developed his taste for singing on stage as a schoolboy in a Gilbert and Sullivan production. Since then, he flourished as a world-class opera tenor.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Aryeh Oron and Joanna Zygan, "Rogers Covey-Crump," Bach Cantatas Website, last modified August 2009, <http://www.bach-cantatas.com/Bio/Covey-Crump-Rogers.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Aryeh Oron, "Jakob Lindberg," Bach Cantatas Website, last modified May 2008, <http://www.bach-cantatas.com/Bio/Lindberg-Jakob.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Gordon Campbell, "University of Leicester - Martyn Hill - Doctor of Music - Tenor, Opera Singer, Concert and Oratorio Soloist, and Recitalist," University of Leicester — A Leading UK University, accessed October 17, 2016, <http://www.le.ac.uk/ebulletin-archive/ebulletin/news/2000-2009/2009/01/npfolder.2009-01-27.8688650573/nparticle.2009-01-27.4432693819/index.html>.

Dowland scholar Anthony Rooley, a self-trained, exguitar, lute player, started the Consort of Musicke ensemble and recorded Renaissance and Baroque music for over forty years.<sup>4</sup> The third recording is of Daniels and Kenny. Charles Daniels' singing career took shape in the choral world as a young boy and through university. This training launched him to a solo career with over eighty recordings, mostly on music from the middle ages to Baroque.<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Kenny has toured playing early music lute works since 1997 and teaches lute at the Royal Academy of Music.<sup>6</sup> The fourth recording is of Sting and Karamazov. Sting entered the music world through the call of a Spanish guitar. He interprets various genres of music including jazz, reggae, punk, folk, and classical into his compositions. He figured out how to sing in his high register in demanding performance tours and not ruin his voice.<sup>7</sup> Edin Karamazov studied lute playing at Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, focusing on early music and historically informed performances.<sup>8</sup>

In 1597, John Dowland published "Come Again! Sweet Love" in his *First Booke of Songes or Ayres of Foure Partes with Tableture for the Lute*. Dowland writes on the first page:

That harmony which is skillfully exprest by instruments, albeit, by reason of the variety of number and proportion, of itself it easily stirs up the minds of the hearers to admiration and delight, yet far higher authority and power hat been ever worthily attributed to that kind of music, which to the sweetness of instrument applies the lively voice of man, expressing some worthy sentence or excellent poem.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Timothy Dickey, "Anthony Rooley | Biography & History," AllMusic, accessed October 17, 2016, <http://www.allmusic.com/artist/anthony-rooley-mn0000685502/biography>.

<sup>5</sup> The Charles Daniels Society, accessed October 17, 2016, <http://www.charles-daniels-society.org.uk/>.

<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Kenny, Elizabeth Kenny, accessed October 18, 2016, <http://www.elizabethkenny.co.uk/>.

<sup>7</sup> "Sting.com > Official Site and Official Fan Club for Sting Biography," Sting.com > Homepage, accessed October 18, 2016, <http://www.sting.com/biography>.

<sup>8</sup> "Edin Karamazov - Biography," Decca Classics - Home of the Legendary, London-based Classical Music Label and Home to the Stars of Classical Music, accessed October 19, 2016, <http://www.deccaclassics.com/us/artist/karamazov/biography>.

<sup>9</sup> John Dowland, *The First Booke of Songes or Ayres* (Peter Short Press, 1597), 2.

Nowhere in the book does Dowland indicate what type of voice or what vocal ability his intended performer would be. Lack of specificity would suggest that all singers would be inclusive in what an appropriate rendition would be. Dowland had exposure to singers of many countries and professions. If he felt particularly elitist about what approach would justifiably serve his music, he could have easily printed direction in that regard. On the second page he refutes all other published lesson books with his name, stating that this book is his first publication. From the first two pages, one can conclude that the Dowland published these songs as both learning songs, as determined by the tablature printing, and as performance material for chamber and court.

The book blazed the trail in printing and mass market music scores. Dowland's innovative format of a two-page layout with sections viewable from four angles to accommodate musicians sitting around a table unfortunately faded from history, but the songs continue their call past four centuries. The singing tradition near the turn of the seventeenth century in Britain was not of the Italian *bel canto* tradition. *Bel canto* singing developed in parallel with the needs of the budding operatic tradition. Donnington advises in his handbook for Baroque style that the sound of Baroque singing should be "transparent and incisive."<sup>10</sup> As time moved forward and venues for singing grew larger, the expectation for dramatic weight in a singer's voice increased. Reversing time, would vocalizing have been even lighter? "Come Again" as a sung song most likely spread from chamber to chamber, not from touring staged concert events, though there

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Donnington, *Baroque Music: Style and Performance : a Handbook* (New York: W.W.Norton & Company, 1982), 167.

may have been the wandering minstrel disseminating tunes to towns further away from literate society.

The original published score is in C Ionian and the first note starts on E above middle C. I imagine all the performers referenced the original scores as it is not hard to access and is readable with a moderate amount of music notation reading. The tenors in the recordings have transposed the song down to G or Gb. Assuming the lutenists can play in any key or that a lute in a particular key could be procured and used, the singers probably chose their key according to a comfortable range to sing and to where the song sits in their voice to give it the sound respective of its mood. The Lute Society webpage states that lutenists move beyond equal temperament as they gain more experience.<sup>11</sup> Since all the lute players are studied musicians, they must not be in equal temperament. The recordings rarely land on true notes on the tuner and though that may indicate the absence of equal temperament, whether the lutes were tuned by standard just tuning or mean tuning is not easily assessed. Bachly states that “singers initially tend to resist just intonation.”<sup>12</sup> The singers accompanied by the lute would presumably adjust their pitch to match it but Hill and Daniels periodically missed or left the goal pitch. Hill missed some ascending intervals because his mechanics kept him in a register that prevents ease of execution on that pitch. If he had reached the goal pitch in the register he remained in, it would have to be with high pressure, which changes mood. Daniels near the end of a verse would arrive at the goal pitch and quickly slide down for interpretive effect. Covey-Crump and Sting pitched their

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<sup>11</sup> "The Lute Society: Beginners Lesson 16," The Lute Society: Home Page, accessed October 18, 2016, <http://www.lutesociety.org/pages/beginners-lesson-16>.

<sup>12</sup> Jeffery T Kite-Powell and Alexander Blachly, "On Singing and the Vocal Ensemble I," in *A Performer's Guide to Renaissance Music* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 26.

singing in pleasant intonation with the lute. Overall, the singers sang skillfully with the lute tuning, making this element of performance historically accurate. The discrepancies of Hill's technique could have happened to any singer during Dowland's time and so is not an issue of historic reenactment but of ability.

In terms of vocal training of the four tenors, let's look at green beans. Whereas Sting's sound compares to a fresh green bean pulled right off the bush, Daniels' sound compares to a lightly blanched green bean, Covey-Crump's to *al dente*, and Hill's to canned green beans. Both Sting and Hill adjusted their vocal production from how they sing the majority of their performance life. Hill did not sing with a full-bodied operatic voice and Sting did not sing with a full-blown rock voice.

Blachly instructs that

In music of the generation of Willaert and later, many problems of phrasing in vocal music are solved merely by correctly pronouncing the words, and this for the simple reason that after about 1550 most vocal music is written predominantly with one note per syllable. ... speech and correct pronunciation are the guiding principles of Renaissance phrasing.

Between the four tenors, differences in inflection show personality and possible geographic accent. These stylistic choices would exist at any time in history. Covey-Crump and Hill pronounce their words in a highly cultivated manner. Daniels pronounces some syllables as if he were apprehensive in saying them, as if he were right by you and trying to be careful in his meaning, and other syllables he pulses firmly, expressing the utter conviction of his meaning. His pronunciation is not always as refined as Covey-Crump and Hill. Sting sings from his blue-collar upbringing, an honest delivery in identity and heart. Neither the level of vocal training nor the musical interpretation of the text would refute a historically informed performance.

Because recordings are artificially consumed compared to a live performance in a small setting with only yourself as the audience, the logic and philosophy of mixing the record must be addressed. In the recording age, the quality of the microphone, sound engineering, and mixing of the recorded tracks can elevate or deteriorate the perception of a recording. Sting's recording could have benefitted from the effects heard on the other three recordings. The microphone seems close to his mouth, making the sound capture too direct and void of ambience. When listening to Sting's entire album, the placement and levels of sound are easily digested. Only when listened in sequence with the other three recordings does the disparity of levels become revealing. When listening to live performances of Sting and Karamazov from a capture source somewhere in the audience, an effective ambience exists, stemming from slight movements by Sting as he emotes.

	Covey-Crump/Lindberg	Hill/Rooley/Jones	Daniels/Kenney	Sting/Karamazov
Year recorded	1988	1975	2011	2006
Label	BIS Records, Sweden	Decca, Universal Music Group, UK	Sony Music Entertainment	Deutsche Grammophon
Location	Petrus Church, Stocksund, Sweden			Steerpike Studios II Palagio, Italy
Atmosphere	sonorous, like a marble bathroom	empty chamber, non-smooth surfaces	cozy & personal room	sparsely furnished small chamber, close proximity
Mixing	voice somewhat in front	voice forward, followed by viol only slightly behind, and lute quite hidden	vocals comfortably close, lute pulled back	vocals very forward and lute only slightly behind.
Key	G	~Gb	Gb	G
Tempo	80-115bpm	81-114bpm	74-1044bpm	66-120bpm
Instruments	Lute	Lute, Bass Viol	Lute	1-2 Lutes
Verses	6	6	6	4
Duration	4:35	4:33	5:04	2:56
Vocal approach	light, high space, cultured, restrained, refined	stylized, placed, trapped, rigid, overprocessed	balanced, natural, unpressed, lightly processed	uncaricaturized, raw, unprocessed, natural, easy, unpressed
Age of vocalist at time of	44	31	51	55

Current audiences versed in music of times past commend the recordings of Covey-Crump, Hill, and Daniels. In this case, the presentations cohere with audience expectations. Comments found on YouTube postings of Sting singing “Come Again! Sweet Love” cover the range of approval and delight to negative criticism. Most of the posts include Sting with Karamazov, but there is a post with Sting collaborating with Joshua Bell and other famous classical musicians that show resentment in Sting’s crossover situation.<sup>13</sup> The bad comments

<sup>13</sup> Navarro Lorenzo, "Joshua Bell At Home With Friends," YouTube, last modified November 2011, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0M69VSy\\_cr8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0M69VSy_cr8).

focus on Sting's level of training as compared to the well-trained classical musicians. Sting's training and decades of performing cover other genres. He is not under skilled. Audiences of other genres tend to be less defensive of Sting's collaborations with artists at the top of their fields like Branford Marsalis. As a side note, the audio mix on this recording sets a pleasant balance in par with the recordings of Covey-Crump, Hill, and Daniels.

In the documentary of Sting's year-long study of lute playing and the music of Dowland, he expresses his nervousness in performing in a church for five hundred people.<sup>14</sup> Though he's performed for some of the world's largest audiences, he knows that he is presenting unlikely material to an audience that may or may not have the potential to accept what he wants to share. Whereas the general public of Dowland's time period may have heard his music in the town square, only elite, twenty-first century populations seek to hear Dowland's music, either through their own impetus to play recordings, or to attend an obscure early music ensemble in a cozy venue. If Sting, who can draw five thousand supporters to his events, can only draw five hundred to hear him croon in the style of a Baroque troubadour, then anyone wishing to expand present-day fandom of John Dowland would have to work intensely hard.

To some audiences, Sting's efforts have met with pleasant curiosity and general enthusiasm for the growth and reinvention of a career. To other audiences, Sting's trespassing into the realm of academic music have met with a flavor of prohibitiveness. Taking the initial desire to publish his songs for the general public, one could scarcely believe that Dowland would have forbidden Sting's immersion into his music or the consequent global gift of sharing.

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<sup>14</sup> Tatiana Draka, "Sting The Journey And The Labyrinth The Music of John Dow," YouTube, last modified July 2013, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t9BI\\_nRbeq4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t9BI_nRbeq4).

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