

*Documentation for
John Dowland's*

Frog Galliard

*Arranged for small harp
and performed by
Lady Isolde de Lengadoc*

Background

Although representations of harp performance are common in medieval art and literature, very little remains of written harp music from the medieval and renaissance eras.¹ There is reason to believe, however, that crossover may have existed between plucked-string repertoire in general, which makes renaissance lute music a reasonable resource for fleshing out our collection of early harp music. Lute and harp was a popular duet pairing in period,² which necessarily means that these instruments had music in common. There is also the fascinating case of a piece written by Alonso Mudarra for vihuela³, “Fantasia Que Contrahaze la harpa en la manera de Ludovico,” which imitates the musical style of a then-famous harp soloist, Ludovico. Because of this, I decided to embark on a project arranging renaissance lute music for harp.

The repertoire for small harp is not only lacking in authentic early music, it’s also quite spare when it comes to technically challenging pieces. For this reason, I was drawn to the lute music of John Dowland. The Dowland Folger MS is a collection of songs, many of which are hand-written by John Dowland, the famous Elizabethan lutenist, sometime prior to 1594.⁴ There are 61 pieces, including several fragments and two duets, that range in difficulty from fairly basic to blisteringly difficult. I intend to arrange the entire manuscript, minus the fragments, for small harp.

Different versions of “Frog Galliard” were published in subsequent collections by Dowland, but I think this version is quite well suited to being played on the small harp. Originally, this tune was written to accompany the poem “Now, oh now I needs must part,” by an unknown author (the author of the text is not listed in the editions of John Dowland’s work that include “Frog Galliard”). This and several other versions of “Frog Galliard” are, however, composed for instrumental performance, and the piece has always been most popular as an instrumental piece.

“Now, oh now I needs must part” has nothing to do with Frogs, and I have not been able to find a satisfying explanation for why this piece is titled “Frog Galliard.” The galliard is a dance form, on which many pieces were composed, much like the pavane or the jig. One scholar speculates that the title may refer to the hopping quality of the dance form. I do not find this entirely satisfying, as no other galliards are associated with frogs. Thus, the association with frogs remains a mystery.

This is a long-term project, and so I am presenting here only the first of the several pieces I’ve already arranged – Frog Galliard, one of the most famous of John Dowland’s compositions. Though by no means the most difficult piece in the manuscript, it is certainly more technically challenging than any printed music I’ve found for small harp.

¹ The Robert ap Huw manuscript, published shortly after 1613, contains music for the Welsh wire strung harp. The only piece of music published for the continental gut-strung harp that I’m aware of is a piece by Alonso Mudarra for “harp or organ,” published in 1546.

² McGee, Timothy J. “Untexted Repertoire.” *A Performer’s Guide to Medieval Music*. Ed. Ross W Duffin. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000. pp 448-453.

³ A plucked-string instrument similar to the guitar.

⁴ Craig-McFeely, Julia. “English Lute Manuscripts and Scribes 1530-1630.” <http://www.cs.dartmouth.edu/~wbc/julia/ap1/Folger.htm>

I am displaying a selection from the piece in lute tablature next to the first page of my arrangement for harp, for comparison. Complete versions of both are included at the end of this documentation, and you can listen to a recording of me playing the piece through the cleverly concealed CD player.

Musical Notation

The Folger MS is recorded in lute tablature. This notation is completely indecipherable to musicians familiar only with modern staff notation, but to someone holding a lute, it soon becomes quite clear and far more useful than staff notation. You will note what looks like a staff in the tablature with hash-marks above it.



The staff is actually a diagram of the lute's fretboard. Each space in (and just above) the staff represents a string. The letters on the staff represent where on the neck of the lute a string should be fretted. The hash-marks above the string represent the duration of the note being sounded, giving the rhythm of the piece.

So while staff notation tells a musician which notes to play, and leaves the how up to the musician, lute tablature tells musicians exactly what to do with their hands, but doesn't give an immediate indication of the note that will sound. So in order to arrange a piece, one must first transcribe it from tablature into staff notation.

This is extremely difficult to do when one is not holding a lute, and I do not own a lute. Fortunately, there is already a faithful grand-staff transcription of the Folger MS available online.⁵ This transcription has a legible tablature transcription of Dowland's scrawl over the staff, so by using both the staff notation, the tablature and a facsimile of the manuscript, I was able to create a faithful arrangement.

Musical Considerations

In arranging this piece, I tried to stay as faithful as possible to the original Dowland composition, and I think I succeeded quite well. It was, of course, necessary to arrange, and not merely transcribe the piece, to account for differences between the lute and the harp. In the end, I was able to produce a version of "Frog Galliard" that I think is faithful to what an Elizabethan harpist would have played. The piece is arranged for a single-row 22-string harp with no levers, which is consistent with harps played in the Elizabethan era.⁶

The simplest difference between the harp and the lute is range – the lute's range is larger. In order to fit the song onto my harp, it was necessary to transcribe the entire piece up a fourth, which luckily landed the piece in C major – an easy key for a harpist with no

⁵ <http://musickshandmade.com/lute/collections/view/139>

⁶ For a good overview of the development of the early harp, see chapter 6 of Roslyn Rensch's *Harps and Harpists*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989. pp114-152.

levers (there are no sharps or flats in the key of C). I also raised some of the bass notes either by an octave or to some other note in the chord (see, for instance, measure 7).



A gothic harp, the type of harp that would have played a duet with a lute during Dowland's time, would have had between 22 and 30 strings (30 was rare, 26 was common). I chose to arrange it for 22, so that it could be played on any size folk harp (22 is the smallest readily-available size for folk harps). Played on a gothic harp, this piece will sound an octave lower than what you hear on my nylon-strung harp and will have a warmer, more complex tone. A gothic harp is currently being made for me, and although I love my folk harp, I can't wait to play this piece on a period instrument.

The difference between lute and harp most obvious to a player is chromaticism. On a fretted instrument, it is possible to play a chromatic scale, with a full compliment of sharps and flats. On a single-row harp, this is not possible without levers, and harps in period did not have levers.⁷ Double-strung harps, which were popular in the baroque era, were coming into vogue during Dowland's time and allowed a great deal of chromaticism. However at the time that Dowland was writing music, they were not as popular or widespread as their single-strung counterparts, and they are extremely difficult for a modern harpist to find. For this reason, I decided to arrange the piece for single-strung harp.

This required some creative arranging in certain passages. There is a key change at measure 33 that is a crucial part of the piece. By leaving out no more than one note per chord, or by moving up instead of down to lead to a new chord, I was able to preserve the modulation without the F and C sharps in the strict transcription. I employed a similar technique in the last section of the piece.



Frog Galliard transposed into C, otherwise unchanged.



Transposed and modified to eliminate accidentals.

The one accidental I couldn't leave out was part of the key change at measure 49. This section includes runs in which a B flat plays a major role. Once I realized that there are no Bs played by the left hand up until this point, I was able to split the runs between two octaves, letting the left hand play the parts containing B flats and the right hand play the parts with no Bs. This not only preserved the key change completely, but it created an



Measures 49 and 50 of the final arrangement. Note the separation of the lines over two octaves to preserve the accidental.

⁷ Hook harps, the precursor to lever harps, were not developed until the 18th century. Rensch, 134.

interesting call-and-response effect reminiscent of the vocal polyphony of about the same time (for instance, Thomas Ravenscroft).

Lute tablature gives a player a very clear idea of which notes should be sounded by which finger, but modern staff notation does not, and a harpist clearly employs a very different hand technique than a lutenist. Although one might think it necessary to make concessions to technique, changing notes so that they will be easier for a harpist to play, this is not the case at all – once I'd arranged the piece to fit on a harp, I found it to be challenging but easily fingerable. No notes have been changed to make the piece easier to play. You will, however, notice numbers above the staff in some places. These are indications of which fingers should sound which notes in passages I thought might not be completely intuitive. Such fingering markings are quite typical in harp music, but fingering is ultimately at the discretion of the performer.

Frog Galliard

by John Dowland
Arr. Isolde de Lengadoc

Tune low B flat

8

8

15

15

21

21

Frog Galliard

26 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 4 3

31 3 3 3

38

45 3 2 1 4 3 2

3 2 1 4 3 2 1

51 1

Frog Galliard

56

2 3 2 1 2 3 2 1

1 1

4 3 2 1 1

56

4 1

60

2 3 2 1 2 3 2 1

3 2 1 3

2 3 2 1 2 4 3 2 1

4 3 2 1 2 1 3

2

4 2 1 3

1 2 3

60

