

Topic Page: [Wilbye, John, 1574-1638](https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/wilbye_john_1574_1638)

Summary Article: **Wilbye, John**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

English composer. He was not only one of the first English composers to write madrigals, but also one of the finest. Among his most characteristic works are the popular madrigals 'Draw on Sweet Night' and 'Sweet honey sucking bees' (both 1609).

Wilbye was born at Diss, Norfolk, where his father was a tanner and landowner. Wilbye was patronized by the Cornwallis family at Brome Hall near Diss. In about 1595 he went into the service of their son-in-law, Sir Thomas Kytson, at Hengrave Hall near Bury St Edmunds, and was frequently in London with the family. After the death of his patron he remained in the service of Kytson's widow, Lady Elizabeth Kytson, who died in 1628, whereupon he went to Colchester to join the household of her daughter, Lady Rivers. He never married and was well-to-do, having been granted the lease of a sheep farm by Kytson and gradually acquiring property at Diss, Bury St Edmunds, and elsewhere.

Wilbye was influenced by Morley and Ferrabosco. He published two books of madrigals (1598 and 1609), the second of which is generally regarded as one of the greatest English madrigal collections. It contains 'Draw on sweet Night', which uses major and minor tonalities to depict deep melancholy.

WorksVocal two sacred vocal pieces contributed to Leighton's *Teares or Lamentacions*; two books of 64 madrigals (1598, 1609), madrigal 'The Lady Oriana' contributed to *The Triumphes of Oriana*.

Other five sacred works; three fantasies for viols (incomplete), lute lessons (lost).

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