

Scintillating baroque..



.. Serious fun



Director from the Continuo  
*Andrew Lawrence-King*  
Early Harps & Research

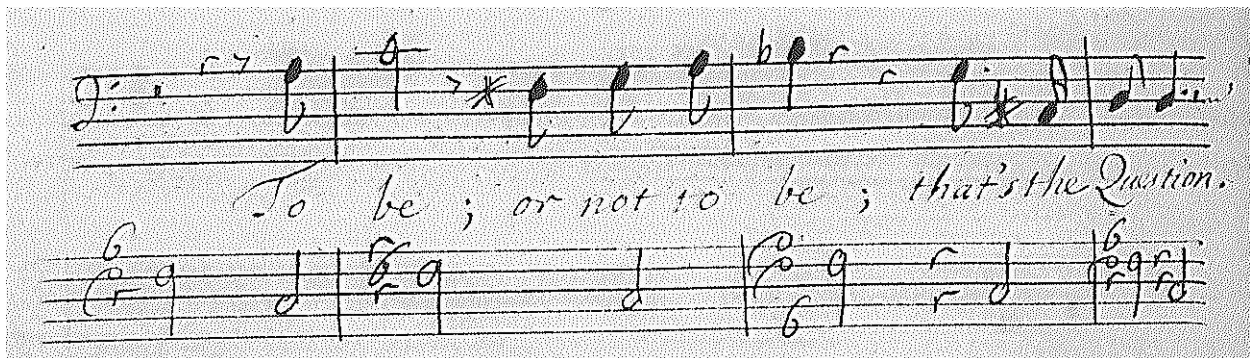
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Action! Action! Action!

## To Sing, or not to Sing? Questions about Samuel Pepys' *Three Songbooks*



Together with CHE colleagues from a wide range of disciplines, Stephen Grant and Andrew Lawrence-King are working towards a recording of songs from Samuel Pepys' *Three Songbooks*. Amongst the large number of music books that Pepys bought and traded at London publishers, these manuscripts preserve his personal selection of songs, transposed down for his bass voice and with the figured bass realised in guitar tablature. All this was the work of his household musician, Cesare Morelli, who also contributed many of his own songs, including a setting of *To be or not to be*. As we might expect, Pepys carefully indexes, categorises and catalogues his favourite songs, whether Light, Grave or Sacred.

These books alone contain many hours of music, a daunting prospect for close study, and far too much for a concert or recording. Academic and artistic exploration must therefore address the delicate question of selection: which songs can we sing? And what was 'singing' for this amateur bass, enthusiast of the spoken theatre, student of the Italian trillo, who much preferred recitative songs to light airs? What performance contexts can we imagine in the 17<sup>th</sup>-century, or today, for a French operatic love-duet transposed for one bass, or for a setting of the complete Litany for bass and guitar? Whilst performers search for answers, the aim of this panel is to discuss: What's the Question?