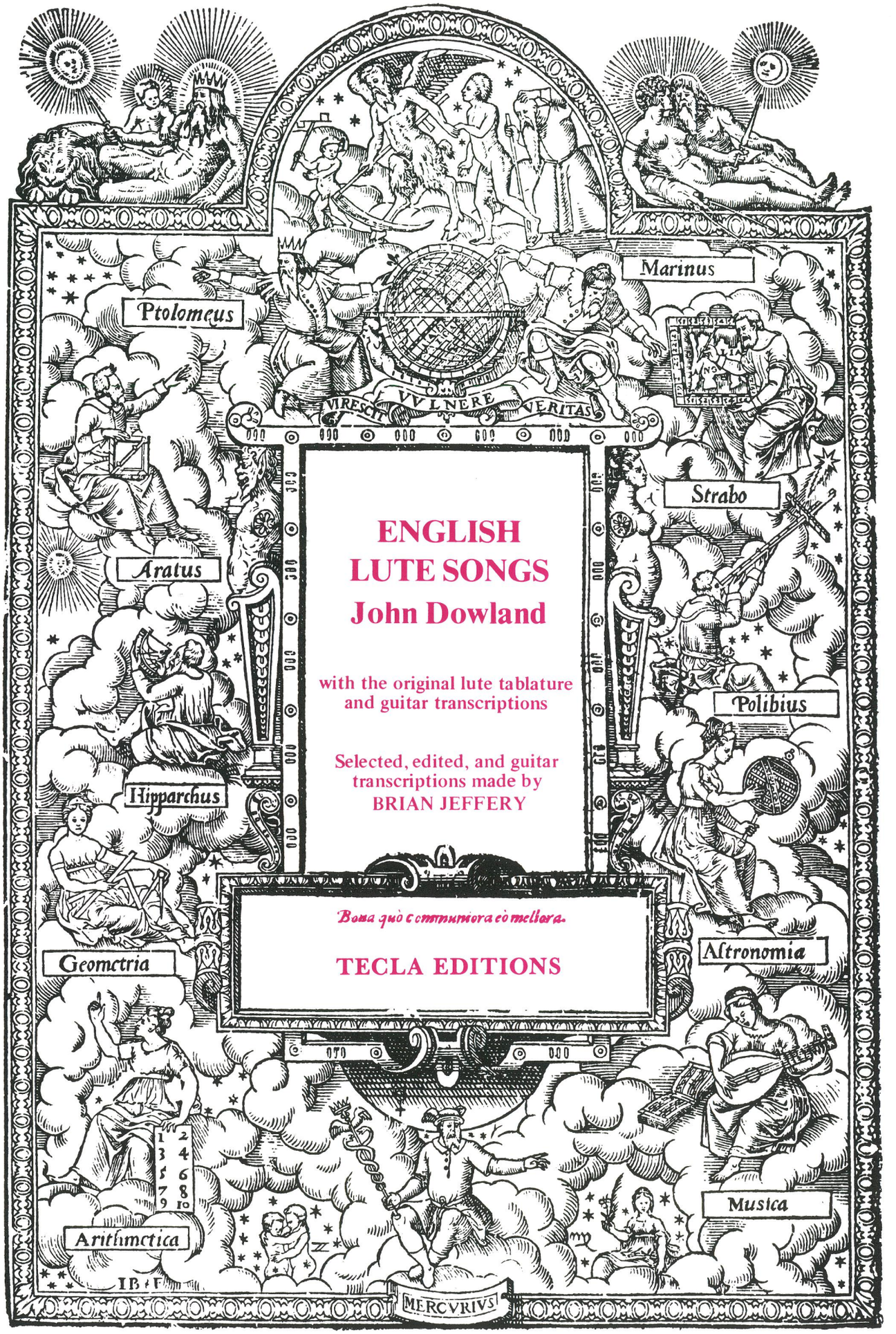

ENGLISH LUTE SONGS

John Dowland

with the original lute tablature
and guitar transcriptions

Selected, edited, and guitar
transcriptions made by
BRIAN JEFFERY

Bona quò communiora eò meliora.

TECLA EDITIONS

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TECLA EDITIONS

BRIAN JEFFERY was born in London and educated at Oxford, and has taught at the University of St Andrews in Scotland, the University of California at Berkeley, and elsewhere. He has published extensively, especially in the fields of Renaissance poetry and music, lute, and guitar. His editions of poetry and music, which include newly discovered Spanish songs by Fernando Sor, Francis Pilkington's Complete Works for lute, and Dowland's lute music arranged for guitar, have earned a reputation for respect for the original texts and for reliability of detail.

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his book contains twelve of the most beautiful songs of John Dowland, the greatest song-writer of Elizabethan and Jacobean England and an exact contemporary of Shakespeare. It includes not only some of his best-known and favourite songs such as 'Come again, sweet Love doth now invite', 'Flow not so fast, ye fountains' and 'Awake, sweet love', but also some of the finest songs from his late period such as 'Sweet, stay awhile' (with words attributed to John Donne), 'To ask for all thy love', and 'Stay, Time, awhile thy flying'.

Dowland lived from 1563 to 1626, and travelled a great deal, being for a time court lutenist to King Christian IV of Denmark, before returning to England. He became famous throughout Europe, above all for his pavane called 'Lachrimae', which in the form of a song is called 'Flow, my tears' and is included in this collection. His pieces for solo lute include dances and fantasias which by putting extreme gloom and extreme liveliness side by side or even by combining them together show the same taste for paradox as do some of these songs.

Paradox and playing on words were indeed characteristic of the age in which Dowland lived. In this collection, for example, the words of 'Flow, my tears' express totally unrestrained grief, yet the music is in the form of a grave, measured and stately pavane. 'I saw my lady weep' describes the poet's beloved weeping, but shows the beauty that can lie in sadness. 'Sleep, wayward thoughts' plays with the word 'love': 'So sleeps my love (his beloved), and yet my love (his love for her) doth wake'. The poets are nearly all anonymous. Dowland's music fully complements the poetry and far from simply echoing the sense of the words, makes a new work of art out of the combination of words and music.

Dowland published four books of lute songs, containing between them 85 songs. The present collection includes three songs from each of the four books. A word of warning: today they are usually known specifically as lute songs, but in the original publications, there are not only a voice part and a lute part, but often also three more voice parts, allowing for performance as part-songs without a lute at all. In many cases, Dowland may well have composed the part-song version first and only afterwards rearranged the three lower voices to make a part for solo lute which could accompany the top voice as an alternative method of performance. In order to demonstrate this, we are printing on pages 4-5 a photograph of the original version of 'Shall I sue', showing how the book could be laid open and used by singers sitting around three sides of a table.

In this collection, spelling, barring, and punctuation have been modernised and the tablature has been newly written out. Apart from that, the voice line and the tablature are exactly as Dowland published them. Newly arranged guitar transcriptions are provided. All of the songs have been meticulously checked against the original editions, and there are explanations of any difficult passages in the words. We are grateful to Brian Jordan of Early Music Centre Publications for kind collaboration in this edition.

PERFORMANCE

Any of these songs can be performed in three ways:

1 Best of all, with lute accompaniment reading from the tablature. Lute tablature is easy to read and takes very little time to learn, and for those as yet unfamiliar with it, instructions on how to read it are given on the next page.

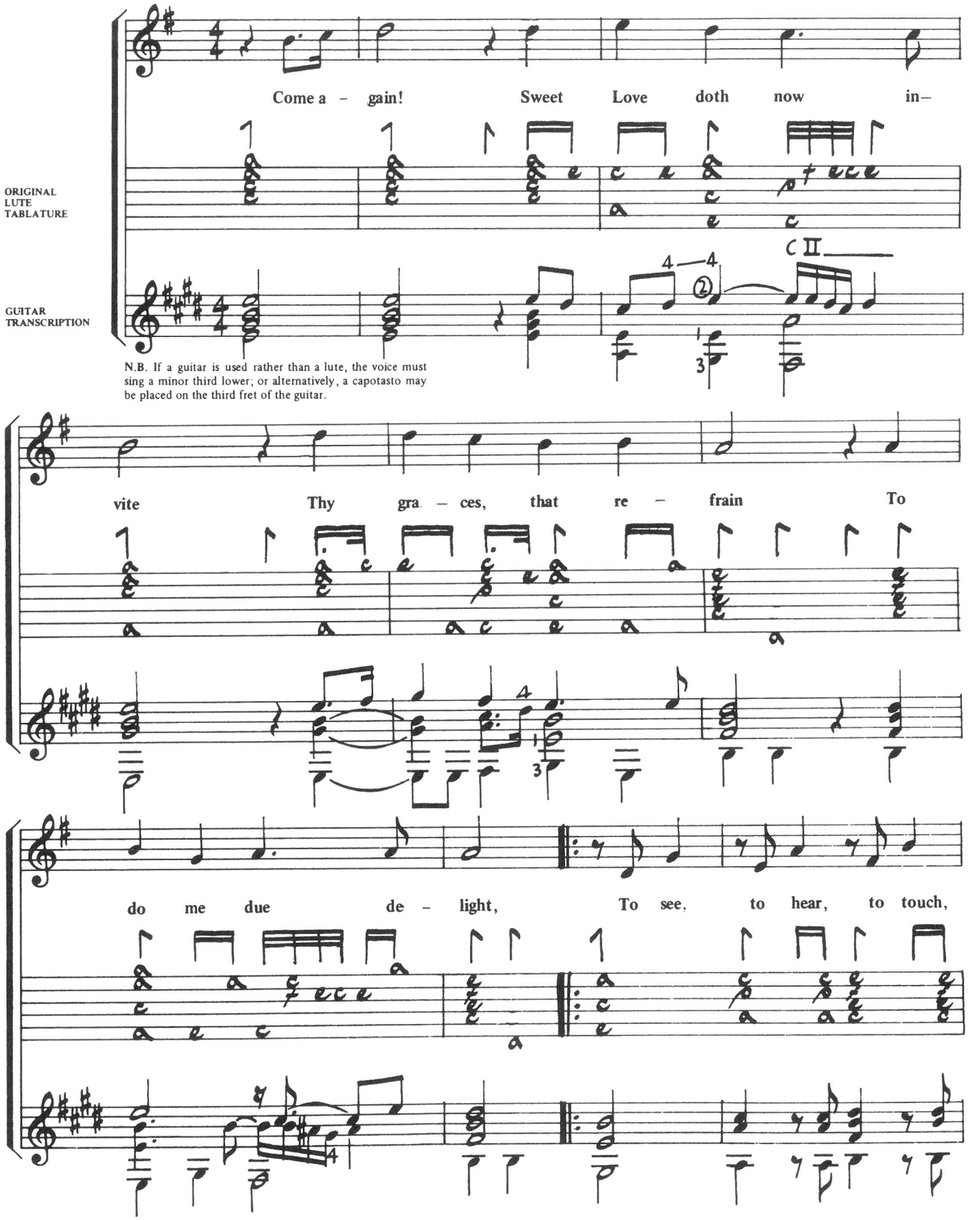
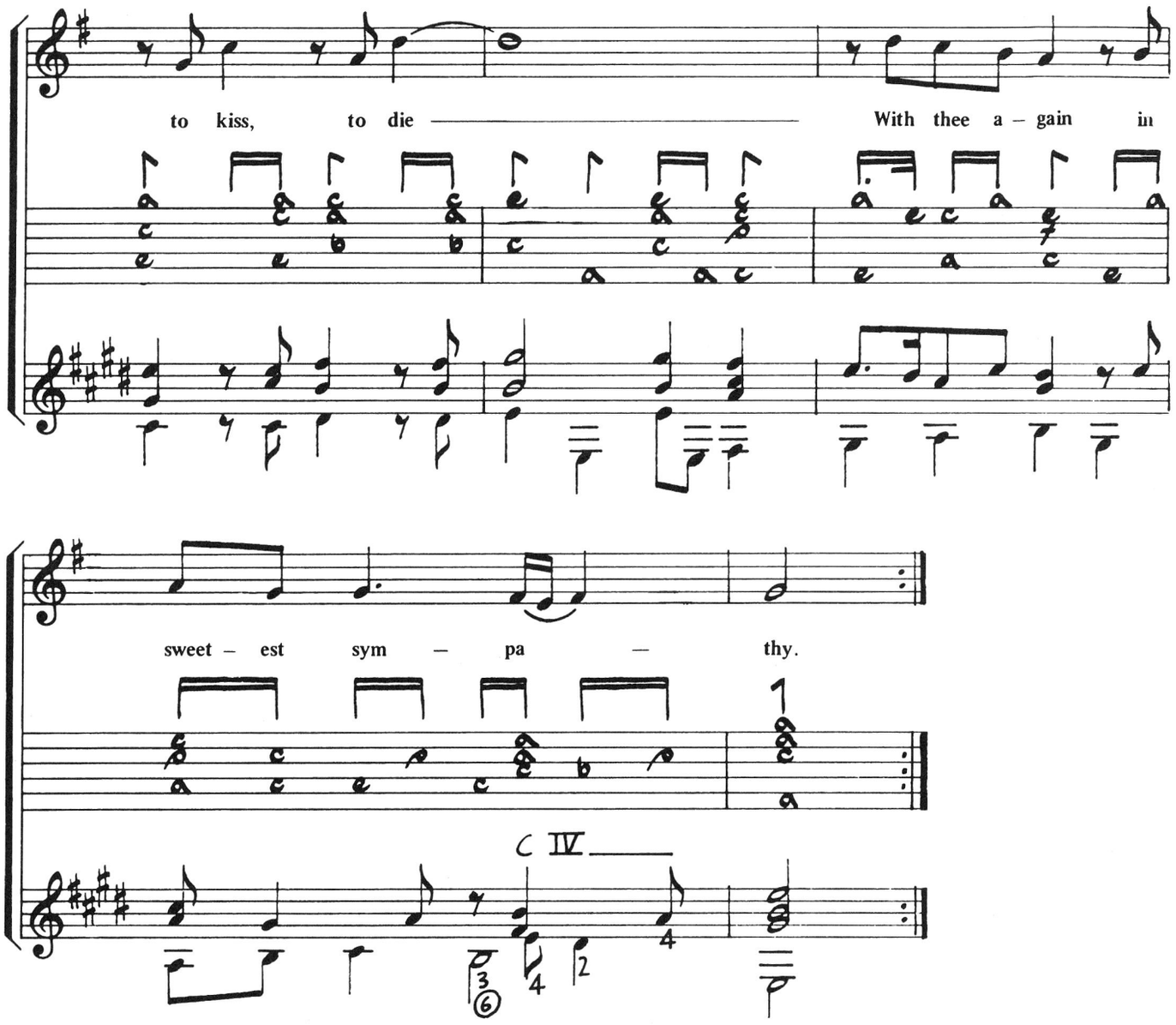
2 With guitar accompaniment, reading from the tablature. If you read from the tablature and use a guitar, the third string should be tuned down from G to F sharp, and then the six strings of the guitar will have the same relative tuning as the six courses of the lute. However, because the guitar is tuned in E rather than the lute's G, either the voice will have to sing a minor third lower, or a capotasto may be placed on the third fret of the guitar.

A very few notes are played on the seventh course of the lute: if a guitar is used, these notes will have to be played an octave up or omitted.

3 With guitar accompaniment, reading from the guitar transcriptions. These transcriptions have been made for the guitar in its normal tuning (without the third string tuned down), and so sometimes the fingers do not fall as naturally on the frets as they do in Dowland's original tablature version; but they are all perfectly playable and have been provided for those who prefer not to read from tablature. Some fingerings are given when they can be helpful. In some cases, either the voice must sing a minor third lower or a capotasto must be placed on the third fret. Of course, any song may be transposed upwards at will by placing a capotasto on a higher fret.

Come again! sweet Love doth now invite

The First Booke of Songes or Ayres (1597), no. 17.

The poem expresses the despair of a rejected lover, who can get only disdain from 'her eyes of fire, her heart of flint', and begs Cupid to release him from his fruitless love. 'Come again' does not mean so much 'Come once more' but rather, sadly, 'Come back'. So the music, which at first sight seems cheerful, is in fact contrasting the longed-for joys of love with the hopelessness of not possessing them. 'Love' in the first and last stanzas means Cupid, the god of love. In stanzas 3–6, the last line is two syllables short, and in performance this problem can be solved by repeating 'her frowns', 'the storms', 'whom tears', and 'while she'.

N.B. If a guitar is used rather than a lute, the voice must sing a minor third lower; or alternatively, a capotasto may be placed on the third fret of the guitar.

1 Come again! sweet Love doth now invite
Thy graces, that refrain
To do me due delight,
To see, to hear, to touch, to kiss, to die
With thee again in sweetest sympathy.

2 Come again! that I may cease to mourn
Through thy unkind disdain,
For now left and forlorn
I sit, I sigh, I weep, I faint, I die
In deadly pain and endless misery.

3 All the day the sun that lends me shine
By frowns doth cause me pine,
And feeds me with delay;
Her smiles my springs that makes my joy to grow;
Her frowns the winters of my woe.

4 All the night my sleeps are full of dreams,
My eyes are full of streams,
My heart takes no delight
To see the fruits and joys that some do find,
And mark the storms are me assigned.

5 Out alas! my faith is ever true;
Yet will she never rue,
Nor yield me any grace.
Her eyes of fire, her heart of flint is made,
Whom tears nor truth may once invade.

6 Gentle Love, draw forth thy wounding dart,
Thou canst not pierce her heart;
For I, that do approve,
By sighs and tears more hot than are thy shafts
Did tempt, while she for triumph laughs.