

Germany and Denmark. It was shortly before his offer of work in Denmark that he published *The First Booke of Songes or Ayres of Foure Partes with Tabelture for the Lute* in 1597, and it was an outstanding success, confirming his position at the forefront of English musical life.

The First Booke was reprinted at least four times between its first publication and 1613, and was published in a style used by later sets of lute songs. Previously, a composer may have compiled four separate partbooks, with each separate book containing the music for one voice or instrument. However, the 'table-book format' solved the problems of combining lute and staff notations in a printed collection and allowed for a variety of different domestic performance possibilities (see example *right*). They can be performed by one person singing the vocal line while accompanying themselves on the lute. Alternatively, they can be sung by a group of singers (as a part-song), with instruments such as viols replacing or reinforcing any of the vocal parts.

The edition that you use should show the lute tablature underneath the vocal part. It would be helpful to use an edition that also shows a piano version of the lute part, so that you can easily play and sing through some of the songs. While you will not be expected to interpret lute tablature, it is useful to understand how the notation works.

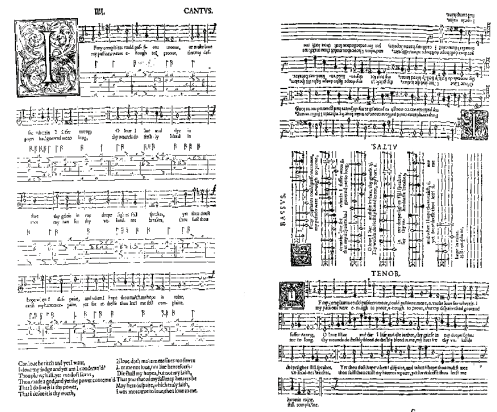
The beginning of the first song in your edition may look similar to the example shown *right*.

There is a C clef printed before the vocal staff. This shows that Dowland's original manuscript used this clef and that the music has therefore been transcribed into the more familiar treble clef by a modern editor. These 'movable C-clefs' work in exactly the same way as the modern alto and tenor clefs: the middle point of the clef (where the two semi-circles join) indicates middle C.

The lute part looks rather more formidable but it is not hard to understand. Like guitar tablature, the lute tablature tells you which string and fret to play. Dowland, in his youth, would have learned to play a lute with six pairs of strings (called *courses*) that would be tuned to the notes shown *right*.

Each line on the lute tablature represents one of the six courses, the top line showing the highest-pitched course. A seventh course sometimes appears below the tablature (Dowland's songs often require this seventh course), using what you would recognise as a ledger line. The letters 'a' to 'f' tell the lute player which fret to put their finger behind. The letter 'a' means that the string should be played unfretted, 'b' is the first fret, 'c' is the second fret and so on. In older editions, the 'c' may look like an 'r'.

Finally, the flags above the lute tablature show the relative rhythms used in the piece. A single flag represents a note that has been transcribed as a minim; two flags shows a crotchet and a three flags indicates quavers. (If there is no flag, then the previous note length is repeated.) This is not an exhaustive guide to lute tablature, but should allow you to gain a basic understanding of the notation.



Understanding the score

The edition used for this study is published by Stainer and Bell, edited by Edmund H. Fellows and revised by Thurston Dart.

Pitches of the six courses

