Greensleeves

Greensleeves, one of the most popular tunes in history, was already a favorite in Elizabethan times. It was twice mentioned in Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor,* and first appeared in the stationer's register of 1580 when Richard Jones had licensed to him "A new Northern Dittye of the Lady Greene Sleeves." There is, however, evidence that the tune is of much earlier origin, perhaps in Henry VIII's time, this registration and the many that followed it being evidence of a new wave of popularity in the late sixteenth-century.

In the following century it was adopted during the revolution by the cavaliers, who wrote many political songs to this tune, and in 1728 appeared again as one of the melodies selected for the *Beggar's Opera.*

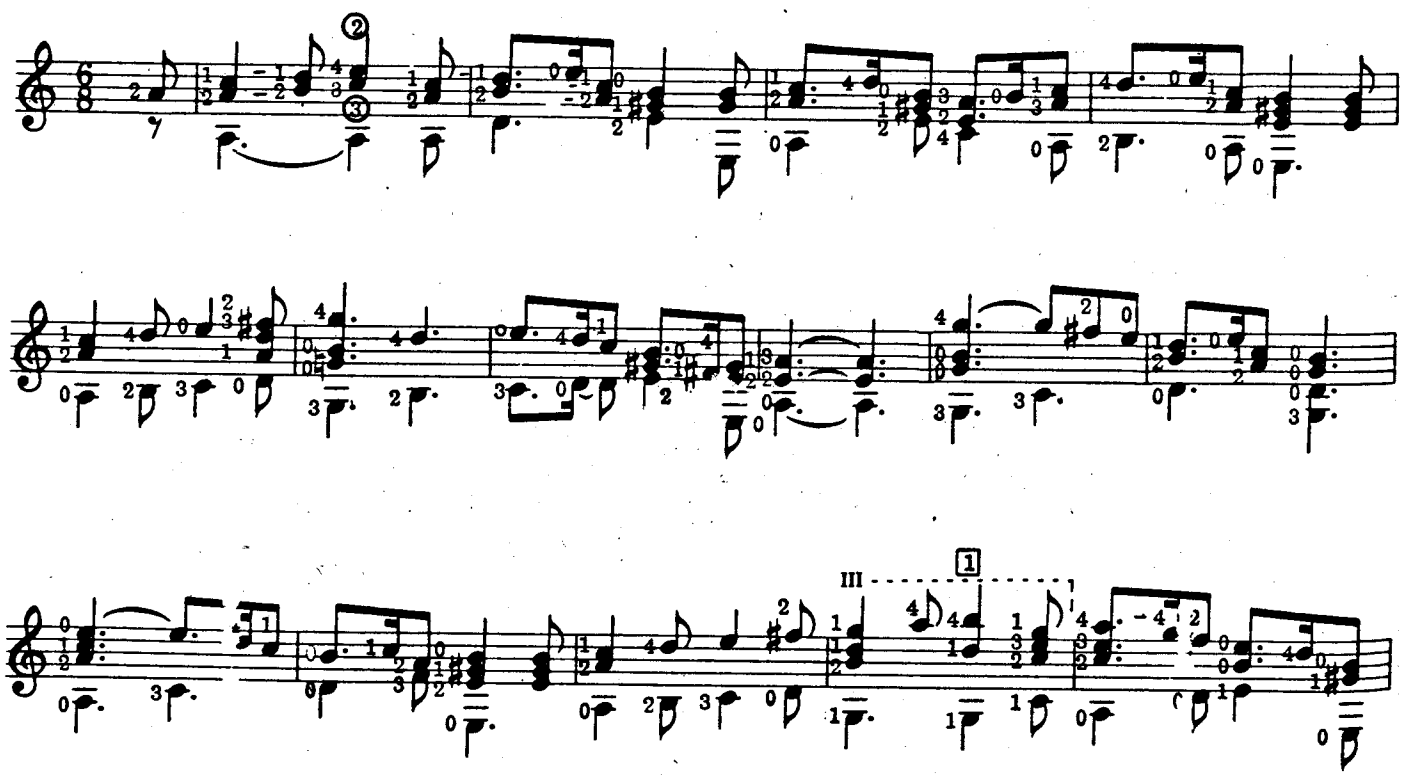
One of the earliest instrumental settings occurs in William Ballet's manuscript lute book (late sixteenth-century), and a transcription of this is included in Brian Jeffery's *Elizabethan Popular Music,* (Oxford University Press, 1966). The same author has transcribed a duet version from the Dowland lute book in his Elizabethan Duets (Schott and Co. Ltd., 1970).

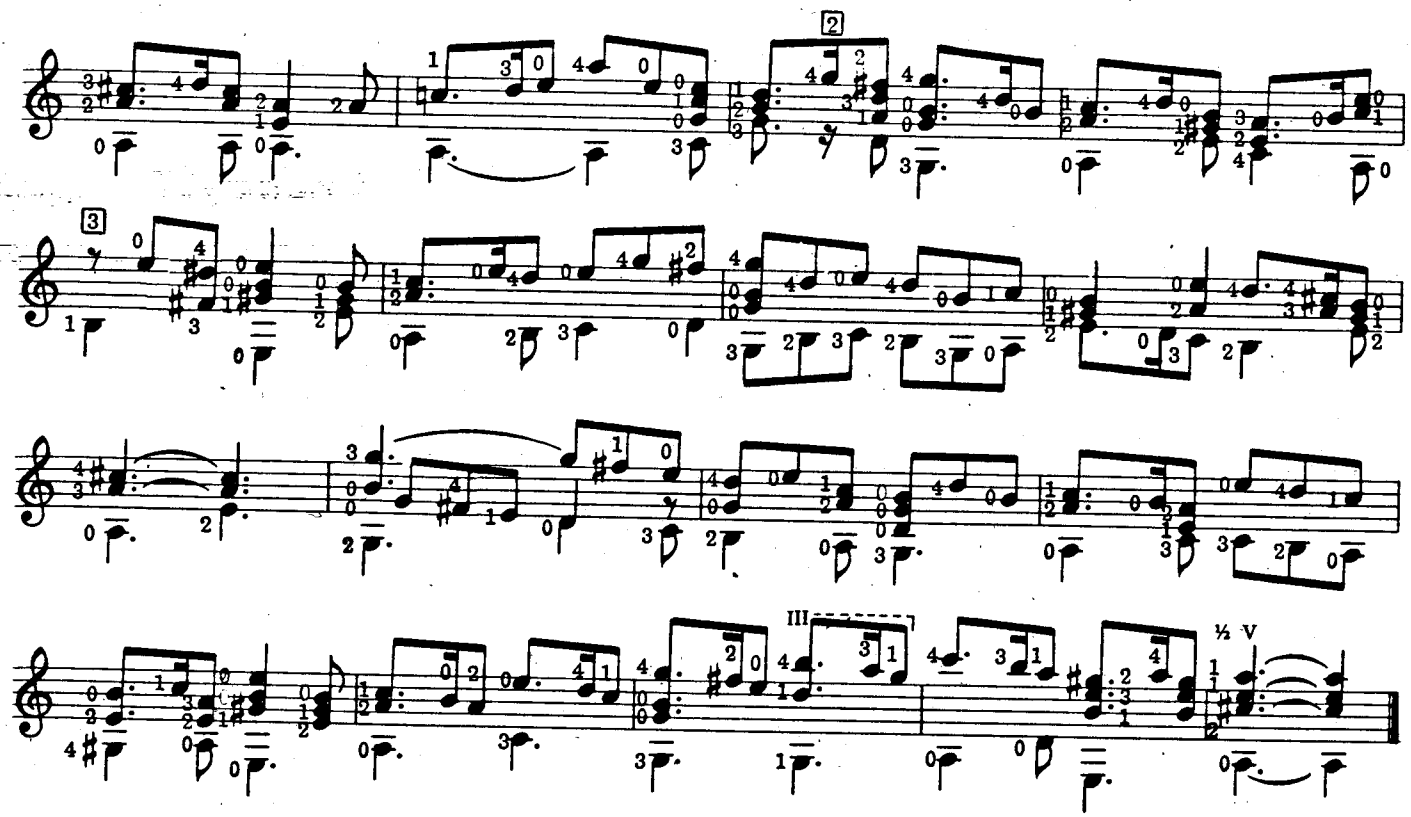
Cutting's version lies very well on the guitar and is a pleasure to play. The manuscript of this is now in the British Museum (Add. 31392).

Suggested tempo is a lilting ♪ = 138.

1. *This is a common chord on the lute which makes some demand on the left hand, but it is possible with practice.*
2. *Note the fourth finger, which makes a necessary change of position for the quick move to the D chord.*
3. *The first finger is necessary if the B is to sustain. It is an awkward jump from the previous chord, which may be played staccato to allow for this.*

Francis Cutting

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