

## 2. John Wilbye

Of all the English madrigal composers who imitated the Italian style perhaps the greatest was John Wilbye (1574-1638). He was born in Norfolk and for most of his life he was in the service of the Kyton family who lived in the grand house pictured here, Hengrave Hall, near Bury St.



Edmonds, Suffolk. We are going to look at his madrigal “Adieu sweet Amaryllis.” This is one of the most famous madrigals that he wrote. From his music we can tell that Wilbye had made a study of Italian madrigals. The Italian madrigal composers set poems about shepherds and shepherdesses and Amaryllis was one of the characters often mentioned.

On this CD the mechanical performance imagines that instead of singers we have three recorder players and a lutenist. These were familiar Elizabethan instruments and you can easily find pictures in an *Early Music Shop*<sup>1</sup> catalogue.

The madrigal begins rather as if the top voice is a solo accompanied by the lower three voices. Can you spot any imitation? Why do you think the composer chooses longer notes (semi-breves and minims) for the words “For since to part you will is, O heavy tidings”?

There is a change for minor to major mode for the final section. (Look at the key signature.) Here the composer can hint at something which the poet does not say. The major key gives a bright cheerful feel to the music. Do you think he really had to say goodbye to Amaryllis or did she change her mind?

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<sup>1</sup> Request a catalogue from The Early Music Shop, Salts Mill, Victoria Rd, Saltaire, Shipley, BD18 3LF