

Monika Mauch, Nigel North A Musical Banquet

Monika Mauch, soprano
Nigel North, lute

ECM New Series 1938

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In 1610, Robert Dowland published his anthology "A Musical Banquet", a unique collection of lute songs from England, France, Italy, and Spain, which was the first publication of its kind to contain songs in four different languages and styles. Robert Dowland (1586-1641) was the son of the famous and highly esteemed lutenist and lute composer, John Dowland (1563-1626). In 1610, John Dowland returned to London, having left his court position in Denmark. He continued waiting for a position at the English court, but it was not until 1612 that his talents were finally recognised. Since Robert Dowland was only 19 when he published the collection, it is most likely that the book is a collaboration of father and son.

Of the English Ayres in The Musical Banquet three are by John Dowland himself, including the famous and intensely melancholy "In darkness let me dwell". Two other themes characterise the songs which Robert Dowland chose: settings of Philip Sidney's poem "Astrophil and Stella" one of many love poems about Sidney's unfulfilled love for Penelope, Lady Rich. Secondly there is Robert Devereux, the Earl of Essex, the most notorious of Queen Elizabeth's young favourites.

John Dowland had travelled widely in Europe, and the English court was itself truly international with many visitors from abroad, so it is not at all surprising to find such gems as the exquisite French Airs by Guédron, versions of Italian monodic songs by the renowned Giulio Caccini (including "Amarilli, mia bella") side by side with the lyrical and rhythmically stimulating songs from Spain by anonymous composers.

Monika Mauch's and Nigel North's subtle recording of this important cross section of Renaissance European song offers a welcome addition to the ECM discography which has addressed music from the period around 1600 since almost twenty years. The first two issues of John Potter's Dowland project were dedicated to the music of John Dowland and his English and Italian contemporaries while both Rolf Lislevand's "Nuove musiche" (which borrowed its title from Giulio Caccini's famous publication) and Steven Stubbs' "Teatro Lirico" based their improvisational music on instrumental scores from the same era.

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German soprano **Monika Mauch** was last heard on ECM on the internationally successful Bach-CD "Morimur" alongside the Hilliard Ensemble and Christoph Poppen. Already during her studies in Trossingen and Paris she began specializing in early music and has worked with such groups as Ensemble Daedalus of Geneva, La Cappella Ducale of Cologne, the Ensemble Europeen William Byrd in Paris, les Cornets Noirs in Basel, the orchestra L'Arpa Festante of Munich, the l'Orfeo baroque orchestra of Linz and with Double Band under the direction of René Jacobs. English-born **Nigel North** counts among the foremost lutenists of our time. His extensive discography includes complete cycles of lute music by Bach and John Dowland

alongside many recordings with the ensemble Romanesca (with Andrew Manze and John Toll). North was professor for lute and early music at Guildhall School in London, and at the Hochschule der Künste Berlin before accepting his current posts at the Early Music Institute at Bloomington/Indiana (USA) and at the Royal conservatory Den Haag.

The collaboration between the two artists began after a meeting in Innsbruck in 2002. North, who had been planning to henceforth concentrate exclusively on solo recitals, asked the singer whether she would be prepared to work on several song programs with him. “Nigel heard me sing a Haydn cantata at that festival in Austria and I felt very honored when he proposed these projects because Nigel is a lutenist I had admired for long”, says Monika Mauch. “His style is immediately recognizable in its utmost clarity and cleanliness, every note is articulated and shaped individually. When we started making music together we frequently included selected songs from the ‘Musical Banquet’ in our concerts, and we became more and more fascinated with the spectrum of compositional styles and the interrelation between the different languages and the respective musical settings.”

For detailed information about the artists and their upcoming projects please visit:

<http://www.monika-mauch.de/>

<http://www.nigelnorth.com/>

CD-package includes 24-page illustrated booklet with an essay by Nigel North and all sung texts.