

## An emblem of modern music: temporal symmetry in the prologue of *L'Orfeo* (1607)

'io non faccio le mie cose à caso'

[I do not do things by chance]

Monteverdi, *Il quinto libro de madrigali a cinque voci* (1605)

As Florentine music drama began its climb on the slippery rock of conviction, the stakes for the prologue became expectedly high. The allegorical presenter of the spectacle had to deploy sufficiently engaging manner and language<sup>1</sup> to establish her reality and facilitate the passage into a world whose inhabitants communicate through song. Responding to this challenge, Claudio Monteverdi and Alessandro Striggio assigned the role to La Musica in *L'Orfeo*. As participants in the Italian cultural rivalries of the period, moreover, they also had to surpass their historical rival *Euridice*, which Jacopo Peri and Ottavio Rinuccini had produced in October 1600 for the royal nuptials of Maria de Medici and Henri IV of France.<sup>2</sup> The latter work's happy ending had spoiled the myth and questioned the choice of La Tragedia as the opening figure. In addition, her modest melody (repeated sevenfold) and belated announcement of the story in the last of 28 lines left much space for improvement (*illus.1*).

La Musica, by contrast, offers a gradual transition to the myth in only five stanzas. She announces her arrival from Permesso (not Parnassus) and pays tribute to the Gonzagas's royal blood.<sup>3</sup> 'Io la Musica son' (I am Music), she affirms and proceeds to advertise her power over mortal ears. She then introduces her instrument, the 'Cetera d'or' (lyre of gold), and describes her moral mission of leading the soul to heavenly harmony. Orfeo's name and reputation make the subject of the fourth stanza, and the monologue closes with an oracle on the extraordinary effects her singing will produce on all things around her. By the time La Musica exits

the stage we are in no doubt that she is more than a presenter: what we are going to witness issues directly from her; it is her song enacted before our eyes (*illus.2*).

Musically, too, Monteverdi outshines Peri in the attention he lavishes on the prologue. He moves the key from F to D—possibly an allusion to the Greek Dorian mode<sup>4</sup>—and replaces the instrumental appendices to La Tragedia's stanzas with a majestic ritornello that frames La Musica's statements (*illus.3*). By far his most significant improvement is the rejection of La Tragedia's strophic setting for strophic variations, through-composed music on a *basso ostinato*. What varies here is not simply the distribution of notes within a fixed temporal length but also the length itself. This central parameter is the subject of what follows. Specifically, I study the number of semibreves, or common metrical unit, for each section of the prologue.<sup>5</sup> The results of this analysis appear in *Tables 1* and *2*.

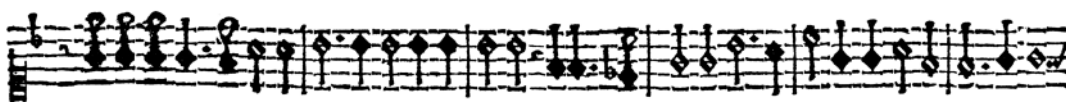
The structure of the prologue is remarkably symmetrical, forming an almost perfect palindrome.<sup>6</sup> How can we be sure that this is a design and not a happy coincidence, that Monteverdi intended it to be so? The existence of large-scale symmetries in the opera is well established.<sup>7</sup> The first act, for instance, is proportionally built around Orfeo's aria 'Rosa del ciel'. La Musica's ritornello also frames the two acts the hero spends in Hades. And his 'Possente spirto', the opera's musical apex, is placed in the third of five acts.<sup>8</sup> Monteverdi further stresses its centrality by introducing a second fully ornamented version of Orfeo's plea before Charonte. The aligning of the two parts predicates on accurate measuring of their note values, exactly the kind I claim he applied to La Musica's prologue (*illus.4*).



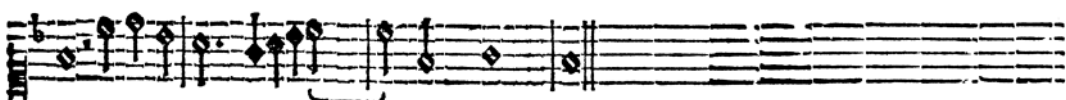
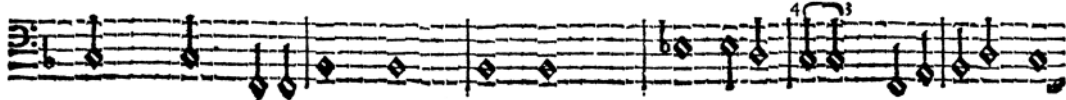
# PROLOGO<sup>2</sup> LA TRAGEDIA.



O che d'alti fospir vaga, e di pian ti Spars'or di doglia



hor di minaccie il volto Fei negl'ampi te atri al popol folto Scolòrir di pietà volti, e fembian-



ti. Ritornello.



<sup>2</sup>  
Non langue sparso d'innocenti vette  
Non ciglia spente di Tiranno insano  
Spettacolo infelice al guardo humano  
Canto su meste, e lacrimose scene.

<sup>3</sup>  
Lungi via lungi pur da regij tetti  
Simulacri funesti, ombre d'affanni  
Ecco i mesti coturni, e i foschi panni  
Cangio, e desto ne i cor piu dolci affetti

<sup>4</sup>  
Hor s'auuerrà, che le cangiate forme  
Non senza alto stupor la terra ammiri  
Tal ch'ogni alma gentil ch'Apollò ispiri  
Del mio nouo cammin calpesti l'orme

<sup>5</sup>  
Vostro Regina fia coranto alloro  
Qual forse anco nó colse Atene, ò Roma  
Fregio non vil fu lonorata chioma  
Fronda Febea fra due corone d'oro

<sup>6</sup>  
Tal per voi torno, e con sereno aspetto  
Ne Reali Imenei m'adorno anch'io  
E su corde più liete il canto mio  
Tempro al nobile cor dolce diletto

<sup>7</sup>  
Mentre Senna Real prepara intanto  
Alto diadema, onde il bel crin si fregi  
E i manti, e feggi de gl'antichi Regi  
Del Tracio Orfeo date l'orecchie al cato.

1 Jacopo Peri and Ottavio Rinuccini, *Euridice*, Prologue



# PROLOGO.



## LA MUSICA.

**D**AL mio Permessò amato à voi ne uoglio  
 Incliti Eroi, sangue gentil di Regi,  
 Di cui narra la Fama eccelsi pregi,  
 Nè giugne al uer perch'è tropp'alto il segno.  
*Io la Musica son ch'è i dolci accenti*  
*Sò far tranquillo ogni turbato core,*  
*Et hor di nobil ira, & hor d'amore*  
*Possò infiammar le più gelate menti.*  
*Io sù cetera d'or cantando foglio*  
*Mortal orecchia lusingar talhora,*  
*E in guisa tal de l'armonia sonora*  
*De le rote del Ciel più l'alme inuoglio.*  
*Quinci à dirui d'ORFEO desio mi sprona*  
*D'ORFEO che trasse al suo cantar le fere,*  
*E seruo fè l'Inferno à sue preghiere*  
*Gloria immortal di Pindo e d'Elicono.*  
A   a   Hor

2 Alessandro Striggio, *L'Orfeo*, Prologue (libretto)

Ritornellos being a symmetry-generating device (here also harmonically rewinding the strophes from A to the original key of D), their exact repetition helps cast into relief the individual setting of the stanzas. The latter's identical poetic structure (44 syllables distributed in four *endecasillabi*) exposes any length variant as a conscious compositional choice. Strophe 3 forms the axis of the prologue, its number of semibreves (16) matching that of the full ritornello and being distributed symmetrically within its lines.<sup>9</sup> Its pivotal role is confirmed melodically, too. This is the only strophe where *La Musica* deviates from her starting note D, beginning instead on A, the note that comprises almost half of her pitches in the strophe, and has the highest

From my beloved Permessus I come to you,  
 illustrious heroes, noble scions of kings,  
 whose glorious deeds Fame relates,  
 though falling short of the truth, since the target is too high.

I am Music, who in sweet accents  
 can calm each troubled heart,  
 and now with noble anger, now with love,  
 can kindle the most frigid minds.

I, with my lyre of gold and with my singing, am used  
 to sometimes charming mortal ears,  
 and in this way inspire souls with a longing  
 for the sonorous harmony of heaven's lyre.

From here desire spurs me to tell you of Orpheus,  
 Orpheus who drew wild beasts to him by his songs  
 and who subjugated Hades by his entreaties,  
 the immortal glory of Pindus and Helicon.

Now while I alternate my songs, now happy, now sad,  
 let no small bird stir among these trees,  
 no noisy wave be heard on these river-banks,  
 and let each little breeze halt in its course.

2 Continued

representation in all five (Table 3). The centrality of the strophe reflects its textual content. Music's power to transport the soul to celestial harmony lies at the heart of Neoplatonism, especially as expounded by Marsilio Ficino (1433–99), the first Renaissance author to use music for therapeutic and astrological ends.<sup>10</sup> To enhance the stanza's musical imagery, Monteverdi exchanges the libretto's 'rote del Ciel' with 'lira del ciel', thus creating another semantic symmetry with the opening line's 'Cetera d'or'.

The central frame of the full ritornellos and strophe 3 finds a complement in the symmetrical external strophes. The opening one has 19 semibreves and so should the last, I propose.<sup>11</sup> Resorting to musical pictorialism, Monteverdi disrupts the textual/musical alignment at the very end of the prologue.<sup>12</sup> *La Musica*'s final word 's'arresti' is denied harmonic closure and gives way to a lengthy pause. Unfortunately, the double-breve spelling of the last rest (not to mention the fermata) is excruciatingly long to make any musical sense (illus.3e). If performed, it lasts for more than two metrical units, extending the strophe's length by a quarter. Quite reasonably, performers ignore it and editors often disregard (Clifford Bartlett) or reduce its length

ATTO PRIMO.



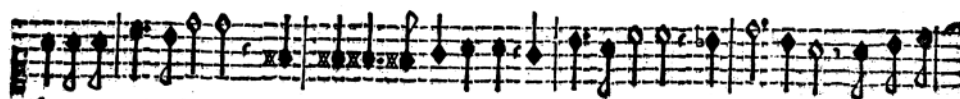
RITORNELLO

## P R O L O G O .

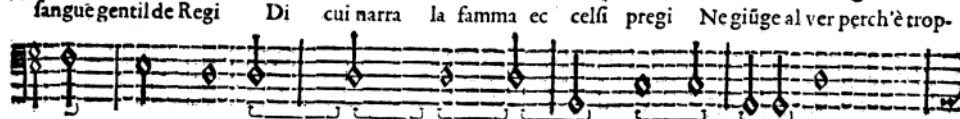
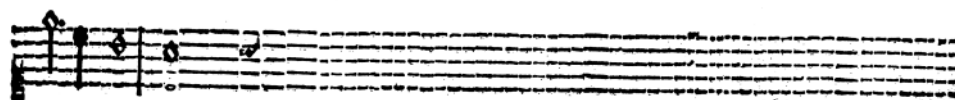
L A M V S I C A ,




Al mio permesso a mato a voine vegno Incliti Eroi

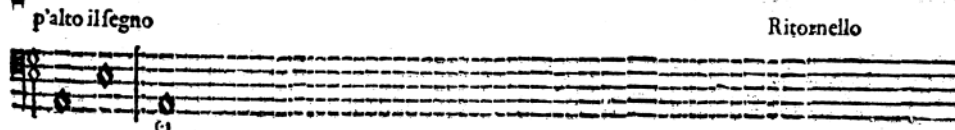



fanguè gentil de Regi Di cui narra la famma ec celsi pregi Negiùge al ver perch'è trop-

p'alto il fegno

Ritornello



L'Orfeo del Monte verde, B

3a-e Monteverdi, *L'Orfeo*, Prologue (ritornelli omitted)



**I**

O la Mufica fon ch'ai dolci accen ti So far tranquillo ogni turbato

core Et hor di nobil'ira & hor d'Amore poſ s'inhammar le più gelate

menti.

**I**

O fu Cetera d'or cantando ſo glio Mortal orecchio luſingar tal'hora

Ein queſta guiſa à l'armo nia ſonora De la lira del ciel più l'al me inuoglio.

Ritornello

L'Orfeo del Monte verde. B 3

3a-e Continued

**Q**

Vinci à dirui d'Orfeo defio mi spro na D'Orfeo che traffiche al suo cantar le fere

E feruo fe l'Inferno a sue pre ghiera Glo ria immortal di pindo e d'Elico na.

**H**

Or mentre i cantialterno hor lieti hormone sti Non si mo ua Augellin fra

queste piante Nes'oda in queste riue on da sonante Et ogniauretta in suo ca-

min s'arre sti.

Ritornello.

3a-e Continued

(Jack Westrup, Bruno Maderna, Denis Stevens).<sup>13</sup> Either the spelling is an error (one among roughly 200 in the 1609 edition, for example the two crochets spelled as minims in the previous system's last bar)<sup>14</sup> or its value is indeterminate like that of a final *longa* (observe the following double bar). Whatever the case may be, my reading of the prologue's symmetries suggests that the appropriate length of the last pause should be close to two semibreves, a sufficient time interval to illustrate 's'arresti' and to align the strophe metrically with the opening one.<sup>15</sup>

The only true anomaly in the palindrome is the uneven length of strophes 2 and 4, which have 14 and 15 semibreves, respectively. A melodic analysis of the former shows that its third line is the shortest in the prologue, counting little more than one semibreve. In fact, Monteverdi here breaks the pattern of one line per melodic phrase, turning Striggio's

*Et hor di nobil ira, et hor d'amore  
Posso infiammar le più gelate menti*

into

*Et hor di nobil'ira et hor d'Amore poss infiammar  
le più gelate menti.*

Responding to La Musica's strong imagery (perhaps also assisted by the enjambment between the two lines), he heightens the contrast between 'infi-  
ammar' and 'gelate' (this last further emphasized with the dissonant c# in the bass). He also counterbalances the rapidly sung third line with a long note on 'poss[o]', which receives a full semibreve. Given his faithfulness to Striggio's versification,<sup>16</sup> it may not be an accident that strophe 2 spoils La Musica's palindrome. Two years before *L'Orfeo*, Monteverdi had unwillingly become the spokesman for *seconda prattica*, a new compositional practice that placed music under the expressive demands of poetry.<sup>17</sup> The need for checking its affective power through poetry's rational content is a cornerstone of Platonic aesthetics.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, Plato is the chief authority invoked by Giulio Cesare Monteverdi to defend his brother's choices.<sup>19</sup> By abandoning the principles of his setting in the lines culminating in 'poss[o] infiammar', Monteverdi was, in effect, demonstrating his aesthetics: music unchecked by poetry leads to disruption of harmony.

Subtle as his statement may have been, it had grave implications because of opera's new-born status. Was *dramma per musica* to be a reckless explorer of human passions or a responsible vehicle for expressive poetry? Monteverdi and Striggio address the question within the plot of *L'Orfeo*. In the culmination of the opera, the virtuosic 'Possente spirto', Orfeo fails to move Charonte. However one

Table 1 Distribution of semibreves in La Musica's Prologue

Ritornello (complete)		16	
Strophe 1			19
Ritornello (incomplete)	6		
Strophe 2		14	
Ritornello (incomplete)	6		
Strophe 3		16	
Ritornello (incomplete)	6		
Strophe 4		15	
Ritornello (incomplete)	6		
Strophe 5			[19]
Ritornello (complete)		16	

Table 2 Distribution of semibreves per line of text

	Line 1	Line 2	Line 3	Line 4	Total (strophe)
Strophe 1	6	3.5	4	5.5	19
Strophe 2	4.5	3.5	1.25	4.75	14
Strophe 3	4.5	3.5	3.5	4.5	16
Strophe 4	4.5	3.5	2.75	4.25	15
Strophe 5	4.5	4.75	3.75	3.5+[2.5]	[19]
Total (line)	24	18.75	15.25	[25]	83

Orfeo al suono del Organo di legno, & vn Chitarrone,  
canta vna sola de le due parti.

Violino.

Violino.

Poffen te spir to e formi da

Poffente spir to e formida-

bil nu me senza

bil nu me senza cui

4 Monteverdi, *L'Orfeo*, Act 3, 'Possente spirto'



Table 3 Distribution of notes in La Musica's Prologue

Notes	F/F#	G	A	Bb/B	C/C#	D	E	Total
Strophe 1	1+4	3	12	2+5	7+0	11	1	46
Strophe 2	0+4	3	13	2+8	5+0	10	0	45
Strophe 3	2+0	2	21	1+5	7+0	5	1	44
Strophe 4	1+0	4	14	2+5	5+1	13	1	46
Strophe 5	0+5	2	10	2+7	11+0	11	0	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>229</b>

wishes to interpret the latter's sleep, which clears the way for the hero's descent into Hades,<sup>20</sup> it is undisputable that the excessive vocalism of the aria did not have the desired effect. The collapse of text here into endlessly repeated syllables is the extreme consequence of La Musica's autonomy, expressed as disregard for poetic order in strophe 2 and refusal to cadence at the end of the poem.

In this perspective, La Musica is much more than a dramatic hostess: she serves as an Orphean emblem, subtly preparing us for the story's tragic outcome. Like Orfeo, the son of Apollo and performer of an instrument whose strings supposedly reflected the planets,<sup>21</sup> she is constitutionally capable of grounding celestial harmony in this world. Also like the Thracian hero, she eventually fails in her mission because of self-indulgence. As he defies Pluto's command and gives in to his own emotional urges so does she turn away from poetic authority, snatching half of strophe 2's final line to brag about her powers in one protracted phrase. Her imperfect palindrome presages Orfeo's own failure, which, in another case of symmetry, Apollo himself will point to in the opera's 1609 finale: 'Non è non è consiglio / Di generoso petto / Servir al proprio affetto' (it is not, it is not the advice of a generous breast to serve one's own passion).<sup>22</sup>

La Musica's spoiled palindrome has wider implications, however, since Orpheus was the spokesman for the *stile rappresentativo* around 1600.<sup>23</sup> In Karol Berger's recent formulation, 'a poet-musician as the central figure of the new poetic-musical genre ensures that the early operas are intensely self-reflexive. They are meditations on the dilemmas faced

by poet-musicians in general and on the opportunities and perils of the new genre in particular.'<sup>24</sup> Berger reads *L'Orfeo* as the dramatization of early modern music's anxiety over the feasibility of reviving *l'antica musica* and considers the opera's 1609 finale as the answer to this predicament: 'For Orpheus, to ascend to heaven is to leave behind the life of mutable passions for the life of eternal harmony, the shifting quicksands of the *seconda* for the consoling stability of the *prima prattica*'.<sup>25</sup>

Yet the actual problem here is not the musico-poetic synergy of *seconda prattica* but La Musica's/Orfeo's autonomy, the self-centredness that detaches them from a higher goal. With modernity's shifting orientation from God and immutable cosmic harmony to the human self and its subjectivity, the metrical imperfection in *L'Orfeo*'s prologue registers anxiety not only about modern music's comparison to the ancient Greek one but also about its own future. What could guarantee that its liberation from the strictures of counterpoint would not lead to a similar disengagement from poetry?<sup>26</sup> Who could prevent the collapse of its new assertiveness ('poss infiammar') into empty rhetoric and the kind of mental impotence that King Claudius bemoaned: 'My words fly up, my thoughts remain below: / Words without thoughts never to heaven go' (*Hamlet*, Act 3, scene iii)? Indeed, Monteverdi's later experiments with pure sound effects (*Madrigali guerrieri, et amorosi* (1638)) led to sufficient controversy to justify epithets, such as 'sonorous, grandiloquent . . . hollow works'.<sup>27</sup> In the centuries to come, moreover, opera would more often lean towards vocal virtuosity rather than dramatic coherence. Already in 1607, right at the start of

it all, Monteverdi seems aware of the genre's potential for reaching either extreme. An artist who publicly affirmed that he does nothing by chance and who hoped his opera 'may be as durable as humankind' (*che sia per esser durabile al pari dell'humana generatione*),<sup>28</sup>

he uses *La Musica* as his mouthpiece to question her own autonomy under the new constellation of modernity. He thus not simply puts on her shoulders 'the artistic anxiety of the time',<sup>29</sup> but really embeds it in her metrical structure.

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- 1 For the use of indexical words in the prologue, see M. Calcagno, 'Monteverdi's *parole sceniche*', *Journal of the Seventeenth-Century Music*, ix (2003), [www.sscm-jscm.org/v9/noi/calcagno.html](http://www.sscm-jscm.org/v9/noi/calcagno.html).
- 2 For the indebtedness of *L'Orfeo* to *Euridice*, see A. M. Monterosso-Vacchelli, 'Elementi stilistici nell'*Euridice* di Jacopo Peri in rapporto all'*Orfeo* di Monteverdi', in *Congresso internazionale sul tema Claudio Monteverdi e il suo tempo*, ed. R. Monterosso (Verona, 1969), pp.117–26; G. Tomlinson, *Monteverdi and the end of the Renaissance* (Oxford, 1987), pp.131–6.
- 3 Permessos was 'a river of Boeotia, rising in Mount Helicon [and being] sacred to the Muses': J. Whenham, 'Five acts: one action' and 'Synopsis', in *Claudio Monteverdi, Orfeo*, ed. J. Whenham (Cambridge, 1986), p.190 n.11. This could have been an indirect reference to Mantua's lakes (see a 17th-century engraving of Mantua in

- D. Arnold, *Monteverdi*, ed. T. Carter (London, 1990), pp.118–19, as these kinds of 'topographical text-changes' were not uncommon at that time (see *The letters of Claudio Monteverdi*, trans. D. Stevens (London, 1980), p.417). For the artistic ambitions of the Mantuan court since the 1590s (for example, Vincenzo Gonzaga's intense efforts to stage Guarini's *Il pastor fido*), see Tomlinson, *Monteverdi and the end of the Renaissance*, pp.114, 118; also I. Fenlon, 'The Mantuan stage works', in *The new Monteverdi companion*, ed. D. Arnold and N. Fortune (London, 1985), pp.254–5, 258, and P. Fabbri, *Monteverdi*, trans. T. Carter (Cambridge, 1994; Italian edn 1985), pp.25–7.
- 4 C. Gallico, 'In modo dorico', in *Venezia e il melodrama nel seicento*, ed. M. T. Muraro (Florence, 1976), pp.44–6.
- 5 Riccardo Allorto, too, offers a melodic analysis based on the use of motivic nuclei to be found also in Monteverdi's Books iv and v of madrigals: 'Il prologo dell'*Orfeo*. Note sulla formazione del recitativo Monteverdiano', in *Monteverdi e il suo tempo*, pp.157–68. Wulf Arlt argues for the use of this piece as a model for historical performance and examines the deviations of the strophes from the basic melodic pattern: 'Der Prolog des "Orfeo" als Lehrstück der Aufführungspraxis', in *Claudio Monteverdi: Festschrift Reinhold Hammerstein zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. L. Finscher (Laaber, 1986), pp.45, 46–8. For short discussions of its symbolic

- content, see R. Müller, *Der stile recitativo in Claudio Monteverdis Orfeo: Dramatischer Gesang und Instrumentalsatz* (Tutzing, 1984), pp.67–70; and R. Donington, *The rise of opera* (London, 1981), pp.149–51.
- 6 Donington perhaps knew more than he thought when he was writing of the prologue's 'formal structure of unexpected symmetry': 'Monteverdi's first opera', in *The Monteverdi companion* (New York, 1968), p.260.
- 7 Donington, 'Monteverdi's first opera', pp.257–76; D. J. Groult, *A short history of opera* (New York, 2/1965), p.52; C. Gianturco, *Claudio Monteverdi: stile e struttura* (Pisa, [1978]), pp.39–60; Fenlon, 'The Mantuan stage works', pp.272–3; E. T. Chafe, *Monteverdi's tonal language* (New York, 1992), pp.129–33, 136.
- 8 There are also small-scale symmetries, such as the placement of the deictics 'Dal' and 'degno' in the opening line and the 'Io son' declarations by *La Musica* and *Orfeo* later in the opera: Calcagno, 'Monteverdi's *parole sceniche*', 3-1, 3-3.
- 9 According to Allorto, this strophe 'ascertains the formal symmetry' of the piece: 'Il prologo dell'*Orfeo*', p.164.
- 10 D. P. Walker, 'Ficino's spiritus and music', *Annales musicologiques*, i (1953), p.132. See also G. L. Finney, 'Music and neoplatonic love', in *her Musical backgrounds for English literature: 1580–1650* (New Brunswick, 1962; r/Westport, CT, 1976), p.76. For the influence of Neoplatonic

philosophy on the happy ending of the opera, see J. D. Solomon, 'The Neoplatonic apotheosis in Monteverdi's *Orfeo*', *Studi musicali*, xxiv (1995), pp.27–47.

11 According to Arlt, the beginnings of both strophes have similar rhythmic patterns for reasons of textual balance: 'Der Prolog des "Orfeo" als Lehrstück der Aufführungspraxis', p.46.

12 For a list of disruptions in the prologue, see Allorto, 'Il prologo dell'*Orfeo*', p.164.

13 *L'Orfeo: favola in musica*, ed. C. Bartlett (Redcroft, 1986), p.7; the editor acknowledges in a footnote that 'Both parts have additional rest'. Westrup (*Orpheus: a tale in music* (Oxford, 1925), p.7) gives two semibreves, whereas Stevens (*L'Orfeo: favola in musica* (London, [1967]), pp.7–8) and Maderna (*Orfeo* (Milan, 1967), p.12) only a single one. G. F. Malipiero's 'versione libera' of the opera eliminates the problem by excising the entire last strophe (*L'Orfeo* (Milan, [1949]), p.6).

14 Claudio Monteverdi, *L'Orfeo. Favola in musica*, introduction W. Osthoff (Kassel, 1998), pp.x–xi. Tim Carter has discovered that the list of errors fully corresponds only to one of the four surviving copies of the edition, which ironically is not the one reproduced by Osthoff: 'Some notes on the first edition of Monteverdi's "Orfeo"', *Music & Letters*, xci (2010), p.499.

15 Arlt connects this long pause with the following repetition of the ritornello in its entirety: 'Der Prolog des "Orfeo" als Lehrstück der Aufführungspraxis', p.49.

16 Carter, 'Some notes on the first edition of Monteverdi's "Orfeo"', p.502 n.9.

17 The classic study on the *prima-seconda prattica* debate remains C. V. Palisca, 'The Artusi–Monteverdi controversy', in *The new Monteverdi companion*, pp.127–58, also reprinted in C. V. Palisca, *Studies in the history of Italian music and music theory* (Oxford, 1994). For a general introduction to this debate and its musicological reception, see I. Chrissochoidis, 'The "Artusi–Monteverdi" controversy: background, content, and modern interpretations', *British Postgraduate Musicology*, vi (2004),

[www.bpmonline.org.uk/bpm6-artusi.htm](http://www.bpmonline.org.uk/bpm6-artusi.htm).

18 The classic study on music in Plato remains E. Moutsopoulos, *La Musique dans l'oeuvre de Platon* (Paris, 1959).

19 Giulio Cesare Monteverdi, 'Explanation of the letter printed in the fifth book of madrigals', in *Strunk's source readings in music history*, ed. L. Treitler (New York, 1998), pp.538, 540, 541–2. Needless to say, Plato would have been appalled by the sensuality of Italian madrigals. In *The Republic* (Book x, 595a–607d), Socrates openly condemns imitative poetry as a source of public corruption and designates only hymns to gods and to good men as suitable for his ideal state.

20 For Tim Carter this is a legitimate outcome of *Orfeo*'s power: *Monteverdi's musical theatre* (New Haven, 2002), p.116.

21 Franchino Gaffurio, *De harmonia musicorum instrumentorum opus* (Milan, 1518), book 1, chapter 4, cited in K. Berger, *Bach's cycle, Mozart's arrow: an essay on the origins of musical modernity* (Berkeley, 2007), pp.25, 360 (n.15).

22 For a discussion of this finale, see B. R. Hanning, 'The ending of *L'Orfeo*: father, son, and Rinuccini', *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music*, ix/1 (2003), <http://sscm-jscm.press.illinois.edu/v9/1/1/hanning.html>.

23 N. Pirrotta, 'Early opera and aria', in N. Pirrotta and E. Povoledo, *Music and theater from Poliziano to Monteverdi*, trans. K. Eales (Cambridge, 1982), pp.262–4.

24 Berger, *Bach's cycle, Mozart's arrow*, p.28.

25 Berger, *Bach's cycle, Mozart's arrow*, p.40.

26 The paradox of music's autonomy as a precondition for better serving the text is explored in M. Ossi, *Divining the oracle: Monteverdi's seconda prattica* (Chicago, 2003).

27 Tomlinson, *Monteverdi and the end of the Renaissance*, p.210.

28 *L'Orfeo*, Dedication of the score dated 22 August 1609, cited in Berger, *Bach's cycle, Mozart's arrow*, p.29.

29 J. Kerman, 'Orpheus: the Neoclassic vision', in *Claudio Monteverdi Orfeo* (Cambridge, 1986), p.135.

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