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Sonata of the Seaven Teares (2005)

The Sonata of the Seaven Teares refers to a work of John Dowland (1563–1626) entitled *Lachrimae, or SeavenTeares figured in Seaven Passionate Pavans, with divers other Pavans, Galliards, and Almands, set forth for the Lute, Viols, or Violons, in five parts* (London, c.1604). In this work Dowland expresses the late Elizabethan fascination with melancholy by developing seven pavans from a single doleful theme, one also used for his lute song Flow my Tears. While Dowland developed his theme using varied imitation between five equal and continuous instrumental voices in a three-strophe form, I transform that same theme using a more complex architecture of phrases in shorter-term cadences in a texture of unequal voices. There are three movements. The first, *Dialogue of the Antiquities*, establishes the overall technique of style dialectics, placing Dowland’s Elizabethan style against that of French Baroque preludes, keyboard toccatas, the dramatic sweep of Romantic ‘cello sonatas, and mid-Twentieth-century Neoclassicism. The second movement, *Pavan of the Sorrows*, transforms Dowland’s *Lachrimae Tristes* into an improvisatory keyboard prelude, then intertwines this elaborated style with Romantic melodic treatments of the Tristes theme in the ‘cello. The third, *Rounds and Divertissments*, includes the most divergent thematic transformations yet. The rounds are multiple, bringing back themes in unobvious patterns, linked by metric modulations, and transforming Dowland’s relative rhythmic uniformity into metric patterns based on 2:3:5. The final section begins with a reprise of the opening grave, from which emerges a closing presto.