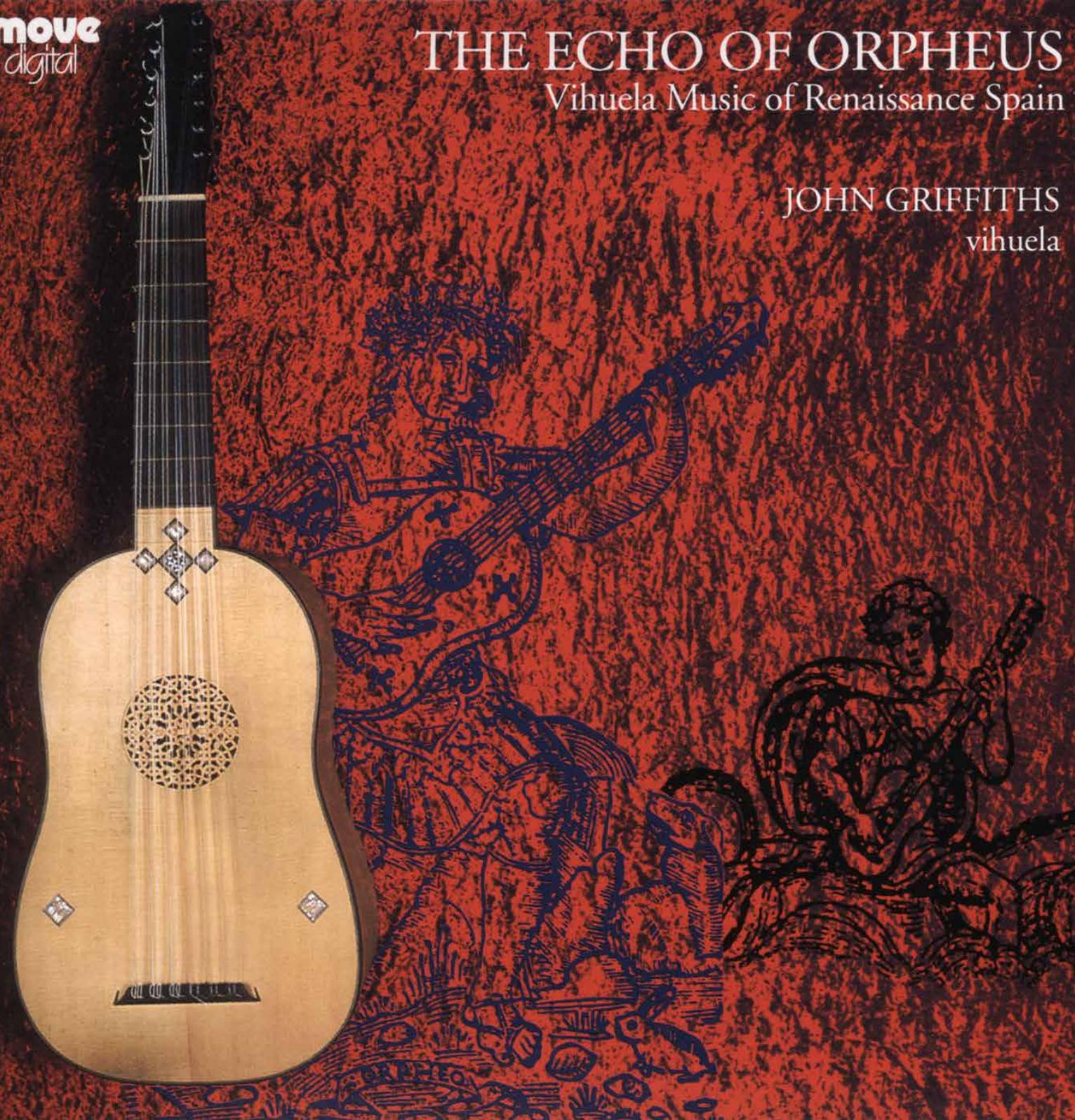


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# THE ECHO OF ORPHEUS

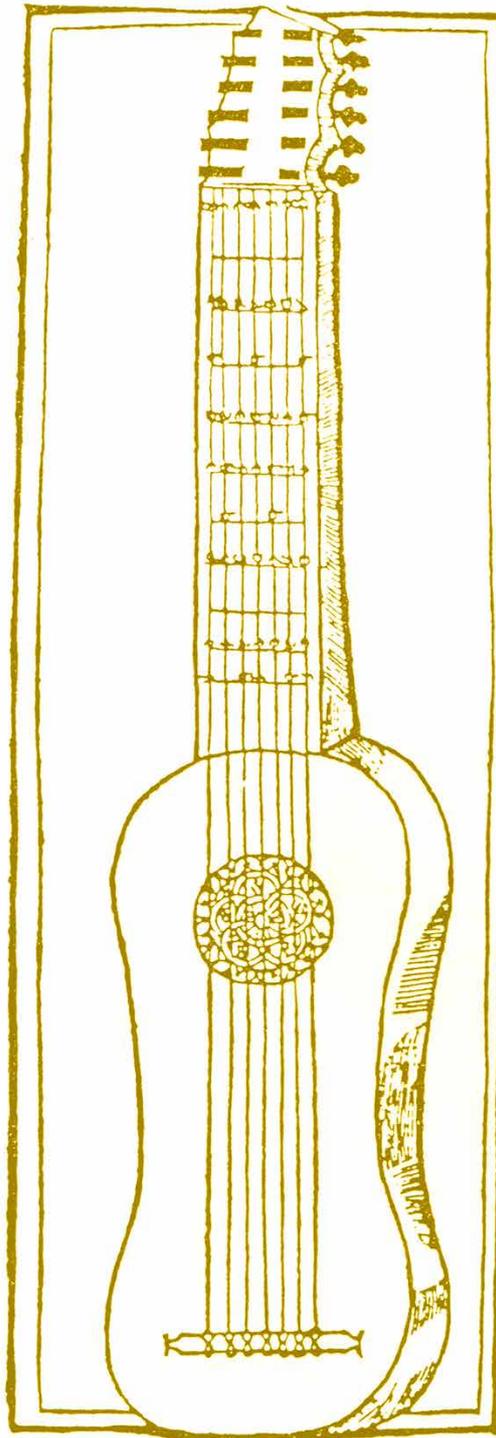
Vihuela Music of Renaissance Spain

JOHN GRIFFITHS  
vihuela



TO MUSICIANS IN 16TH-CENTURY SPAIN, the vihuela de mano was the spiritual reincarnation of the ancient lyre and an evocation of Orpheus, its greatest legendary exponent. Classical allusions that acknowledge this heritage stemming from both the ancient and mythological worlds are embedded in the titles of most of the surviving vihuela anthologies and, if not present in their names, are clearly invoked in their prefatory essays. No more apt recognition of this patriarchy can be found than the description of Luis Milán who, in the earliest vihuela book *El Maestro* (1536), placed the following inscription in the border of an illustration of Orpheus playing the vihuela: *El grande Orpheo, primero inventor, por quien la vihuela paresce en el mundo. Si el fue primero, no fue sin segundo, pues Dios es de todos, de todo hazedor*— “The great Orpheus, the first inventor, by whom the vihuela appears in the world. If he were the first, he was not without a successor, for God is of all, creator of all.”

With only thinly-veiled egotism, Milán invokes the renaissance spirit of rebirth in suggesting himself as the inheritor of Orpheus’ powers. Some eighteen years later, in 1554, Miguel de Fuenllana paid similar homage to the legendary son of Thrace with greater humility, simply naming his vihuela book *Orphenica lyra*, the lyre of Orpheus. Other authors chose similar titles to suggest diverse images of the classical world: Narváez’s *Los seys libros del Delphín* (1538) draws on the legend



of Arion, Valderrábano’s *Silva de sirenas* (1547) refers to the sirens whose song overpowered the warrior Ulysses, and Daza’s *El Parnasso* (1576) is named after the mountain home of the classical gods.

The preferred solo instrument of both the nobility and the educated bourgeoisie of sixteenth-century Spain, the vihuela de mano flourished both at court and in middle-class homes, played by professional musicians and amateurs alike. It brought solace and repose to Spanish ears in the same manner as did the lute across the remainder of Europe, and it also flourished in southern Italy. Of Aragonese parentage, the vihuela evolved in eastern Spain in the closing decades of the 15th century from the Moorish rebab. Early vihuelas appear to have been used primarily for providing chordal accompaniments for the sung recitation of popular ballads. By the early 16th century, the plucked vihuela de mano had detached itself from its bowed cousin and evolved into an independent instrument, with its own solo repertory. It flourished for a century before becoming eclipsed by a new fashion for simple strummed guitar music early in the 17th century.

The vihuela reflects the humanistic climate of renaissance Spain, an amalgam of classical spirit and contemporary musical practice. Its music encompasses the gamut of human affections in accord with ancient theory, and it utilises musical

forms closely allied with classical notions of rhetorical declamation. Vihuela music also draws from several 16th-century traditions; secular and sacred, native and imported, improvisatory and learned.

The complex polyphony of Josquin's generation transmitted to Spain from the Low Countries early in the century was central to the development of the vihuela repertory, particularly the genre of freely invented fantasia. Copious numbers of intabulations of vocal music—masses, motets and secular works—also reflect the vihuelists' love of imitative counterpoint.

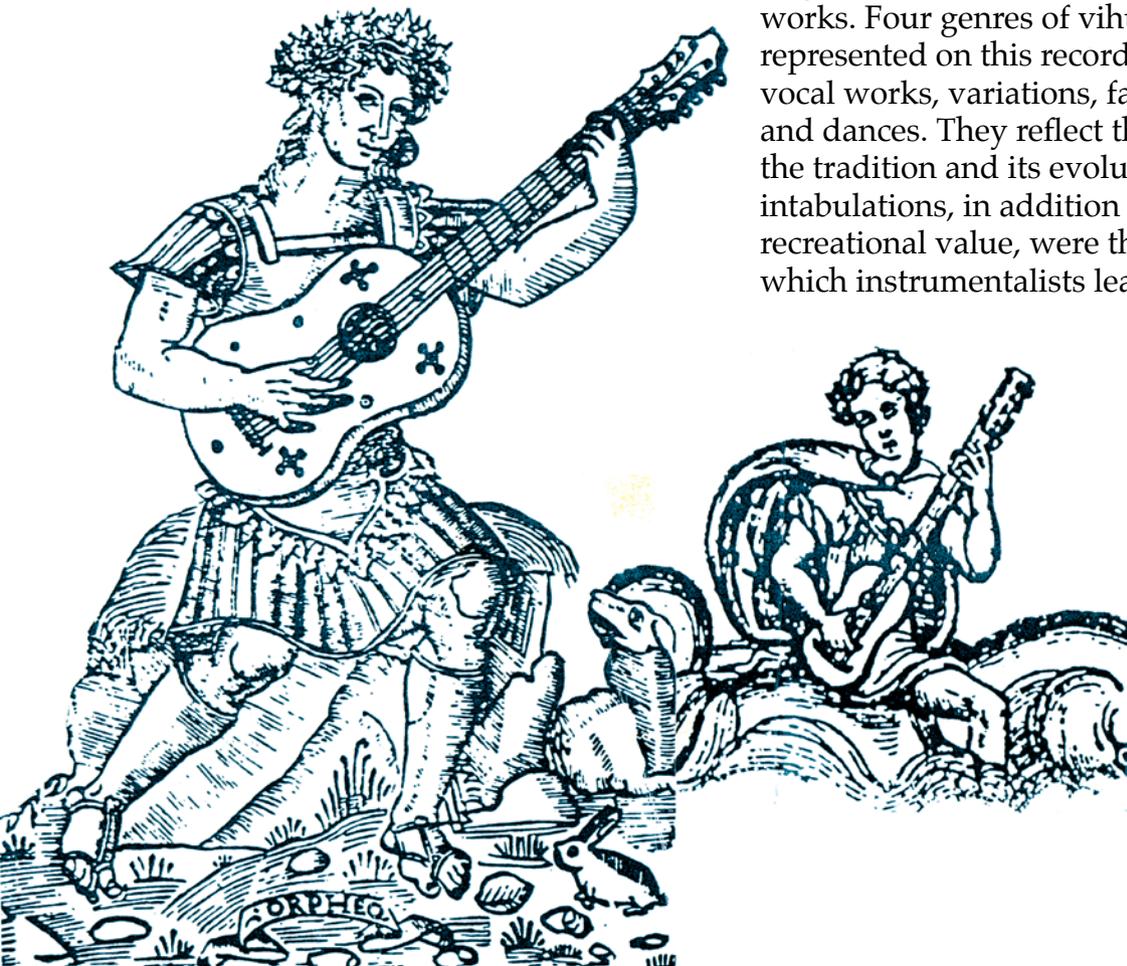
Native traditions provided a second source of inspiration. Extemporised accompaniments to long strophic ballads (*romances*) were formalised into sets of variations, dance music flourished, and traces of a tradition of instrumental improvisation pervade the entire repertory.

The vihuela's repertory survives principally in seven books printed between 1536 and 1576, as well as some manuscript fragments. Between them, they contain some seven hundred works. Four genres of vihuela music are represented on this recording: intabulated vocal works, variations, fantasias, and dances. They reflect the origins of the tradition and its evolution. Vocal intabulations, in addition to their purely recreational value, were the means by which instrumentalists learned to emulate

the leading composers of their age. In contrast to this, the variation comes from an improvisatory instrumental tradition, from a practice that existed long before it was ever written down. Variations were composed on popular chord sequences of the time that gained their common names from the names of the romances commonly sung to them.

The variations in Narváez's vihuela book are the earliest written examples in European music history. The sophisticated vocal counterpoint and the idiomatic virtuosity of the improvised tradition are fused together in the fantasia, a form with no fixed structure that "proceeds according to the fantasy of its author," as Luis Milán explained it. Each composer's style of composition is thus quite distinct, although a strong tendency for vihuelists to rely increasingly on vocally-derived counterpoint is evident. Surprisingly little dance music is contained in the vihuela books compared with the instrumental repertoires of other countries, although dancing was as common a pastime in Spain as elsewhere and probably belonged to an unwritten tradition.

The music of the first three vihuelists on this recording is drawn from the books published in the Castilian city of Valladolid, a strong cultural and political centre during the empire of Charles V and Philip II. **Luis de Narváez** (c.1505–c.1549), a native of Granada, was associated with Valladolid, probably due to his patron



Francisco de los Cobos, secretary of Charles V, who moved to the court in 1538, the same year that Narváez's book was published there. From the 1540s he was attached to the musical chapel of the future king, Philip II, in whose retinue he travelled abroad on at least two occasions. His settings of *Guárdame las vacas* and *Conde Claros* are variations on harmonic schemes originally associated with the *romances* after which they are named. They are highly idiomatic and draw cleverly from the innate resources of the instrument.

The more studied side of Narvaez's art is seen in the exquisite polyphony of three of his imitative *Fantasias*. **Esteban Daza** (c.1537–c.1591) was the eldest child of large middle-class Valladolid family. He was not a professional musician, yet his music is by no means that of an amateur. The *Fantasias* in modes 3 and six show the deftness of his imitative contrapuntal style, while the *Fantasia de passos largos para desemvoluer las manos*—"in long passages to develop the hands"—alternates imitative sections with passage work of a more improvisatory nature. *Gritos daua la morenica* is Daza's intabulation of an anonymous *villancico* whose text tells of a girl in an olive grove, lamenting her lover's death with such passion that the olive branches tremble. **Enriquez de Valderrábano** (fl. 1547) was a professional musician in the service of the Count of Miranda in Peñaranda del Duero in northern Castile. The individuality of his musical style is

made evident by comparing his seven variations on *Guárdame las vacas* with those of Narváez. The two fantasias reflect his two principal modes of composition. The *Fantasia suelta* is a freely composed work, unusual among his works for its imitative concision, while his *Fantasia sobre un pleni de contrapunto* parodies an unidentified "Pleni sunt caeli" from a polyphonic mass. *De dónde venís amore?* is an intabulation of a coquettish villancico by Juan Vásquez, and the *Soneto lombardo* is Valderrábano's version of an Italian pavane that appears with recognisable similarity in both German and French lute collections.

Some of the earliest knowledge of the existence of a 15th-century tradition of vihuela playing comes from the kingdom of Aragon whose capital, Valencia, was the home of the courtier **Luis Milán** (c.1500–c.1561). Of his forty fantasias, the four included here represent different facets of his style. The *Fantasia del primer tono* develops a series of brief themes using imitative and sequential devices; the **Fantasia del quarto tono** is more homophonic and recalls the sobriety of his pavanés. More closely related to his dance music is his *Fantasia del octavo tono que remeda a las pauanas que tañen en Ytalia* which is a fantasia on themes from the first of his pavanés, elaborated with indirect reference to the vogue of battle pavanés that were fashionable in the 1530s. The *Fantasia a consonancias mescladas con redobles* is one more

improvisatory works where Milán advises the performer to play the chordal slowly, and the alternating running passages with greater speed.

The music of Mudarra and Fuenllana reflects taste in the southern city of Seville, and has much in common with the music of Castilian composers. Raised in Guadalajara by the third and fourth Dukes of the Infantado, **Alonso Mudarra** (c.1510–1580) was ordained a canon of Seville Cathedral in 1546, the publication year of his *Tres Libros de Musica*. Mudarra remained in that position until his death and became an influential member of the cathedral administration. His *Pauana de alexandre* and *Gallarda* is the only known pavane and galliard pair preserved in the vihuela books. The pavane is a major-key version of the passamezzo antico formula, and the more lively galliard is only loosely related to it. Mudarra's intabulation of the *Pleni* from Josquin's *Missa Faysan regretz* is a literal transcription of the vocal model, but an effective translation from one medium to another.

The idiomatic orientation of the *Fantasia de passos largos para desenboluer las manos* is clear from the running passages and sequences that develop from a customary opening in imitative style. The *Fantasia que contrahaze la harpa en la manera de Ludovico* has achieved fame due its uncommon dissonance that imitates the playing of the legendary

15th-century court harpist Ludovico. The fantasia is conceived as three loose variations on the *folia*, the only vihuela fantasia to be based on variation technique and the earliest known setting of the *folia* in Spanish instrumental music. Born near Madrid, the blind **Miguel de Fuenllana** (c.1525–c.1585) held a number of professional posts as a vihuelist, to the Marquesa de Tarifa and later to Isabel de Valois, third wife of Phillip II.

The music contained in his anthology *Orphénica Lyra* published in Seville in 1554, shows him to have been a distinguished virtuoso. The simple *Duo de Fuenllana* is a discursive essay

in two-part counterpoint, effectively a two part fantasia. Equally simple is his arrangement of Juan Vásquez's villancico of forlorn love, *Duélete de mí, señora*. The *Fantasía de redobles* comprises two parallel sections of equal length whose initial imitative themes are built from decorative figures. Claudin de Sermisy's popular chanson *Tant que vivray* is presented by Fuenllana in two forms, both as a plain intabulation and also with Fuenllana's added embellishment.

The anonymous setting of the *Pavana de España* comes from a manuscript

(Cracow Ms Mus 40032), probably copied in Naples around 1600, and which includes numerous works with a direct Spanish connection. It comprises a set of variations on the *pavaniglia* formula that became popular in the late 16th century and which was identified with Spain in sources from across the European continent and England. The concluding variations on the *folia* date from the same period and were copied into a copy of Valderrábano's *Silva de sirenas* by some former owner.

John Griffiths



❖ JOHN GRIFFITHS studied vihuela and lute with Hopkinson Smith and Eugen Müller Dombois in Basel, and has published a broad range of books and articles on the vihuela. He has performed extensively in Australia, Europe, Asia and the USA both as a soloist and as a member of the ensemble La Romanesca. He is Professor of Music at The University of Melbourne and was awarded the cross of Oficial de la Orden de Isabel la Católica in 1993 for his contribution to Spanish music and culture.

Vihuela: Lourdes Uncilla-Moreno (Madrid, 1986), tuned in Pythagorean temperament after Bermudo.

- Occasional notes appearing to be out of tune on this recording are due to the inherent imperfections of the Pythagorean tuning system applied to the vihuela.

Recorded at Move Records studio, March 1995  
*Digital recording:* Martin Wright  
*Editing:* Martin Wright, Vaughan McAlley  
*Cover photography:* Howard Birnstihl

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# THE ECHO OF ORPHEUS

JOHN GRIFFITHS vihuela

LUIS DE NARVÁEZ—Los seys libros del Delphin (Valladolid, 1538)

- 1 **Quatro diferencias sobre Guárdame las vacas** (1'50)
- 2 **Fantasia del primer tono por Gsolreut** [No 13] (1'45)
- 3 **Fantasia del quarto tono** [No 10] (2'11)
- 4 **Fantasia del quinto tono** [No 11] (2'19)
- 5 **Conde claros del sexto tono** [22 variations] (3'10)

ESTEBAN DAZA—El Parnasso (Valladolid, 1576)

- 6 **Fantasia por el tercero tono** [No 3] (2'48)
- 7 **Gritos daba la morenica** (1'36)
- 8 **Fantasia de passos largos para desemvoluer las manos** [No 21] (2'23)
- 9 **Fantasia por el sexto tono** [No 17] (2'11)

ENRÍQUEZ DE VALDERRÁBANO—Silva de sirenas (Valladolid, 1547)

- 10 **Siete diferencias fáciles sobre Guardame las vacas** (4'00)
- 11 **Fantasia suelta del quarto tono** [No 1] (2'06)
- 12 **Fantasia sobre un pleni de contrapunto** [No 10] (2'57)
- 13 **De dónde venís, amore?** [Vásquez] (2'10)
- 14 **Soneto lombardo a manera de dança** (2'02)

LUIS MILÁN—El Maestro (Valencia, 1536)

- 15 **Fantasia por el primer tono** [No 1] (2'07)
- 16 **Fantasia del cuarto tono** [No 8] (2'56)
- 17 **Fantasia del octavo tono que remeda a las pauanas que tañen en Ytalia** [No 22] (3'38)
- 18 **Fantasia de consonancias y redobles del primero y segundo tono** [No 11] (3'22)

ALONSO MUDARRA—Tres libros de Música (Seville, 1546)

- 19 **Pauana de alexandre; Gallarda** (3'08)
- 20 **Pleni de la misa faysan regres de Josquin** (2'26)
- 21 **Fantasia de passos largos para desenbolver las manos** [No 1] (1'44)
- 22 **Fantasia que contrahaze la harpa en la manera de luduico** [No 10] (2'16)

MIGUEL DE FUENLLANA—Orphénica Lyra (Seville, 1554)

- 23 **Duo de Fuenllana** (2'32)
- 24 **Duélete de mí, señora** [Juan Vásquez] (2'45)
- 25 **Fantasia de redobles** [No 51] (1'31)
- 26 **Tant que vivray** [Claudin de Sermisy] (2'22)

ANONYMOUS

- 27 **Pavana de España** (3'37)
- 28 **Folias** (4'58)

Total playing time 74'22

