

University of Denver

## Digital Commons @ DU

---

Musicology and Ethnomusicology: Student  
Scholarship

Musicology and Ethnomusicology

---

11-2018

### The French Air de Cour and the English Ayre

Audrey Oden

University of Denver, Audrey.Oden@du.edu

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.du.edu/musicology\\_student](https://digitalcommons.du.edu/musicology_student)



Part of the [Musicology Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Oden, Audrey, "The French Air de Cour and the English Ayre" (2018). *Musicology and Ethnomusicology: Student Scholarship*. 19.

[https://digitalcommons.du.edu/musicology\\_student/19](https://digitalcommons.du.edu/musicology_student/19)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License](#).

This Bibliography is brought to you for free and open access by the Musicology and Ethnomusicology at Digital Commons @ DU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Musicology and Ethnomusicology: Student Scholarship by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ DU. For more information, please contact [jennifer.cox@du.edu](mailto:jennifer.cox@du.edu), [dig-commons@du.edu](mailto:dig-commons@du.edu).

---

## The French Air de Cour and the English Ayre

## **The French *Air de Cour* and the English *Ayre***

This project aims to explore the relationship between French *airs de cour* and English *ayres* (or *airs*) in the early 17th century. Although the first collection of *airs de cour* was published in 1571 by Adrian LeRoy, *airs de cour* were most popular in the 17th century during the reign of Louis the XIII, with composers the Pierre Guédron, Antoine Boësset and Etienne Moulinié. The popularity of the English *ayre* began with John Dowland's publication *First Booke of Songes or Ayres* in 1597 and continued with composers such as Thomas Campion and John Danyel. There are apparent similarities between these songs and influences between the two. It seems the term *air* was popularized by the French and made its way to England. Both songs are strophic and tend to use homophonic textures. This project will investigate the similarities, differences, and influences between these songs by focusing primarily on *airs* with lute accompaniment by French composers Pierre Guédron, Antoine Boësset and Etienne Moulinié, and English composers John Dowland, Thomas Campion and John Danyel.

**Baron, John H. 2001 "Air de cour." *Grove Music Online*. Edited by Deane Root. 16 Oct. 2018. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.**

This article gives a concise overview of the *air de cour*, which includes important influences and publications in the genre. The influence of *voix de ville* and *musique mesurée* are prevalent in the *air de cour*, especially in the compositions of Adrian LeRoy and Pierre Guédron. *Airs de cour* were most popular in the 17th century during the reign of Louis the XIII and this is when the majority of the publications took place. Compositions by Pierre Guédron, Gabriel Bataille, Antoine Boësset, and Etienne Moulinié were included in the publications. Also, the bibliography of this article provides important resources relation to the *air de cour*.

**Bataille, Gabriel. *Airs de Differents Autheurs, mis en tablature de luth, par Gabriel Bataille.* Paris, 1608. Petrucci Music Library.**

This is the first book Gabriel Bataille published with arrangements of *airs* for solo voice and lute accompaniment. *Airs de Differents Autheurs mis en tablature de luth* was published in 1608 and set the trend of arranging *airs de cour* with lute accompaniment. This book contains nearly eighty monodic songs with lute tablature. The only composer mentioned in this book is Pierre Guédron, but we can assume he is not the only composer Bataille arranged based on the title of this publication. Some of the composers in this book will remain anonymous, but compositions by Bataille and Guédron's son-in-law, Antoine Boësset, are also included.

**Coren, Pamela. "Singing and silence: female persona in the English ayre." *Renaissance Studies* 16, no. 4 (December 2002): 525-547.**

This article discusses the, "role of ayres in the lives of women." There are two aspects to this discussion: the likelihood of women reading *ayres* and female persona in *ayres* created by composers, such as William Corkine, John Danyel, Thomas Campion, and Robert Jones. This source provides insight to the lyrical contents of English *ayres* from a musicological perspective, and more specifically, a feminist perspective.

**Dowland, John. *The First Booke of Songes or Ayres of fowre partes, with Tableture for the Lute.* London, 1597. Petrucci Music Library.**

John Dowland's *First Booke of Songes or Ayres* was the first publication of *ayres*. According to the title page, these songs are written for four voices and can be accompanied by lute, orpharion, or viol da gamba. Although these songs are written for four voices, it is not necessary for all the voices to be sung together. Each song provides two pages; the first page is a solo vocal melody with lute accompaniment and the second page provides the other three

voice parts facing different directions performers can read from the same copy. This is an important primary resource, because it is the first collection of English *ayres* to be published.

**Fischlin, Daniel** “‘Sighes and Teares Make Life to Last’: The Purgation of Grief and Death Through Trope in the English Ayre.” *Criticism* 38, no. 1 (Winter 1996): 1-25.

This article explores the poetics of elegiac *ayres*, particularly the ones by John Dowland. More specifically, how lyricists of the English *ayre* handle the topic of death through the literary expression of their own morality. Fischlin offers a unique, analytical perspective on the poetry of English *ayres*, specifically the elegiac *ayres*. This facet of the English *ayre* is important to consider when studying the subject as a whole.

**Fortune, Nigel, David Greer, and Charles Dill.** 2001 "Air (i)." *Grove Music Online*. Edited by Deane Root. 16 Oct. 2018. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

The most important section in this article is, “The English ‘ayre’, 1597-1650,” which discusses the history and significant composers of the English *ayre*. Although this article focuses heavily on John Dowland, it includes other composers such as Campion, Danyel, Rosseter, Jones, Pilkington, and Ferrabosco. This article also examines the influences of the English *ayre* and suggests the French *air de cour* had an important influence on John Dowland, the leading composer of the English *ayre*. Additionally, the bibliography of this article provides a broad range of resources on the subject.

**Gibson, Kirsten.** “The order of the book: materiality, narrative and authorial voice in John Dowland's *First Booke of Songes or Ayres*.” *Renaissance Studies* 26, no. 1 (February 2012): 13-33.

In this article, Gibson explores the meaning behind the order of songs in John Dowland's *First Booke of Songes or Ayres*. Gibson states, “The songs in the First Booke do not appear to be

organized by musical characteristics,” but “the collection does, however demonstrate a level of literary and thematic organization.” This article focuses on the poetics of Dowland’s *ayres*, specifically the organization of themes within the book and the context of these themes in the culture of the day.

**Le Cocq, Jonathan. “The Early Air de Cour, the Theorbo, and the Continuo Principle in France.” In *From Renaissance to Baroque*, edited by Jonathan Wainwright and Peter Holman, 173-190. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005.**

This article challenges the assumption that the use of basso continuo arrived in France in the 1640s or 1650s, which is rather late compared to Italian or English publications. The first true appearance of basso continuo accompaniment for the *air de cour* is in Antoine Boësset’s seventh book published in 1630. Le Cocq argues that there were earlier occurrences of basso continuo in *airs de cour*, but it was not clearly stated in the score. For example, Pierre Guédron’s publication in 1617 has “untexed basslines” and his publication in 1608 is written for “superious and bassus.” Le Cocq suggests that the, “late appearance of continuo in France has as much or more to do with printing conventions as it does with musical practice.” This is a significant idea to acknowledge when comparing the differences between English *ayre* and the French *air de cour*.

**Resick, Georgine. “The Turbulent Century and the *air de cour* (1576-1661),” In *French Vocal Literature: Repertoire in Context*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018.**

The purpose of this book is to expose vocalists to lesser-known composers outside of the standard repertoire and to contextualize French vocal genres in the entirety of French vocal literature. The chapter discussing *airs de cour* is concise and informative, providing general historical backgrounds and overviews of a few select composers. Resick focuses on the composers Pierre Guédron, Gabriel Bataille, Antonie Boësset, and Etienne Moulinié, examining

their publications and discussing the style of the composers. This chapter offers a unique perspective on the *air de cour* by providing insight to a vocalist's observations about the genre.

**Spring, Matthew. "The Development of the French Lute Style." In *From Renaissance to Baroque*, edited by Jonathan Wainwright and Peter Holman, 173-190. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005.**

Although this essay does not focus on the *air de cour*, it explores the development of the lute in France at this time. Specifically, Spring analyzes the solo lute music of Nicolas Vallet, Robert Ballard, and Pierre Ballard, who were composing during era of the *air de cour*. Additionally, Spring says the ten-course lute was, "the type of lute normally required for the 27 volumes of *airs de cour* published between 1608 and 1632." This is an important fact to consider when comparing the French *air de cour* and the English *ayre*.

—. "The Lute in Song Accompaniment," In *The Lute in Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

The chapter titled "The Lute in Song Accompaniment" explores the songs of John Dowland and other composers of Dowland's time, including Thomas Campion and John Danyel. Spring's approach to discussing these songs is to ignore the poetic aspects of the *ayres* and focus on the songs from the perspective of a lutenist. An important aspect to this chapter is the discussion John Dowland's influences for the *ayre*, which include the French *air de cour*, the Italian recitative style, consort songs and madrigal intabulations, and instrumental dance music. Spring also explores the stylistic differences between English *ayre* composers, such as John Dowland and Thomas Campion.

**Tunley, David. "Tunings and transpositions in the early 17th-century lute air—some implications." *Early Music* 21, no. 2 (May 1993): 203-209.**

In this article, Tunley argues *airs de cour*, specifically in Gabriel Bataille's publications, were transposed lower for ease of playing and singing. The tessitura of certain songs would not have been suited for amateur singers and alternative tunings are suggested by Tunley to make the vocal parts easier.