

# The First Booke of Songs or Ayres (1605)

## Commentary

Francis Pilkington is a lute song composer who is not quite as well known but, in my opinion, on the same level as Thomas Morley, Thomas Campion, Philip Rosseter, Alfonso Ferrabosco, and the like, both musically and poetically. So I am pleased to put out this edition of his book of Ayres.

The original is well printed (for the time) and clearly legible. It lacks fingering notations apart from slashes indicating when a note is to be held. There appear to be almost no errors in the original – unusual for the time.

### Punctuation and Spelling

In 1605, there was still no standard of English orthography. The first dictionary of English had come out in 1604, but there was no reliable standard of English orthography until Samuel Johnson's dictionary of 1755. Elizabethan writers spelled words any way they felt like spelling them, sometimes using different spellings within the same paragraph. People even spelled their own names in a fairly random fashion. I have used modern spelling in this edition.

Punctuation of the time generally indicated rhythm rather than syntax. A comma was a short pause, a colon a longer pause, a period still longer, etc. The semicolon had only been in existence for a brief period of time. Pilkington confined himself to using the comma, the colon, and the period. He did not use the question mark, apostrophe, quotation marks, or exclamation mark. Maybe the typesetter didn't have these symbols. In any case, in this edition of the songs, I have chosen to use modern syntactical punctuation to clarify the meaning. I realize this requires a little editorial interpretation, but I think it is worth it, and of course the reader or singer can consult the [original](#) if any question arises.

### Elizabethan English Terms

Pilkington seems to use more than his share of archaic terms. Here are some Elizabethan terms, with what I think they mean:

#### 1. Now peep bo peep

prove, approve  
faunt  
sprite

usually means "experience"  
faint?  
spirit

#### 2. My choice is made

change  
list  
sooth  
humor

take a new lover  
choose, prefer  
sweet, soothing?  
state of mind?

vain	empty
mean	moderation, as in Aristotle's Golden Mean
blouds	blouds, dashing young men, rakes
frames	arranges
remove	move
3. Can she disdain	
thrald	slavery?
froward	stubborn
Love	when capitalized, usually means Cupid
4. Alas, fair face	
again	back, in return
onely	uniquely
5. Whither so fast	
whether	whither
woodbind	honeysuckle
clipping	hugging
gainsay	deny, contradict
telltale	tattletale
hearbe	here be?
6. Rest, sweet nymphs	
whiles	whilst
7. Ay me! She frowns	
lower	scowl
8. Now let her change	
change	take a new lover
9. Underneath a cypress shade	
Myrrha's son	Adonis, god of vegetation, sometime lover of Venus
Seaborn Queen	Venus rising from the waves
10. Sound woeful plaints	
estate	state
repine	discontent
11. You that pine	
vain	empty
pent	confined
12. Look, mistress mine	
attending	awaiting
13. Climb, O heart	

falth	falleth, falls
arrant	errand
warrant	protector?
T'sore	???
14. Thanks, gentle moon	
Zephirus	the north wind
blasts	gusts
twining	entwining
frame	order, structure
undergo	suppress?
15. I sigh as sure	
suit	courtship
sorry	wretched
frid	???
smart	pain
prove	experience, turn out to be
conceit	witty expression or thought
froward	stubborn
16. Down a down	
fancy	fantasy
accord	state of harmony
17. Diaphenia	
daffdowndillie	daffodil
prove	try
careful	caring
requite	return
18. Beauty sat bathing	
fond	foolish
feature	shape
fashion	the way something is formed
19. Music, dear solace	
ebon	ebony
secluse	a secluded place?
attire	clothes
attire	clothe
rebounding	resounding, re-echoing
rear	raise?
attone	attune
20. With fragrant flowers	
clime	region

balm  
record  
weeds

aromatic oil  
sing, warble  
garments

21. Come all you that draw

condole  
tane  
timely  
sith  
drerements  
accords

commiserate  
taken  
early  
since  
drear events???  
chords

### **Musical Editing**

Pilkington's lute parts are written for a 7-course lute in G, with the 7<sup>th</sup> course tuned top D. However, since most lutenists probably play an 8-course lute, and these songs are easier on that instrument, I have arranged the lute parts for 8-courses, with bass courses tuned to F and D. Someone playing a 7-, 9-, or 10-course lute can easily make the necessary adjustments.

I have used modern time signatures. Since Pilkington does not clarify what he intends by the time signatures he provides, my notations are my best guess on this point as well. For "key signatures", Pilkington confines himself to none, one, or two flats. I have chosen key signatures arbitrarily to minimize accidentals.

Barring is mostly Pilkington's but sometimes editorial, to avoid excessive switching between time signatures and also to satisfy the dictates of my software.

There are occasional discrepancies between the 4-part vocal version of a song and the tablature. I have made some arbitrary decisions about which to choose. I have also corrected some apparent errors in the music. In each case, I have noted the variance from the original.

### **Text Underlay**

Pilkington is usually quite clear on text underlay, at least for the first verse of each song. Since the rhythm is quite consistent throughout the verses, that makes the text underlay unusually easy. A small exception is than when a word or phrase repeats in the first verse, it doesn't always make sense to have the repeat come at exactly the same place in subsequent verses. For instance, in Song 19, "Music, dear solace", bars 12 and 13, in the first verse we have:

"such that whilst she doth, she doth vouchsafe her ebon"

and in the second, we have put:

"hear, and such the concord, concord diapasons"

instead of exactly following the first verse underlay with:

"hear, and such the con-, the concord diapasons"

Here again, a bit of editorial license comes into play. The only major underlay problem occurs in Song 18, where there are a lot of “hey nonnies” and such with repeat signs that don’t specify exactly what the underlay is supposed to be for the repeats. My version is largely guesswork, here. The reader can look at the original and decide for him/herself.

I hope you enjoy this wonderful music!

Sarge Gerbode, Editor  
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