

Peter Warlock Society

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Professor Parrott outside 30 Tite Street (see p. 2)

THE UNVEILING OF THE CHELSEA PLAQUE

'And here, in this place, this sensitive composer died.'

The final words of the speech which Ian Parrott delivered before unveiling the GLC commemorative plaque at Warlock's last home, 12a (now 30) Tite Street, London SW3. The ceremony took place at 4 p.m. on December 10th. Ian Parrott and other Committee members were assembled on the pavement outside the house, together with some other members of the Society, and some representatives of the press. (Two doors along, a similar-style plaque commemorates Oscar Wilde.)

In the course of his address, Ian Parrott said: 'Ivor Gurney, who went to the War, died as a result of gas poisoning. Peter Warlock, who was a conscientious objector, also died of gas poisoning. Such is the strangeness of things. Whether he took his own life or not is still a matter for debate... Of one thing we can all now be certain, in the year in which he might feasibly have reached the age of 90: Peter Warlock, largely unrecognised in his short lifetime except for a few items, was a genius. If he was a miniaturist, he was, more than Grieg, a sensible miniaturist. As he wrote to van Dieren:

"I would rather spend my life trying to achieve one book of little songs that shall have a lasting fragrance, than pile up tome upon tome on the dusty shelves of the British Museum."

'His style absorbed such different idioms as those of Delius and Bartók - he was a champion of both - and it was refined by the influences of folk-song and the music, with its literature, of the first Elizabethan period, which he loved and often transcribed. The result was a strong, unmistakable and individual voice.

'Today', Ian Parrott continued, 'we salute a great composer who (as he said), born on the Embankment, returned to London and nearby in his final years. He had seen much of the Celtic countries and, indeed, wrote many of his maturest works at his mother's and stepfather's home, Cefn Bryntalch in Powys.

'His life was stormy and often controversial, but in the first year following his death two memorial concerts were given and further recognition has followed and grown... The future for his compositions looks bright.' Ian Parrott referred to the work of the Peter Warlock Society, with 'its present vigorous Committee', and to the collected edition of Warlock's music which is at present being published under its auspices.

DECEMBER 18, 1930
DAILY TELEGRAPH, THURSDAY,

PETER WARLOCK FOUND GASSED

FAMOUS COMPOSER'S
TRAGIC END

DISCOVERED BY HIS
WIFE

LETTERS AND A WILL

Mr. Philip Heseltine, better known as Peter Warlock, one of the most famous of English song-writers, was found dead in his flat, 12a, Tite-street, Chelsea, yesterday morning.

He had been gassed, and when the police entered they found him lying on a divan in what was known as the sun-parlour, a small conservatory-like apartment where he did much of his work.

A plug in a gas pipe in the fireplace had been removed.

On a table near the divan were letters in his own handwriting, and also a will which it is believed he drafted just before he died.

Peter Warlock had with his wife occupied the flat since last September. On Tuesday Mrs. Warlock left to spend the night with some friends, and it was on her return soon after ten o'clock in the morning that the tragedy was discovered.

THE BOLTED DOOR

She tried to unlock the door with her key, but to her amazement it was bolted on the inside. The police were immediately summoned, and they forced open the door, recovered the body, and with all haste removed it to St. Luke's Hospital, where the doctors said that death had already taken place.

SING-ALONG-A-WARLOCK

The same day as the unveiling of the plaque (10 December), there was another gathering which followed very appropriately, in the evening. It was at LAMDA (London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art), and was called *Sing-along-a-Warlock*; but in fact it turned out to be something more far-reaching than this flippant title might suggest. Patrick Mills writes about it. He was himself one of the performers, contributing two Warlock songs - *The Cricketers of Hambledon* (Did he say this was his favourite Warlock song? Or did we mishear?) and *The Countryman*. The latter was something of an eye-opener (or rather, ear-pricker-up): as Patrick explained, there have been so many genteel renderings of *The Countryman* that he felt it should be interpreted for once in a raw, rustic manner. The results were both amusing and healthily corrective! Here's what Patrick says about the occasion as a whole:



Not long ago, the Committee was expressing anxiety on its isolation from the wider membership of the Society. It is true that everyone is invited to the Annual General Meeting, an invitation which, unfortunately, most members find entirely resistable. It is therefore a source of infinite relief to discover a winning formula which, truth to tell, was staring us in the face if only we had thought of it before. It is based on the premise that many members of our Society sing in their bath; why not have a party where everybody could come and sing their favourite Warlock songs to each other? It seemed a good idea to a figure approaching a third of our membership, who could either bring their own accompanist, or entrust themselves to the nimble fingers of Anthony Ingle.

It is difficult to do justice to the cornucopia of talent that comprised this extremely enjoyable evening, which covered a wide range of Warlock's repertoire, *some things* more familiar than others. *Dedication*, for example, is perhaps an elaborate parody of the Drawing Room song. Or was it composed seriously? Who can say? Fred Tomlinson sang it with a sincere twinkle in his eye, and then joined Malcolm Rudland in a four-handed *Beethoven's Binge*. Other members, whom in many cases we had not had the pleasure of meeting before, included (in the order of our programme) Gordon Brenchley, Alice Wakefield (a particularly beautiful *Sleep*), David Candlin, Sarah Uren, beautifully accompanied by Gary Eyre, in *The Distracted Maid* and *Rutterkin*, Philip Stone, accompanied by Nina Walker (including a beautiful *Burd Ellen and Young Tamlane*), Jennifer Tatam (a rare chance to hear the exuberant *Chanson du Jour de Noël*), and Sandy Myles with Gary Eyre, who gave us the limpid nostalgia of *Hanacker Mill* and the rumbustious *Roister Doister*. It was a privilege to hear these accomplished singers, whose activities so very obviously lie far beyond singing in the bath.

The interval was spent in consuming the food, wine and excellent beer purchased only a few hours previously by the Chairman and the Treasurer at the local grocer. As I drank a little more than was entirely prudent, the second half of the proceedings comprise memories which are slightly blurred. I do recollect the première of a work by David Cox, entitled 'In praise of Marie Stopes'. Peter Warlock once wrote a letter to a publisher declining to write songs for the young, which developed into a diatribe against all children. What if Warlock had written a song based on these sentiments? As he never did, David decided to write it instead. It ended with the suitably outrageous flourish 'Ave Maria...Stopes!' Anthony Ingle, Malcolm Rudland and Ian Parrott took turns in performing the *Folk Song Preludes*, and then I think I sang something or other, or was it all a dream? The evening was satisfactorily rounded off by the singing of *Sociable Songs* in a chorus.

Our most grateful thanks are due to Anthony Ingle and the proprietors of LAMDA who gave us permission to use their premises.

Patrick Mills

THE FULL-ORCHESTRAL 'CAPRIOL' AT LAST

Despite the popularity of *Capriol* in its version for strings, performances of the version for full orchestra (which Warlock himself made) have been so rare as to be virtually non-existent. So it is good news indeed that the long-hoped-for Lyrita record is shortly to appear. It will contain, besides the full-orchestral *Capriol*, the *Serenade* and *An Old Song* - coupled with Holst's early and little-known *Suite de Ballet*. Performances are by the LPO under Braithwaite, and the LSO under Boult.

PUBLICATION NEWS

John Bishop writes:

Volume 3 of the Society's collected edition of Peter Warlock is now available, price £6 to members (plus postage). Those members who have asked to receive the volumes automatically as they are published should receive their copies (plus invoice) by the end of January. Anyone else who would like a copy should write to Thames Publishing, 14 Barlby Road, London W10 6AR, enclosing a cheque for £7.

Volume 4 is in hand, but it is unlikely that it will appear before the autumn of 1985.

Also available now from Thames is *Bernard van Dieren* - an introduction to the composer and his music by Alastair Chisholm, price £3.50 (plus 50p post and packing). Alastair Chisholm is a leading authority on van Dieren, and this booklet, which includes a memoir by Sacheverell Sitwell and a number of hitherto unpublished photographs, comes at a time when interest is steadily growing in the man who had such an influence on Warlock.

English music buffs might like to know that Thames have recently published books on York Bowen and Robin Milford. In active preparation is a book about George Butterworth, the centenary of whose birth falls this year. The author, as with the Milford book, is the Society's Ian Copley.

'CURLEW IN APRIL'

A BBC Radio thriller serial (by Edward Boyd) in six episodes, under this title, was broadcast in April and May last year. Very effectively, it used as signature tune and incidental music some of the purely instrumental parts of Warlock's *The Curlew*. Let's hope the composer wasn't turning in his grave!

WARLOCK AND FRIENDS

Malcolm Rudland writes:

Late on the warm summer night of 21 July last, at 10.30 pm, within earshot of Warlock's living quarters when he was at Christ Church, Oxford, could be heard a curious celebration of Wine and Warlock. Entitled "Beethoven's binge: Peter Warlock and friends", it was part of a Summer Weekend of English Music held under the auspices of the Gerald Finzi Trust. It was an intensive three days, including a workshop on Finzi's *Magnificat*, and recitals and lectures concentrating on early and contemporary twentieth-century English music. It was spread among several Oxford colleges with accommodation based at Pembroke College - whose College Hall was the venue for this Warlock celebration.

On presentation of a £3 ticket you were greeted with a glass of red wine which paved the way for a very exuberant and extrovert rendering of *Beethoven's Binge*. It was a good boisterous opener, but some of the humour was lost through inaccuracies and lack of attention to dynamic details and phrasing. Far more professionally presented was Bryan Robson's readings based around Rab Noolas's *Merry-go-Down*, and he was deservedly asked back for a further selection of readings in the second half. He is now head of the English Dept. at St Paul's School, Hammersmith, and had previously been a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company. His choice of other material was always most appropriate and his sense of timing and colouring of words was impeccable throughout.

Then came the serious section, with the soprano Cheryl Hawkins and Andrew Tillett accompanying her. Van Dieren's *Dream Pedlary* and Moeran's *In Youth is Pleasure* preceded a very convincing account of *Lillygay*. Just the right amount of distraction was captured in *The Distracted Maid*, and throughout, her diction and phrasing matched the sensitivity of her accompanist.



After the interval, Paul Spicer, the Weekend's organizing committee's chairman, coaxed and cajoled the audience into joining in half an hour of boisterous Sociable Songs. Mention was made of the Peter Warlock Society, and Robin Crofton and I received several enquiries, one of which has matured into a membership already. More wine, and copies of Vol.1 of the Thames publication were passed round (on sale or return), to each of the 100 or so audience and we were 'rehearsed' before Paul Spicer led the performance of each of the nine songs. Towards midnight the informality and conviviality would surely have been approved by Warlock, even in such Oxfordian surroundings; and although the programme billed that we were going to sing *The Lady's Birthday*, it fortunately was not attempted, for the rehearsals were without any soloists, and little more than read-throughs, though I do remember the final accounts of *Twelve Oxen* and *The Cricketers of Hambledon* as being quite convincing.

MORE 'WARLOCK AND FRIENDS'

Further to the news item on p. 4 - is it coincidence that the Ulster Orchestra, conducted by Brian Wright, will broadcast on BBC Radio3 two programmes of music by Warlock and composers with whom he was associated? On March 11, at 11.45 a.m., *An Old Song* and the string version of *Capriol* will be heard. And on March 18, at noon - yes, the full-orchestral *Capriol*; also the *Serenade*. Well worth noting in your diary.

THE NAUTICAL NIT

A nautical nit am I, tralala,
And I live on a sailor's chest.
I make all the ladies sigh, tralala,
And I travel from East to West.

I'm under the wind and sky, tralala,
Yet never I sleep alone,
For I've found a particular thigh, tralala,
And claimed it all for my own.

When oft in a foreign port, tralala,
My sailor goes ashore,
Together we have great sport, tralala,
Attacking the selfsame whore.

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— . —
A Warlock fragment

THE BALFOUR GARDINER CONNECTION

Strongly recommended to anybody interested in the musical life of this country in the early years of the 20th century - the recently-published book *H. Balfour Gardiner* by Stephen Lloyd (Cambridge University Press). Well written, beautifully researched, it vividly portrays the world of Balfour Gardiner and his friends - including the 'Frankfurt Group' of his student days (with Grainger, Quilter, Cyril Scott, Norman O'Neill) and his later friendships with Bax, Holst, Delius, and others. Gardiner emerges not as an important composer himself - he wasn't - but as an amazingly selfless patron of music and musicians, using his wealth to encourage and forward the work of other composers in whom he believed. One of his most remarkable and influential enterprises was the famous series of orchestral concerts of British music which he organised and financed out of his own pocket. His generosity also included paying for the first performance of Holst's *The Planets*. And when Delius was in financial difficulties, Gardiner bought his house in Grez-sur-Loing so that Delius and Jelka could go on living there... Then, later in life, Gardiner - always his own sternest critic - became disillusioned with composition, with music altogether, and turned away from it, to architecture and forestry... The whole remarkable story and the background detail make fascinating reading.

Philip Heseltine makes a number of appearances in the course of the book. He and Gardiner were friends: they met through the Delius connection - first through a performance of *Sea-Drift* at Birmingham in 1912. On 9 October that year, Heseltine (then 22) wrote to Colin Taylor:

On Thursday evening Balfour Gardiner turned up in his motor car to hear 'Sea Drift', and I had a long conversation with him after the concert: he is an extremely nice person - very cheerful and 'hearty'. He wants me to make a piano score of Delius's orchestral work 'Life's Dance' for him: he is going to perform it at his concerts next year. I have done about a quarter of it, but my progress with it is far from rapid, as it is frightfully complex: I am not surprised that B.G. wants a piano version, if he has to read such a score!

And Gardiner wrote to Heseltine when the arrangement was completed: 'You yourself will realise how much it will facilitate the study of the score, & especially the apprehension of the big lines in it: indeed, an arrangement such as you have made is almost indispensable to a conductor producing the work for the first time.' Heseltine, in return, was offered tickets for Gardiner's next series of concerts.

Later, Gardiner was discussing with Heseltine a piano duet version of Gardiner's *A Berkshire Idyll*. 'You must not let me thrust the work upon you', he wrote; 'but if, as you say, you like doing things of this sort - a strange taste, to my thinking - there it is, and I should be delighted to have your transcription.' But, characteristically, Gardiner's enthusiasm for his own music quickly evaporated, and

the transcription was never made.

When Heseltine, in 1913, briefly went up to Christ Church, Oxford, where he experienced only 'depression and stagnation', he was at least able to keep in touch with Gardiner, who had a house only 22 miles away - Ashampstead. Writing to a friend, Heseltine tells of Gardiner coming to tea with him one day and bringing proof sheets of *The Song of the High Hills*. Gardiner commissioned Heseltine to make a piano arrangement of that Delius work. Delius later described the arrangement as 'wonderfully good in parts', but was (perhaps unreasonably) worried about certain things eliminated in the arrangement. Completeness versus practicality, in other words.

Early in 1914 Gardiner and Heseltine saw a good deal of each other. They went to concerts - at one of which Gardiner introduced Heseltine to the critic Ernest Newman, who gave some advice. Heseltine had by now started composing songs, and was asking Gardiner's opinion of them. He wrote to a friend: 'I actually pushbiked 30 miles in the sweltering heat to see Gardiner! He was in a very genial mood, and was also most encouraging about the songs - this pleased me greatly, being unexpected, since his views on song-writing and mine are widely divergent! He and Delius and I are all going to Wales together in July...'

Gardiner strongly recommended study with Holst, but nothing came of this. Until 1925 Heseltine sought Gardiner's opinion of his compositions. Despite their friendship, Gardiner was not particularly sympathetic: there seems to be no evidence that he ever promoted any Warlock works in the way that he did with certain other British composers. For him, apparently, the early-music influences made it all sound contrived, and he detected a 'hardness' in the settings. Also, van Dieren's music, a powerful influence for PH, left Gardiner cold, or even mentally distressed.

Such, briefly, is an impression of the Gardiner-Heseltine friendship, of which there is a good deal more in Stephen Lloyd's book. All members of the Society are urged to try to get hold of the book - from libraries if you can't afford the outrageous price of £27.50 !

D.C.

EH?

In so far as (Britten's) *A Boy was Born* was a choral work based on a traditional Christian theme, it was part of the heritage of Holst and Vaughan Williams. Where it differs from other attempts to evoke a relatively remote past is in the absence of either nostalgia or inhibition. The ripe chromaticism of Bax's or Peter Warlock's settings of medieval poems carries with it the knowledge that one is shut out from such single-mindedness; while Holst achieves it only by a denial of the lyrical warmth man needs to live by...

Wilfrid Mellers in *Man and his Music* (1962)

Warlock and the Lute

GARY EYRE, a member of the Society, writes about his visit to the famous lutenist Diana Poulton, who had once visited Warlock and discussed the lute, a very important instrument in his work as transcriber of early music.

It was on a bleak autumn afternoon that I trekked from Watford to speak with Diana Poulton (President of the Lute Society) about her encounters - or perhaps I should say encounter - with Peter Warlock. Unfortunately, I had been led to think that Diana had been a close acquaintance of PW and that he had actually persuaded her to learn the lute. The truth of the matter was that they had only met on one occasion in Eynsford, Kent, and it was in reality the first time that PW had heard the lute. In spite of this disappointment, however, my visit was far from unrewarding: Diana talked in a most illuminating manner about her experiences in music and her trials and tribulations in the lutenist's world. However, I will refrain from quoting our good hour or more of chat and use only the material relating to Warlock.

Diana Poulton 'John Goss (the singer) was a great friend of mine: we did a lot of work together in the early days - broadcasting and so on - and he suggested that Peter Warlock would be interested to meet me; so we arranged it, and went down together to Eynsford in about 1927. I did my first broadcast in 1926 and I seem to remember our meeting being in the following year. In fact, Peter Warlock had never heard a lute until I played to him. At that time, I was about the only person who was playing the lute, so he was very interested to hear it. John and I did some songs for him and then he reached under the bed at the side of his room and brought out this enormous boxful of things and said they may be useful to me. At that time, there was hardly any of this music published and what there was was nearly all published in transcription without the tablature, so I was very glad to have this material.'

I asked Diana how PW had responded to her playing :-

'Oh, he liked it very much and I think he was very pleased to hear the sound of the instrument, because you see when he transcribed these things, then he would play them on the piano and of course it has a very, very different effect. This very intimate relationship between the voice and the lute is quite different from the relationship of a piano and the human voice and he was very taken with this; so I think that is why he gave me all this stuff and I used a lot of this.'

Diana kindly loaned me the manuscripts, which have been bound in two volumes under the title 'Elizabethan Manuscripts of Peter Warlock and Philip Wilson'. The larger part of it is in Philip Wilson's handwriting (and, incidentally, in pencil) but there are numerous items in PW's handwriting, notably :-

- a) a list of 292 transcriptions
- b) Robert Jones - 'Ultimum Vale' (Tablature and transcription)
- c) Robert Jones - 'My love bound me with a kiss' (Transcription)
- d) Other Robert Jones tablatures
- e) Rosseter - 'Shall I come?' (Transcription)
- f) Corkine - 'Sweet, let me goe!' (transcription)

Even with his profound knowledge of Elizabethan music, I wondered, since he had never heard the lute up to this point, how his tablature and transcriptions were regarded by lutenists. This was Diana's reply:

'Well, in some ways it was not altogether satisfactory. For instance, he didn't always realize the complete implications of tablature, not in a way that one realizes them oneself when one actually works from it - and he would sometimes for instance make a note held for longer than it's possible to hold it on the lute, either because you're putting your left-hand finger on another note on the same string or that it's an impossible stretch. The lute that Arnold Dolmetsch lent me was a very big one, one that would now be treated as a bass lute and I developed this enormous stretch - it's bigger

than any I know; I can in fact get a right-angle at every finger because Dolmetsch would never tolerate my letting go of notes that ought to be held on, so somehow or other I had to do it. If I couldn't stretch it to hold the note, certainly nobody else could stretch it. As far as the notes were concerned, his transcriptions were accurate, but it's just a question of these things which someone who actually plays the lute would understand.'

PW was very aware, despite the misunderstandings mentioned, that the modern editor should remain faithful to the original score. As he says in *The English Ayre* :-

'There is an admirable poem by Samuel Butler on this subject, and it is pleasant to think of Butler in Elysium, conducting a choir of all the composers of the past whose works have been maltreated by irresponsible editors, in a choral setting of these lines (which were originally prefixed to Butler's cantata "Narcissus"), alightly adapted to suit the requirements of the particular circumstances :

*'May he be damned for evermore
Who tampers with a printed score;
May he by poisonous snakes be bitten
Who writes more parts than what we've written.
We tried to make our music clear
For those who sing and those who hear,
Not lost and muddled up and drowned
In turgid 'pianistic' sound;
So kindly leave the work alone
Or do it as we want it done.'*

I was intrigued to know if Diana Poulton had formed any opinions of PW as a person, but understandably, one encounter almost sixty years ago is hardly likely to provide us with any depth of insight into his complex make-up. She said :

'We talked all the time about the music of this period and of course he was very interested not only in the songs that John and I performed, but in the solo pieces that I played... As far as it went, all that I saw of him was this man who was extremely interested in what John and I were doing, and what I was doing, and the sort of effects that it had.'

In his book *The Music of Peter Warlock*, Ian Copley tells us that 'Warlock was planning a life of Dowland at the time of his death. He was hoping - finances permitting - to research in Denmark. One can only regret that the journey was never made nor the book written.'

Diana Poulton knew of PW's interest in Dowland and of the many articles and prefaces he had written on this musical genius. Perhaps this had some bearing on the fact that Diana subsequently wrote a book on Dowland herself.

'The music of John Dowland' by Philip Heseltine is, sadly, a title we shall never see on our bookshelves. It is perhaps wrong to surmise on the subject, but it is hard to deny that a critical document by the greatest English songwriter of the 20th century on an equally great one of three centuries earlier, would have been a priceless and invaluable treasure to us all.

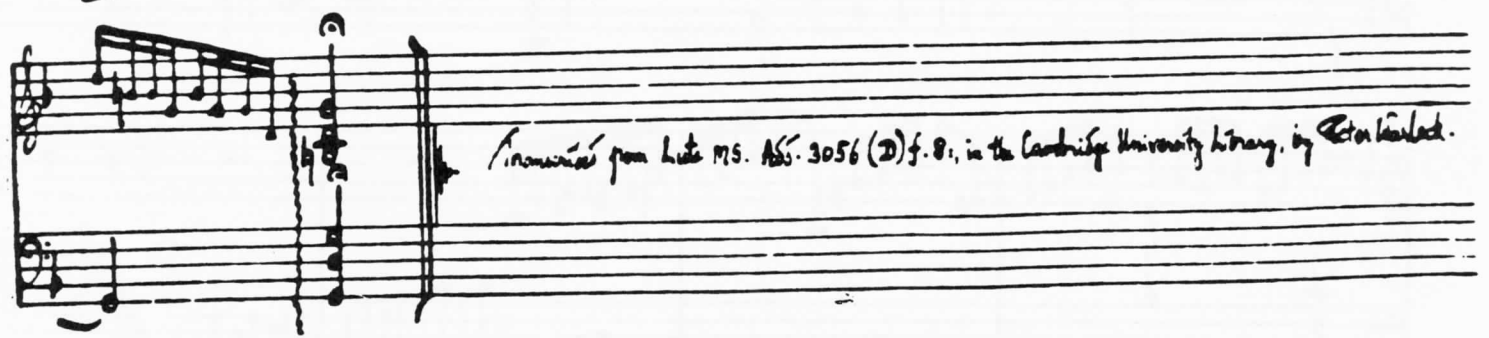
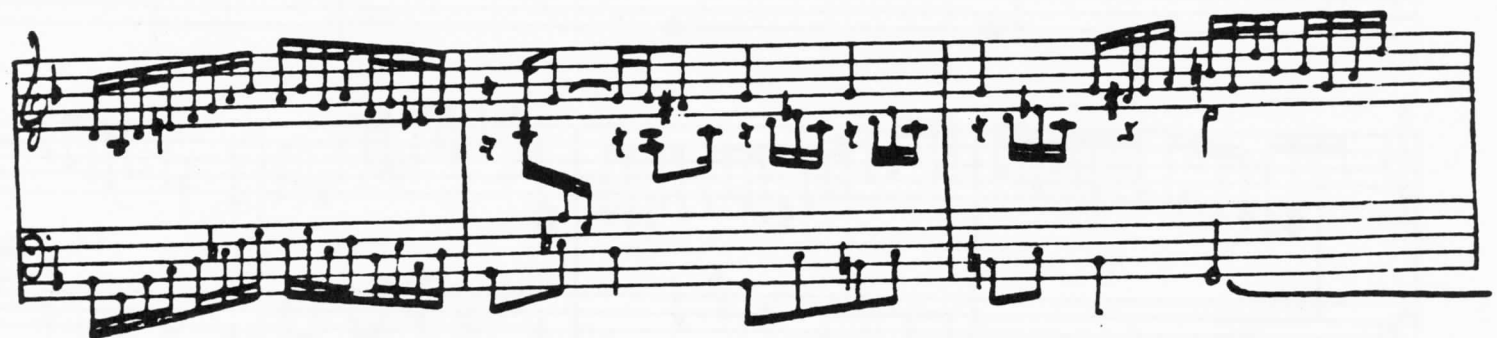
The following - 'A Fancy' by John Dowland - is a transcription made by Warlock from a Cambridge manuscript.

111
A Fancy

JOHN BOWLAND

(Not too slow)





Transcribed from Lute MS. A.65. 3056 (D) f. 81, in the Cambridge University Library, by Peter Warlock.