MUSICAL REPETITION IN
MONTEVERDI'S ORFEO AND POPPEA

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for the Degree Master of Arts

by
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INTRODUCTION

Monteverdi's importance in the history of opera has been well established, but published descriptions of individual works are few. While the Monteverdi biographies of Schrade, Redlich, Le Roux, de Paoli, and Arnold; and the general histories of Hawkins, Burney, Prunières, and Grout, have discussed his first and last operas L'Orfeo Favola in Musica (1607) and L'Incoronazione di Poppea (1642), these authors have not described the role of musical repetition in these two important works. The purpose of this study is to make a style-critical analysis of the two operas, to describe their structural units and to assess the gradual process of development of musical thought and technique of Monteverdi. Specifically, consideration will be given to Monteverdi's use of musical repetition.

In musical composition, repetition is one of the most important principles of structure. Its role becomes clear when one considers that repetition of a musical idea or a motif includes such devices as: sequential treatment, imitation, ostinato, variation, stimmtausch, and repetition of entire sections. While the more common devices of sequence and imitation are present, we shall only be
concerned with these in passing. The major emphasis will be devoted to those techniques that involve the repetition of entire phrases or sections. Such repetitions are the basis of nearly all musical forms. In a broader sense, repetition also includes such basic concerns as the equal length and consistent rhythm of consecutive phrases. Even in discussing the uniformity or diversity of rhythm and pitch center within a passage, we are still involved with the broad area of musical repetition.

In these two operas various facets of musical repetition are evident: recurrent phrases within arias and duets which define the formal structures; recurrent movements (ritornelli, sinfonie, vocal and choral refrains) which bind together segments of the drama and define larger formats; and repetition in the broader sense of pervasive thematic and harmonic relationships.

Some musical historians have sought full-blown 18th-century structures in these 17th-century works. Such an illogical approach has meant that many important structural formats have been incorrectly described or overlooked. A description of the various formats will help to clarify certain misconceptions in the literature, such as: the "lack of definite aria forms in Orfeo," 1 the

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"absence of the da capo format in Orfeo,"\(^2\) the use of aria forms as well as "recitative to carry the dramatic scenes."\(^3\)

Methodology

Each opera is studied separately: chapter one is devoted to L'Orfeo Favola in Musica, chapter two to L'incoronazione di Poppea\(^4\) and chapter three is a summary which states the conclusions drawn from the study. In the individual studies four major units are considered. These are: (1) arias, (2) ensembles, (3) formal structures within scenes and acts, and (4) the complete opera as an entity. In a further breakdown, the arias and ensembles are divided into types. In the section titled "formal structures within scenes and acts," consideration is given to the use of refrain sections. These include: the sinfonia, the ritornello, and the ritornello-chorus. In the last section "the complete opera as an entity," consideration is given to harmonic usage and harmonic schemes in the structure of instrumental and choral passages which affect the entire opera, and also to the


\(^{3}\)Ibid., 59. Also, Henry Prunières, Monteverdi, His Life and Work, trans. by Marie Mackie (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1926) 60.

\(^{4}\)Score references indicate volume and page in the Malipiero edition of Monteverdi's works (MCO) Volume XI Orfeo and Volume XIII Poppea.
recurrent use of vocal motives. In the final chapter, a summary of conclusions will be given.

Terms needing clarification

The problem of terminology is ever present in discussions of early baroque music. The materials are divided into three basic areas: vocal songs and arias, recurrent instrumental and choral movements, and harmonic terminology. The vocal forms through-composed songs in which new music is provided for each stanza and arias where a formal structure is clearly evident. These are of four kinds: da capo, strophic, motto, and passacaglia.

Da capo aria—In this form the first section (A) is repeated in toto after the second section (B) which often is contrasting. Thus a ternary scheme ABA is created.

Abridged da capo aria—The term implies a ternary aria where the final A is shortened.

Strophic bass—The term describes a technique of using the same bass for all of the stanzas of an aria, with varied melodies in the upper part. The length of the strophic bass corresponds to the textual strophe. The strophic bass is distinguished from the ground bass by its greater length and its definite ending. Each strophe is usually followed by an instrumental ritornello.

'Quasi' strophic bass—In the 'quasi' strophic bass, instead of a literal repeat, the bass undergoes some
modification from strophe to strophe. Although there is
a literal repeat of part of the voice, other sections
show considerable freedom.

Strophic song--The term indicates that all strophes of
the text are sung to the same music. Thus textual rhyme-
scheme and musical structure are identical for all strophes.
Each strophe is usually followed by an instrumental
ritornello.

Motto aria--An aria which begins with a preliminary state-
ment of the initial motif of the melody is called a motto
aria. The initial motif ("motto") usually appears twice,
it may be sung and then echoed by the instruments or
played instrumentally and then sung.

Passacaglia--An aria in triple-meter in which the vocal
line has the character of a continuous variation based
on a repeated (ostinato) bass motive that is shorter than
the strophe. Anel refers to this kind of aria as a
"Vocal passacaglia."\(^5\)

The recurrent instrumental and choral movements
are an important part of the musical structure of both
operas. These are: the ritornello, the sinfonia, and the
ritornello-chorus.

\(^5\)Wili Anel, Harvard Dictionary of Music, second
51.
Ritornello--The ritornello is an instrumental interlude which precedes or follows an aria, song, or scene and often are used to separate the strophes of individual pieces. The ritornelli are shorter and have fewer instrumental parts than the sinfonie. In early opera there is sometimes a slight musical relationship between the ritornello and the ensuing movement, perhaps in the melody or bass lines, or in the meter or harmonic center.

Sinfonia--The term usually designates a short instrumental passage designed to serve as an introduction to an opera or an important operatic scene. In Orfeo and Poppea the term usually designates an instrumental movement that is a separate musical unit, a unit that is not tied to a specific aria or duet.

Ritornello-chorus--The term designates a choral segment which after its first presentation is repeated one or more times after intervening material. This device serves to unify and to give form to a variety of short movements that make up a larger unit.

In addition, Monteverdi's harmonic terminology would have been modal, although neither a modal nor a tonal terminology can fully describe the expanded use of the modes which occurs frequently in both operas. Perhaps the term "expanded modality" would be a more appropriate term. In the history of musical style, the 17th-century is an era of transition from modality to
tonality. During this period there is a growing awareness of tonality and an increasing application of major/minor techniques. Several factors indicate this changing concept:

(1) a growing prevalence of the "tonal" modes -- the major and the minor the classical tonal system.

(2) an awakening of chord consciousness and an increasing discrimination in chord handling

(3) the effective planning of related cadence tones within a given mode or "key", and

(4) the immediate transposition of phrases or entire passages to a new pitch level.

These factors are evident in the operas to be discussed.
L'ORFEO PAVOLA IN MUSICA

Monteverdi's setting of Alessandro Striggio's libretto on the Euridice legend, produced in 1607, was his first operatic work. It established itself quickly in Italy, as is evidenced by its double publication and many performances. In examining the opera, we will not approach it expecting to find full-blown 18th-century structures, but will examine it in the perspective of the early 17th-century operatic style. In Orfeo there are eight arias: four are strophic bass arias; two are strophic songs; and two are miniature da capo arias. Each shows the influence of musical repetition either in the use of strophic basses or in the repetition of sections. In these cases musical repetition provides the basis for the formal structure.

**Strophic bass arias**

The first strophic bass aria is the prologue (MCO XI,3) sung by la Musica, the spirit of music. The aria recalls Orfeo's legendary power to charm both man

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6 The opera was produced in Mantua in February 1607, and was repeated there twice shortly afterwards; performed in Cremona in 1607; also performed in Turin, Florence, and Milan around 1610. Libretto published in Mantua in 1607. Score published at Venice in 1609 and reprinted in 1615.
and beast. The strophic bass is essentially retained for each of the five strophes. The only alterations are rhythmic changes to accommodate the rhythmic setting of the text in the vocal part. The example shows the similar first measures of each strophe, note the alteration in the fourth measure of the first strophe. The bass of the fourth measure is in diminution for the second, third and fourth strophes while the fifth strophe employs an extension of the first note with rhythmic alteration.
The prologue is framed by a four-measure ritornello that not only encloses the aria but also recurs in a shortened version after each strophe. In the complete form, the ritornello begins and ends on a di triad and shares this harmonic center with the first strophe of the prologue. The shortened ritornello omits the first measure and begins on the di triad of the second measure.
Ritornello (Shortened form)
(Allegro)
Each of the five strophes of the aria begin on a d minor triad. The first four strophes, though beginning in d end with an A triad. The shortened ritornello which succeeds each of these four strophes begins on an a triad and by descending thirds leads back to the initial tone which is now harmonized as a major triad. Therefore each of these strophes with its ritornello forms a repeating unit of alternating pitch levels: d A a D. The fifth strophe, again beginning on a d minor triad, ends on a half cadence in a minor and is concluded by a statement of the complete ritornello. The large harmonic scheme of the entire aria is:

Rit. I St. 1 Rit. II St. 2 Rit. III St. 3
d - D d - A a - D d - A a - D d - A

Rit. IV St. 4 Rit. V. St. 5 Rit VI
a - D d - A a - D d - a d - D

The second and third examples of the strophic bass aria are in Act III: "O tu ch'innanzi mort'a queste rive" and "Possente spirto." This act contains one of the opera's most dramatic scenes, the confrontation of Caronte by Orfeo. Orfeo has lost Euridice, and through the strength of his love and musical talent, hopes to reclaim her from the land of the dead. Caronte opens the third act with three strophes of a four-fold aria "O tu ch'innanzi mort'a queste rive" (MCO XI, 81) which is followed by Orfeo's extended aria "Possente spirto" (MCO XI, 84). After the "Possente spirto," the fourth strophe of Caronte's aria
appears in the manner of a ritornello (MCO XI, 100). As Orfeo has failed to move Caronte and win his help, it is dramatically appropriate that this fourth strophe recalls the strophic bass of the first three strophes. The recurrence of the strophic bass pattern becomes a musical symbol of Caronte's unbending nature. The whole scene may be diagrammed:

<table>
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<th>Orfeo</th>
<th>Caronte</th>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;O tu ch'innarni&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Possente spirto&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;O tu ch'innarni mort'a queste rive&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strophes 1-3</td>
<td>Strophes 1-5</td>
<td>Strophe 4</td>
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The highlight of the scene is the strophic bass aria "Possente spirto." This aria has been the source of considerable discussion because it exists in two versions—a simple and an ornate—both, presumably bearing Monteverdi's approval. The simple version dates from the 1607 production, while the ornate version, appeared in the 1609 publication. The example shows the opening measures of the six strophes, in order to indicate the aria's strophic construction. Although both versions are given, the ornate version is probably more typical of the music as

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8 Palisca, Baroque Music, 43.
it would have been performed. In this double version the choice intended was between Monteverdi's ornamentation and the singer's ornamented improvisation on the simple version. The simple version was hardly intended for performance.\footnote{Denis Arnold and Nigel Fortune, The Monteverdi Companion, New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 201.}
Of the aria's six strophes, the first four and the final strophe are typical examples of strophic bass repetition and melodic variation, while the fifth strophe is handled freely. The fifth strophe is a simple declamation which culminates in a downward chromatic slide in the bass.

The ritornelli that appear in the aria have a common bass which supports different upper voices at each of its three appearances. To date, the role of the ritornello, which creates a series of instrumental variations within the principal variation of the strophic bass aria, has not been commented on in the literature. This may be diagrammed:

A x A¹ x¹ A² x² A³ C A⁴
St. 1 Rit. I St. 2 Rit II St. 3 Rit III St. 4 St. 5 St. 6

Indeed Bukofzer's description of this aria as a "Master-
piece in five-fold strophic variation\(^{10}\) should be modified
to include the existence of a double variation: a three-
fold variation of the ritornello, and a five-fold variation
of the aria.

The fourth example of the strophic bass aria is
Orfeo's "Qual honor" (KCO XI, 121) from Act IV. The
initial measure of all three strophes are identical.

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\(^{10}\) Sukofzer, *Music in the Baroque Era*, 58.
Each strophe begins with a head motive, however, each strophe then proceeds freely. The aria is preceded by a ritornello which separates the three strophes. The constant quarter-note motion of the ritornello bass is continued throughout the aria and links the ritornello and aria together.

We find in Poppea, that the steadily moving bass becomes more evident and foreshadows the 'walking' bass of the late baroque.11

11CO XIII, 4 and 33.
Strophic songs

Within the opera, there are two examples of the strophic song: the shepherd's song "Mira che 'a de n'allegra" and Orfeo's "Vi ricorda o boschi ombrosi." In both examples, the bass and vocal lines are literally repeated for each textual strophe. In the first of these, "Mira ch' a de n'allegra" (MCO XI, 42) the sequential bass line is particularly interesting. The bass of the first six measures is constructed from a transposed pattern, up a second and then up a fourth.

Before the second strophe, a shortened form of the opening ritornello appears. This procedure of shortening the ritornello is quite similar to that employed in the prelude.
In this song Monteverdi occasionally disregards the natural accent of the text to favor that of the sequential bass pattern, Palisca notes that in this song "Monteverdi produces an interesting cross-rhythm by defying the natural accents of the text in the music, which is dominated by the square-cut sequences in the bass. Similar cross-rhythms are evident in the second strophe of the song. It is apparent that Monteverdi is not strictly making the music the servant of the text.

12 Palisca, Baroque Music, 40.
The second strophic song is Orfeo's aria "Vi ricorda' o boschi ombrosi" (HCO XI, 49). The five strophes are preceded and separated by a ritornello which is also unvaried. As Palisca points out, both the ritornello and aria demonstrate the hemiola alternation of 3/4 and 6/8 time. The consistent use of a basic rhythmic pattern throughout an entire aria is a rarely used device in these operas. In this example the repeated pattern serves to unify the entire aria. Because of their internal construction, the structure of each strophe will be discussed in the following section.

13 Ibid.
Arias in ternary form

Bukofzer has commented that "there are no da capo arias in the entire opera, the only hint at a return occurring in a short canzonetta, the ternary phrase structure of which can hardly be called a da capo proper."\textsuperscript{14} Besides illustrating the existence of the da capo aria in this opera, the following examples demonstrate the use of sectional repetition and the affect of such repetition on formal structure.

In the quotation given above Bukofzer was referring to "Ecco pur ch'a voi ritorno," a nine-measure passage sung by Orfeo at the beginning of Act II (HCO XI, 41). The passage consists of three phrases, of which the first and the last are identical. Thus, small though it is, it can be considered a miniature da capo aria. This short aria follows a "key" plan that was to become established in the later da capo aria, in that the B section is cast in the relative major. The A sections are in $G$, while the B section is in $B\flat$. The bass line of the B section begins as a transposition of the bass line of the A section. Example 10 shows the entire aria.

\textsuperscript{14}Bukofzer, Music in the Baroque Era, 60.
Ex. 10 The da capo aria "Ecco pur ch'è voi ritorno"
The tri-partite form of this aria goes further than the rhyme-scheme of the poetry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ecco pur ch'è voi ritorno</th>
<th>rhyme_scheme</th>
<th>music</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>care selve e piagge amate</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>da quel sol fatte beatre</td>
<td>b</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>per cui sol mie cott'han giorno</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecco pur ch'è voi ritorno</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecco pur ch'è voi ritorno</td>
<td>a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Disregarding the abba rhyme-scheme which could have been set in a ternary format, Monteverdi created an expanded format by repeating the initial textual phrase twice. Despite Monteverdi's directive that "the music should serve the poetry" he often ignores the textual rhyme for purely musical reasons.

Not mentioned by Bukofzer are two other solo sections that are organized on ternary principles. The aria "In questo lieto e fortunato giorno," which opens Act I (MCO XI, 9), contains a ternary form that perhaps was suggested by the repetition of the words "Lieto e fortunato giorno." The text consists of three strophes. The first and third have the same rhyme-scheme abbb, and the music for these two strophes is identical (except for barring). The music and rhyme scheme (abcd) of the middle strophe contrast that of the outer strophes. The
Ex. 11 The da capo aria "In questo lieto e fortunato giorno"
strophe beginnings are as follows:

First strophe: "In questo lieto e fortunato giorno. . ."  
Second strophe: "Caggi fatta e pieta. . ."  
Third strophe: "Dunque in si lieto e fortunato giorno. . ."

The strophic song "Vi ricorda o boschi ombrosi"  
(MOSO XI, 49) shows, in each of its strophes, a ternary  
musical organization. The following diagram shows how the  
rhyme-scheme relates to the musical repetition:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strophe 1</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>rhyme-scheme</th>
<th>music</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vi ricorda o boschi ombrosi</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vi ricorda o boschi ombrosi</td>
<td>a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de' miei lunghi aspri tormenti</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quando i sassi ai miei lamenti</td>
<td>b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rispondean fatti pietsi</td>
<td>a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vi ricorda o bosch'ombrosi</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vi ricorda o bosch'ombrosi</td>
<td>a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each strophe is composed of seven lines, with the first  
pair rhyming, the second pair rhyming, and the last three  
in rhyme. As in the aria "Ecco pur ch'a voi ritorno"  
Monteverdi, for the last two lines, merely repeats the  
bass and text of the first phrase.

In this aria, as in the "Ecco pur ch'a voi ritorno"  
Monteverdi's interest in musical form has overshadowed  
textual considerations. The rhyme-scheme of the text,  
 omitting the repetition of the last phrase, is a ternary  
form aa bb a. However, Monteverdi attains a ternary form  
by setting the textual bba as the B section, thus forming  
a larger unit which disregards the explicit textual rhyme.
Ex. 12 "Vi ricorda o boschi ombrosi" strophe 1
Ensembles

The opera contains four ensembles, three of these are constructed on the strophic bass plan and the fourth is an ABB structure. The style of these three strophic bass ensembles is similar to that of the two-voice continuo madrigals of Books VII and IX. The vocal lines, as in the two-voice continuo madrigal, move in parallel thirds and in short points of imitation.

In the first of these, "Alcun non sia" (MCO XI, 32) the first and third strophes are for two voices, while the second strophe is for three voices. The duet is a typical strophic bass structure. The example shows the opening measures of all three strophes.
The shepherds' duet "In questo prato adorno" (MCO XI, 44) includes two separate strophic basses and two different ritornelli. The first two strophes of the duet are constructed over an identical bass, and both are preceded by a lively ritornello in 3/2 time.
After the second strophe the meter shifts to 4/4 and a new ritornello is presented. The square-cut bass of this ritornello contrasts with that of the preceding ritornello. The bass line of the second ritornello essentially provides the bass for the duet's third strophe and for the ensuing five-part chorus "Dunque fa degno Orfeo" (MCO XI, 47). This chorus is simply an elaboration of the duet's third strophe. Example 15 compares these
two units.

DUE PASTORI - Strophe 3 of duet

Qui le Nape v'esse ache, ta semprefini, ta

Qui le Nape v'esse ache, ta semprefini, ta

Con la candie de di, ta fur vi ste a vogliero se

Con la candie de di, ta fur vi ste a vogliero se

Ritornello-
Five-part chorus "Dunque fa degno Orfeo".

Aria: "Dunque fa degno Orfeo del suo de la tua libra"

(Allegro)
The textual construction and rhyme scheme abba of the three duet strophes and the five-part chorus indicate that this whole segment should be considered as a musical unit. The following diagram shows the plan of this unit.

6/8 Rit. I St. 1 Rit. I 4/4 Rit. II St. 2. Rit. II St. 3

The duet "Chi ne consola ahi lassi" from Act II
(NCO XI 68) is a two-fold strophic bass structure.

Each of the two strophes is followed by a brief chorus
"Ahi caso acerbo" which serves as a unifying refrain.
not only for this duet, but also for a larger structure which will be discussed later. This choral refrain is given in the example.

\[\text{Andante}\]

\[\text{Ahi ca.s.o a. cer.-bo, Ahi fa.s.t'em. - pioe cru.de.le,}\]

\[\text{Ahi ca.s.o a. cer.-bo, Ahi fa.s.t'em. pioe cru.de.le,}\]

\[\text{Ahi ca.s.o a. cer.-bo, Ahi fa.s.t'em. pioe cru.de.le,}\]

\[\text{Ahi ca.s.o a. cer.-bo, Ahi fa.s.t'em. pioe cru.de.le,}\]

\[\text{Ahi ca.s.o a. cer.-to, Ahi fa.s.t'em. pioe cru.de.le,}\]

\[\text{Ahi stel.le in.giu.rio - se, Ahi cie.-lo a.va.ro.}\]

\[\text{Ahi stel.le in.giu.rio - se, Ahi cie.-lo a.va.ro.}\]

\[\text{Ahi stel.le in.giu.rio - se, Ahi cie.-lo a.va.ro.}\]

\[\text{Ahi stel.le in.giu.rio - se, Ahi cie.-lo a.va.ro.}\]

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15 See page 43.
The duet between Orfeo and Apollo from Act V

"Saliam cantand'al cielo" (MDO XI, 148) is an exception to the strophic bass procedure evident in the other ensembles. The duet is divided into three parts, A B B. The first section "Saliam cantand'al cielo," the second and third sections, "Dove he virtu verace degno premio di se dileetto e pace." The syllabic declamation in the B sections is contrasted by the dramatic and melismatic statements on the words "saliam" and "cantando" in section A. The B sections, which are constructed over the same bass, are an example of the Stimmtausch technique. The two voices exchange parts and proceed with a nearly literal repetition. The B sections are shown in the example.
This duet approaches the style of "Possente spirto" of Act III which is the opera's only other example of extensive melismatic writing. It is interesting to note that in the "Possente spirto," the ornamentations serve an expressive function. However, in this duet, the ornaments are used for madrigalistic word painting.
Formal structures within scenes and acts

The musical repetition evident in each of the individual arias and duets described above imposes a musical unity on a part of the drama. Besides these arias and duets, musical repetition is evident in the various refrain sections which unify larger segments of the drama and define these broader structures. The refrains are of three kinds: the sinfonia, the ritornello, and the ritornello-chorus.

Sinfonia

In Orfeo there are five different instrumental movements that are labeled 'sinfonia'. The term usually designates an instrumental movement that is a separate musical unit, a unit that is not tied to a specific aria or duet. These sinfonias are usually longer and have more instrumental parts than the ritornello. All of the sinfonias use a common meter (4/4) and share a harmonic center on g. Beyond this, the sinfonias are usually included as preludes to acts. Four of the five acts of Orfeo are preceded by sinfonias.

Within the opera there are three occurrences of instrumental pieces that are labeled 'sinfonia' but which function as a 'ritornello.' The sinfonia on page 83 that introduces 'Possaente spirto' recurs on page 103 where it
is used to link two recitatives. The sinfonia that first appeared at the opening of Act III (MCO XI, 75) is restated on pages 105 and 112, where it frames the final chorus of the act "Nulla impressa per huom si tanta invano." As the opening and closing sinfonie of the act (MCO XI, pages 75 and 112) are identical, the act is given a balance which occurs only once in this opera.

The sinfonia on page 128 has its initial appearance here as a link between the recitative and final chorus of Act IV "E la virtute un raggio" (MCO XI, 130). The sinfonie on pages 128 and 135 serve a similar function to those on pages 105 and 112, in framing the final chorus of Act IV and separating it from the dramatic action. Thus the sinfonia's repetition strongly unifies the end of the act.

Ritornello

The ritornello is the most frequent refrain. In general the ritornelli are shorter and have fewer instrumental parts than the sinfonie and are reserved to separate the strophes of arias and duets. Eight of the ten ritornelli serve this function. In respect to meter and mode, the ritornelli are more varied than the sinfonie. However, like the sinfonie, most of the ritornelli agree with the
mode of the following movement.

The ritornello before the prologue is used in a shortened version to separate the five strophes of this aria. This ritornello stands as an emblem of the prologue which reminds us of the legendary powers of Orfeo. The same ritornello in its complete form recurs at the end of Act II (MCO XI, 74) and again at the end of Act IV (MCO XI, 137). As this ritornello ushered in the prologue and closed the first two acts which took place in the Glades of Thrace, it is appropriate that its repetition should usher us back to the Glades of Thrace for the final act. The repetitions of this ritornello establish the dramatic continuity of these three acts.

The ritornello-chorus

As is pointed out by Howard, "In Monteverdi's operas the chorus has a similar function to the ritornello, that of giving form to a variety of short movements that make up each scene."16 Howard is speaking of literal repetitions of a choral movement and calls attention to several examples of this procedure. We have designated

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this type of repeated choral movement by the term 'ritornello-chorus.' In Orfeo there are three examples of this repetitive procedure: "Ahi caso acerbo" (MCO XI, 64), "Vieni Imeneo" (MCO XI, 11), and "Lasciate i monti" (MCO XI, 14).

The first of these, found in the closing section of Act II (MCO XI, 64-74), involves the strophic bass duet "Chi ne consola ahi lassi." The ritornello-chorus was first introduced as a response to Orfeo's lament "Tu se morta." The text, bass, and melodic lines of the chorus are derived from a passage which a few minutes earlier served both the messenger and the shepherd laments over Euridice's death (MCO XI, 55, 51, 64). The example shows the messenger's lament, the shepherd's lament and the ritornello-chorus "Ahi caso acerbo."

17 The instrumental 'ritornelli' in this score, were presumably all labeled 'ritornello' by Monreverdi. The term 'ritornello-chorus' is suggested for these choral movements which recur in a ritornello-like fashion.
the messenger's lament (continued)

The shepherd's lament

The ritornello-chorus "Ahi caso acerbo"
The ritornello-chorus "Ahi caso acerbo" (concluded)

In essence this section is a lamentation expressed by the messenger, the two shepherds, and the chorus. In its first appearance the chorus repeats the messenger’s initial text and music and adds new music for two new couplets. The other occurrences repeat only the messenger’s initial text "Ahi caso acerbo, ahi falt’empio e crudele, ahi stelle in giuriose, ahi cie l’avaro." As mentioned earlier, the two strophes of the shepherds’ duet "Chi non consola" are built over a strophic bass. The plan of this whole unit may be diagrammed as follows:
A more elaborate application of the ritornello-chorus scheme is found in Act I (HCO XI, 11-29) where a series of recitatives are tied together by three different ritornelli, two choral and one instrumental. Each ritornello is stated twice in a pattern that suggests a modified arch form, A B C B C A.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ritornello-chorus</th>
<th>Nymph chorus</th>
<th>Recitative</th>
<th>&quot;Lasciate&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Vienimeneo&quot;</td>
<td>Ritornello-chorus</td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shepherd Recitative</th>
<th>Orfeo Recitative</th>
<th>Euridice Recitative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ritornello-chorus</td>
<td>Ritornello-chorus</td>
<td>Ritornello-chorus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Lasciate&quot;</td>
<td>Chorus</td>
<td>&quot;Vienimeneo&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The complete opera as an entity

There are two broad aspects of musical repetition which affect the entire opera. These are: a closed harmonic scheme, and the effective use of the melodically outlined diminished fifth to signify grief. Bukofzer in discussing the modal and tonal qualities of early Baroque music noted the lack of tonal direction and comments that the experimental chordal effects and preference for major and minor modes are clearly factors in the clarification which led to tonality. 17 Many elements of tonality are present in Orfeo, but the composition as a whole reveals a distinctly modal treatment--although it is certainly an expanded modality. The almost exclusive presence of major and minor modes, the use of consonant progressions including dominant-tonic cadences, and movement from one modal center to another are evidences of the growing sense of the major/minor tonal system. Indeed, we shall note stronger evidence of this development in Poppea.

Although Denis Stevens in his recent edition of Orfeo does not discuss the modal and tonal elements of Monteverdi's style, he does state in his preface that:

Modern key-signatures have been used whenever the tonality of a given section seems reasonably clear. When modal writing occurs (as in some of the choruses) the original key signa-

17Bukofzer, Music in the Baroque Era, 12.
ture has been retained.\textsuperscript{18} It is interesting to note that in Stevens' edition, the ritornello of the prologue was given a $d$ minor signature and in its eight measures, nine accidentals have been added.\textsuperscript{19} However, in the Malipiero edition, the editor left this example without a signature and added only three accidentals. It is apparent that neither terminology is appropriate and this example affirms the necessity for the qualification 'modal' to be understood in all references. Indeed, \textit{Orfeo} is more modal than major or minor. The Dorian mode (either in natural position or transposed up a fourth) and the Mixolydian mode are the most frequently used.

Musical repetition plays a great part in the harmonic planning throughout the opera.\textsuperscript{20} In certain choruses and instrumental movements, Monteverdi achieves a clear harmonic design and cohesive structure by the repetition of short phrases at different pitch levels. The ritornello that opens the prologue is built from four phrases that enter successively on $d$, $a$, $F$, $d$, thus suggesting the tonal centers of: tonic, dominant, mediant, and subdominant. 

\begin{flushright}
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\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{19}There are nine accidentals if we exclude the modal $c\#$.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{20}The harmonic plans of various segments have been discussed above. See pages: 14 and 24.
\end{flushright}
and tonic.

Ritornello

(Alegro)
Two other ritornelli are constructed in this fashion. The first of these precedes the two strophes of the shepherd's aria "Mira ch'a se n'allettà" from Act II (MCO XI, 42). Within the four measures of the ritornello, a short bass motive enters four times on C, F, B♭, and C: tonic, subdominant, subtonic, and tonic.

Ritornello

In the ritornello that precedes the shepherds' duet "In questo prato adorno" (MCO XI, 43) a bass motive enters on E, d, F, B♭, and B♭-b: tonic, dominant, subtonic, mediant, and tonic.

21 The phrase in F lacks a B♭.
Similar to these ritornelli is the *moresca* that concludes the opera (MCO XI, 153). The *moresca* is constructed from a four-measure phrase which appears on G, E, G, D, where there is a tonal relation between subdominant, subtonic, dominant, and tonic.

*Moresca*

(Allegro)
In addition to these instrumental passages, two choral passages "Lasciate i monti" (MCO XI, 23) and "Ecco Orfeo" (MCO XI, 38) demonstrate an increased chordal consciousness. The first two sections of "Lasciate i monti" are built on a G center. The G triad is stated on the first beat of every measure except measures four and eight, which are cadential passages: V vii/G V I.
In the chorus "Ecco Orfeo" half of the structure is devoted to an extended cadential passage on "Che nulla e più che da bramar gli avanzi." Despite the short thematic figure which enters on all degrees of the scale, an established G harmony is evident that has the firm support of dominant and subdominant harmonies. The example shows the concluding section of this chorus.
Despite the opening toccata which appears in \( \text{\textcopyright} \) in the Malipiero edition, the opera taken as a whole, is a closed harmonic unit in \( \text{\textcopyright} \). The opening toccata bears the inscription: "toccata che' si suona avanti il levar de la tela volte con tutti li istromenti, e si fa un tuono piu alto volendo sonar le trombe con le sordine."\(^{22}\) Wolfgang Osthoff has pointed out that the sound of muted trumpets was popular around 1600 and the reduced sound produced by the muted trumpets was appropriate for Orfeo.\(^{23}\) Osthoff also has noted that when mutes were used, the pitch of the instruments was raised a tone and that all the instruments would have played the toccata in \( \text{\textcopyright} \) to accommodate the muted trumpets.\(^{24}\) In the new edition by Denis Stevens, the toccata is written with a \( \text{\textcopyright} \) major signature.

The prologue is a closed structure in \( \text{\textcopyright} \). This unit has been discussed above.\(^{25}\) As Acts I and II both occur in the Glades of Thrace and are framed by the repeated ritornello of the prologue, the two acts should

\(^{22}\)Toccata which is played three times before the raising of the curtain, by all the instruments and is played a tone higher if the sound of muted trumpets is desired."

\(^{23}\)Wolfgang Osthoff, "Trombe sordine," Archiv für Musikwissenschaft XIII (1936), 77.

\(^{24}\)ibid.

\(^{25}\)See page 14.
be considered as a dramatic and musical unit. Although this unit is a closed structure in $\text{c}$, extensive use is made of modes on $g$.

Act III is a closed unit in $g$. Act IV opens in $g$ and remains for the most part at a $g$ pitch level. However the act ends in $a$. As Orfeo has failed to bring Euridice back, the scene is dramatically unresolved. Monteverdi intensifies this unresolved mood and builds to the climax and intensity of the final act by withholding a return to the original pitch level of the act. Act V opens and closes in $a$. It seems that one cannot deny the structural importance of harmonic centers in this work. Indeed, Monteverdi must have been aware of the high proportion of modes on $d$ and $g$. The consistent use and repetition of these modes is an important part of the opera's unity.

Beyond these harmonic considerations, there is a thematic motive which attains great significance in the opera. This is the melodic interval of the descending diminished fifth, which in each case involves the expression of grief or sadness over the loss of Euridice. This interval first appears in Euridice's joyful song from Act I (MCO XI, 22), which already has an undercurrent of impending tragedy. The diminished fifth $d$ descending to $g\#$, which appeared in this song, recurs in Act II when Euridice's death is announced. The example shows these two passages.
Ex. 26 Use of descending diminished fifth
a. Euridice's song "Io non dirò qual sia"

b. Messenger's recitative "A te se vengo Orfeo"

Monteverdi may or may not have been aware of introducing Euridice with the same poignant interval which was later to announce her death, but his awareness of her impending tragedy would have been enough to give the music a tragic undertone. There are numerous examples throughout the opera.
that support the association of the descending diminished fifth with this expression of grief.26

26 There are numerous examples of this use of the diminished fifth throughout the opera. (Haliliaro edition Volume XI, page, system, measures) KCD XI: 22, 3, 1; 36, 4, 1–3; 37, 1, 1–4; 57, 2, 2–3; 57, 3, 1; 60, 1, 2; 69, 2, 1; 61, 5, 2–3; 62, 1, 1–3; 124, 1, 1–2; 124, 2, 1; 125, 2, 2–3; 126, 1, 1–2; 126, 2, 1–2; 126, 3, 2; 127, 1, 1–3; 128, 2, 1; 141, 1, 1; 147, 3, 1–3.
L'INCRONAZIONE DI POPPEA

Monteverdi's last opera, Poppea, on a libretto by Francesco Busenello, was lost until 1888. Since its rediscovery, various studies have been undertaken by Kretzschmar, Goldschmidt, Benvenuti, and Abert but none deal with the question of musical repetition. Musical repetition plays an important role in the clarification of forms and overall unity of Poppea. However, the extended length, the more settled orchestral groupings, and the diminished choral significance in the opera make very different demands on the role of musical repetition as a unifying device. Indeed, the whole musical compactness is significantly less than that of Orfeo. In his final opera, Monteverdi relies much more on clearly defined and varied aria and duet formats and shorter dramatic units to accomplish a cohesive structure.

In Poppea the aria formats are clearly distinguishable. They are longer, more varied and offer a more extensive means of organizing the solo vocal material of the opera. There are twenty-three arias in the opera: nine strophic bass arias, three 'vocal passacaglia', two arias titled 'passacaglia', six da capo arias, two through-

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27 Hans F. Redlich, Claudio Monteverdi, Life and Work, 12.
composed songs, and one motto aria.

**Strophic bass arias**

As in *Orfeo*, the strophic bass format is the most common. Redlich's statement that "the aria displays a marked preference for the da capo form"\(^{28}\) is in error. In *Poppea* there are nine arias and one duet in strophic bass form against six arias and one duet in da capo form. The nine strophic bass arias can be subdivided into three kinds: three are constructed like those in *Orfeo* in that the strophic bass for each strophe shows only very slight modifications; two are constructed over either a two-section strophic bass or two separate strophic basses; and four are built over 'quasi' strophic basses which admit considerable variation to both the vocal and bass lines.

In the three arias that are constructed like the strophic bass arias in *Orfeo*, the strophic bass repeats for each strophe with only slight modifications. These are: the dialogue aria of Poppea and Ottone "Ad altri tocca in sorte" from I, 11 (MCO XIII, 95), the nurse's aria "Il giorno femminil" II, 12 (MCO XIII, 168), and Arnalta's "Oblivion soave" II, 12 (MCO XIII, 185). As

\(^{28}\)Redlich, *Claudio Monteverdi, Life and Works*, 15.
the nurse's two-fold strophic bass aria is identical to those observed earlier, it requires no particular comment. However, the other two arias are of special interest.

Arnae's "Oblivion soave" II, 12 (MGG XIII, 185), is a continuous unit of three strophes over a bass that is scarcely altered. Between the three strophes, instead of a ritornello there is a very brief codetta for the continuo, which is a repetition of the two preceding measures of the strophe.

Although, as usual, the voice parts are freely varied, the last phrase of each strophe concludes with a literal repetition of the musical line which closes the first strophe.
Ex. 28 Comparison of last phrases of "Oblivion Soave"

As the last phrase of each strophe with the added codetta constitute a refrain, this is another illustration of musical repetition that goes beyond that of the text.
"Ad altri tocca in sorte" I, 11 (MCO XIII, 95) is a dialogue in strophic bass form between Ottone and Poppea that consists of six strophes sung alternately by the two characters. All six strophes share the same strophic bass, which has only slight rhythmic modifications from strophe to strophe.

Ex. 29a Strophic bass of Ottone's strophes in I, 11. (Strophes 1,3,5)

Ex. 29b Strophic bass of Poppea's strophes in I, 11. (Strophes 2,4,6)
The first strophe is preceded by a ritornello that is repeated between each of the ensuing strophes. The six ritornelli are literal repetitions at three different pitch levels: 3, 9, 4.29 Poppea's final strophe, which is a tone higher than her two preceding strophes, is a symbol of her determined spirit. Even the ritornello before this last strophe is transposed from 9 to 4.

The strophes and ritornelli alternate keys as indicated in the following diagram of the scene:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ritornello</th>
<th>Strophe</th>
<th>Ottone</th>
<th>Poppea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I 3</td>
<td>I 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II 9</td>
<td>II 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III 9</td>
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Schrade observed that this "Musical structure... organizes the whole scene on a grandiose scale,"30 but he goes on to describe the scene in somewhat incorrect terms. "It is a double strophic variation in alternation on two bass melodies and with two ritornelli, all doubled

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29 The instrumental movement is called a 'sinfonia' in the score, however, it is simply a ritornello as defined on page 5.

30 Schrade, _Monteverdi, Creator of Modern Music_, 363.
in order to give the dialogue an alternating form and also a superior uniting organization." As has been indicated, there is only one strophic bass and one ritornello. Nevertheless, an 'alternating form' can be seen in the harmonic scheme described above, and also in the cadences of the strophes. Ottone's three strophes all end on a half cadence in contrast to the strong authentic cadence of Poppea's strophes.

Ottone-Strophe 1

Ottone-Strophe 2

Ottone-Strophe 3

31 Schrade, Monteverdi, Creator of Modern Music, 363.
While the change of pitch level for each strophe may merely accommodate the two vocal parts, the cadence forms emphasize the contrast between the two dramatic personalities—the vacillating, unsure Ottone and the determined, decisive Poppea.
Similar to these are the two strophic bass arias "O sciocchi o frati" II, 13 (MCO XIII, 188), and "Sento un certo" II, 5 (MCO XIII, 135). In light of the passage just cited from Schrade, it is interesting to note that the aria "O sciocchi o frati" really is constructed over two bass melodies. Strophes one and four are built over one bass melody, while strophes two and three are built over a second strophic bass. The two basses only slightly resemble each other.

Ex. 31 Comparison of strophic basses from "O sciocchi o frati"

The aria's four strophes are separated by a ritornello that is heard three times.
Between the first three strophes and their ritornelli there is a regular alternation between duple and triple meter, the ritornello always being triple. Whereas, for the beginning of the fourth strophe, the strophe itself takes up the triple meter. At the beginning of strophe four the similarity of the first phrase of the bass of strophes one and four and the bass of the ritornello is apparent.

Ritornello bass

Strophic bass for strophe 1 and 4.

Ex. 32 Comparison of strophic bass of strophe one and four with ritornello bass.

Although it is a strophic bass aria, the form is a miniature arch form A B B A, a design that appears in
three other segments of this opera.

Valetto's aria "Sento un certo" from II, 5 (MCO XIII, 135), like the preceding aria, is a strophic bass aria that is constructed over a two-section bass. Each of the two strophes is divided into a two-part form: A B A' B. Under the A' section of the second strophe, the A strophic bass is slightly altered and extended. The example compares the ground basses of the two A sections. The B sections are literal repetitions.

Ex. 33a The bass of the A sections of "Sento un certo"
Ex. 33b The B section of "Sento un certo"

The two strophes are separated by a five-measure ritornello that is also repeated after the second strophe. Following the repeats indicated in the Malipiero edition, the section can be diagrammed:

Aria Ritornello Aria Ritornello Aria Ritornello
A A B x A' B x A' B x

There are four arias that are constructed over a 'quasi' strophic bass. The 'quasi' strophic bass is not as rigidly maintained as the usual strophic bass as found in Orfeo. The 'quasi' strophic bass undergoes greater modification from strophe to strophe. Although in these examples:
"Caro tetto amoroso" I, 1; "La pratica coi regi" I, 4; "Se Nerone perso ha l'ingegno" I, 5; and "Sprezza me quarta" II, 8; there is a literal repeat of a part of the bass, other sections of the bass show considerable freedom.

In the first of these, Ottone's aria "Caro tetto amoroso" II, 1 (MCO XIII, 14), it is interesting that Monteverdi does not handle the form as would have been most obvious from the libretto, as a four-fold strophic bass aria. Although the librettist has provided four identical strophes, Monteverdi treats the first strophe as a recitative and begins the aria with the second strophe of text. Underlying the three following strophes in triple meter is a bass that repeats at the beginning and at the end, while admitting considerable melodic variation in the middle.
Ex. 34 Comparison of strophic bass lines of "Caro tetto amoroso"

A descending bass motive is a common link between the recitative strophe, the ritornello, and the three strophes of the aria.

Recitative:

Ritornello:
In I, 4, Arnalta's "La pratica col regi" (MCO XIII, 43) consists of five strophes. However, the bass line does not depart systematically in the middle as in the previous example. In the beginning of each strophe, the bass presents a basic motive. After this motive, the line is freely developed. The example shows the bass of three of the strophes.
The strophes of this aria, which is part of a larger structural unit, are separated from one another by a repeated ritornello and two short vocal refrains.

In 1, 5, (MCO XIII, 55) the text for the nurse's aria and recitative "Se Nerone vo ravi l'ingegno" consists of three four-line strophes that are similarly constructed. The three strophes have two different rhyme-schemes: strophe one and three, abab; strophe two, abba. The first three lines of strophe one and the entire third strophe, which share the same rhyme-scheme, are set over a strophic bass, while the fourth line of strophe one and the entire second strophe are set in recitative. The bass of strophe three is altered to accommodate the full four lines of text, whereas in strophe one, only three lines of the strophe are set.

Strophe 1

Strophe 2

32 These will be discussed later on page 113.
Ottone's aria "Sprenza me quarto," in II, 8 (NCO XIII, 151), is preceded by a four-measure ritornello in triple meter. The ritornello bass is the source of the strophic bass of the aria. The ritornello bass is divided into two segments A and B which are transposed, inverted, and rhythmically extended to form the strophic bass.

This bass procedure is very similar to that of Poppea's aria "Speranza tu mi vedi," I, 4 (NCO XIII, 39). Indeed, there is a vague similarity in the bass lines themselves.
Each of the three strophes of this aria, consists of two lines. However, Monteverdi imposes a musical repetition by repeating the text and music of the second line a fourth higher. By means of this repetition, Monteverdi creates a three-part scheme within each strophe. As the first phrase is in $d$ and the second phrase is in $g$, the repetition of this second phrase a fourth higher, brings back the original pitch level. In Orfeo Monteverdi had used a similar procedure when he repeated the first phrase in "Ecco pur ch'a voi ritorno" and in "Vi ricorda o boschi ombrosi." In all three examples the result was a ternary structure which brought back the original pitch level in the final segment of an enlarged format.

*Arias over a ground bass: the 'vocal passacaglia'*

The term strophic bass has been used above to describe the recurrent bass line of the strophic songs and strophic bass arias. In each case the strophic bass corresponded to the length of the textual strophe. The examples that will be discussed below are constructed over a short ground bass motive that is repeated several times for each textual strophe. Each is described as a 'passacaglia' or as Apel suggests, a 'vocal passacaglia.'\footnote{Willi Apel, *Harvard Dictionary*, 51.} In *Poppea* there are
three arias of this type: "Ma che dico" and "A speranza sublimi" from I, 10, and "Vengo, vengo la morte" from I, 8.

Nerone's aria "Ma che dico" (MCO XIII, 90), which is in triple-meter, has two ostinato motives.

![Motive 1](image)

![Motive 2](image)

The first motive is presented six times in the first part of the aria, with the insertion at measure ten of a free measure. The second part of the aria begins at measure fifteen and after the opening measure, the second motive is presented four times.

Poppaea's triple-meter aria "A speranza sublimi" (MCO XIII, 91) follows directly. The bass presents a motive that is heard twice.

![Motive](image)
Both "Na che dico" and "A speranza sublimi" are unified by a rhythmic pattern in the upper voice. This represents a rhythmical loosening of the vocal and bass motives of the two arias that have slight rhythmic similarities.

- Poppea voice part: \[ \text{ground bass: } \]

- Nerone voice part: \[ \text{ground bass: } \]

Seneca's aria "Vengo, vengo la morte" I, 8 (MCC XIII, 74) has an ostinato pattern that is two-measures long.

The ostinato occurs five times before the bass breaks away to a freely invented line. The designation of this aria as a passacaglia is questionable because of the freely developed bass line and the presence of quadruple-meter rather than triple-meter. Walker has noted that although triple-meter is usual, duple-meter is also possible in the passacaglia. 34

Arias labeled 'Passacaglia'

There are two arias, "Fer capiri" and "Giove nel tuo bel volto" from III, 8(MCO XIII, 235-236), which are labeled 'passacaglia.' However these are not constructed over a rigorous ground bass and the bass lines have none of the character of an ostinate. Monteverdi's meaning is obscure and as Walker has shown, the term passacaglia did not originally mean a ground bass, but implied that a ritornello must be supplied. 35

In "Fer capiri" (MCO XIII, 235) the ostinato pattern consists only of a cadential phrase V-I that is emphasized by an octave jump and which appears at various pitch levels.

35 Ibid., 212.
(MCO XIII, 236), which is also entitled 'passacaglia'
in the score, has two short patterns which undergo
considerable sequential development.

pattern 1

pattern 2

The first pattern is stated three times and the second
pattern appears twice. Despite the presence of triple-
meter, the bass is not a true ostinato and the song
can not be considered a passacaglia.

The da capo arias

The A B A format, which was found only in miniature
form in Orfæo, is frequently used in Poppea. Usually the
arias are more extended than in the earlier work, but
frequently the final A is abridged. There are six arias
that belong to the da capo category: two are full da capo
arias ("Felice cor mio," II, 10; "Io mi compiacio," III, 8)
and four are abridged ("E pure io torno," I, 1; "Sien sei
pazzo," I, 4; "No difesa Poppea," II, 15; "O felice Drusilla,"
III, 1).
Like Orfeo's aria "Ecco pur ch'a voi ritorno," Brusilla's song "Felice cor mio," from II, 10 (Messa XIII, 164), illustrates the harmonic plan of the late baroque da capo format. There is a principal section (C major) a contrasting subordinate section (G minor), and a somewhat modified repeat of the principal section (G major). In both the A and B sections of the aria, there are extended coloratura sequences. In the B section "Hoggi, hoggi spero che Ottone," the bass participates in the imitation of the vocal line.
In the da capo, the girl's excitement is given fullest range and expression, through extended usage of coloratura on the word 'festeggiami.' In the final four measures of the aria, which have moved from triple to quadruple meter, the bass progresses in a long sequential pattern until the cadence. This pattern is reflected in the intensified vocal part, which sequentially reiterates the text "festeggiami nel sen". Following a long flourish on "lieto mio core," the aria concludes.
Venus's da capo aria "Io mi compiacio" in III, 8
(MCO XIII, 244), is interesting because of the recurrent
bass motive that underlies the introductory instrumental
phrase and appears five more times during the aria.

Following the repetition of the instrumental introduction,
which has moved from $F$ to $G$, the B section begins. Six
measures before the end of the aria, the A section returns.
The bass repeats the opening two measures and the last
measure of the bass of the A section.

( measures 1-2)

(final measure)

Ex. 47 Measures from the bass of the A section used in A$	extsuperscript{1}$
The vocal line presents one sustained tone and one long
coloratura on "Dea." Although this word is part of the
text of the B section, here it balances Venus's opening
"Io."
The aria "E pure io torno," which opens I, I (MCO XIII, 12), is a simple A B A' construction, in which the A' repeats only one phrase of the A section. The A section "E pure io torno qual linea al centro, qual foco a sfera a qual ruscella al mare" is built over a series of rising scale motives. The most frequent of these is the three-note rise filling a major or minor third.

The B section climaxes in the coloratura of the cry "Ah", which slowly rises above a bass that descends through an entire octave. At the closing words of the B section "che sta il mio sol qui dentro," which allude to the beloved one, the meter and tempo are changed. This kind of change is a frequent feature of the closing part of a triple-meter aria, and perhaps it was the definite intention of the composer to underscore these words by means of the change in meter and tempo.

Arnalta's da capo aria "Ben sei pazza" from I, 4 (MCO XII, 48) is similar to the short da capo "Ecco pur ch'a voi ritorno" from Orfeo, as far as overall length is concerned. The A section, "Ben sei pazza se credi che ti possano far contenta e salva," is built over an angular bass pattern. The vocal line in contrast to this, is
restrained and moves mainly by step. The B section "un garzon cieco et una cieco calva" is also constructed over an angular bass pattern. However in this case, the bass line is in canon at the octave with the vocal line. The bass line, which is delayed two beats, repeats the vocal line until the last three notes. The A section makes a brief return for two and one-half measures, repeating the music and text of the first phrase of the A section. The example gives the entire aria.
Amor's brief aria "Ho difesa Poppea" from II, 15 (VCO XIII, 107) is also a da capo aria. The aria, which is in triple-meter, is almost entirely syllabic and consists of a series of sequentially developed phrases.

The opening phrase of A "Ho difesa Poppea" is immediately stated a third higher. The same procedure is used in the B section where the phrase "vuo farla imperatrice" is stated once and immediately restated a third higher. This
is followed by a single statement of the first phrase of A at its original pitch level.

Drusilla's solo scene from II, I "O felice Drusilla" (MCO XIII, 199) is similar in spirit to her aria in II, 10. The da capo is filled with her high-spirited joy of life, as can be seen from the opening section.

\[ \text{(Allegretto)} \]

The opening phrase is repeated just before the close of the A section, in effect making this section a ternary structure within itself. The B section begins "se le mie vesti" and contains short points of imitation. After the B section, the opening four measures of the A section return.

**Through-composed songs**

There are two through-composed songs "Chi professa virtù" from the prologue; and "Signor sempre mi vedi," from I, 3. These show textual and musical repetitions
which relate to a discussion of musical repetition and musical unity. The aria "Chi professa virtu" (MCO XIII, 4) is also of interest for its stylistic implications. Like the aria "Qual honor" from Orfeo, this song shows an affinity to the style of later baroque arias. Most noteworthy is the very active bass which supports the song.

There are three repetitions of the text "se protetto non e de la fortuna." The first two repetitions are similar for the first phrase "se protetto non e non e, but the third repetition, which is entirely independent in its nearly syllabic treatment of the text, adds a flourish on "non" and a series of passing tones at "la fortuna" and the aria is brought to a close.

Poppa's song "Signor, sempre mi vedi" in I, 3 (MCO XIII, 33) is similar in its technique and style to the "Chi professa virtu." Poppa's song, which is kept throughout in a slow tempo, has a formal scheme A A' B C C'. The vocal line of the A' section represents a slight variation on the bass and text of A, while the C is merely a repetition of the C section transposed up a fourth. The
bass line of this song is a slowly moving, continuous bass. In the first A phrase, a bass pattern is established that is literally repeated for the A' section. In section C, the bass pattern is transposed up a fourth for the C' section.

Ex. 54 Bass pattern for C and C' sections of "Signor, sempre me vedi"

The motto aria

There is one aria from Poppea that foreshadows the motto arias which become prominent in the latter part of the century. 36 In I, 4 Poppea's aria "Speranza tu mi vai" (MCO XIII, 39) shows the basic characteristics: there is an instrumental introduction which presents the opening motive of the aria, Poppea sings the opening two lines of

36 Bukofzer, Music in the Baroque Era, 132.
the aria, the instrumental introduction is repeated, and then the entire aria is sung. The motto line not only sets the rhythmic and melodic patterns in motion, but also the dramatic significance of the first two lines of the text "speranza tu mi vai, il cor accarezzando" summarize the feeling of the entire aria. The bass line for this aria is merely a simplification of the bass of the preceding ritornello. 37

37 See page 116.
Ensembles

Like the ensembles in Orfeo, most of Poppea's ensembles are performed by secondary figures (the allegories of the prologue, the two soldiers, the domestics, the servants of Seneca, the consuls and tribunes) and therefore are not a prominent part of the dramatic expression. Monteverdi had used the chorus on fourteen occasions in Orfeo, usually as a five-part chorus common to his madrigal style. The number of smaller ensembles was more restricted, there being only four. Three of these were strophic bass formats similarly in the continuo madrigal style and the fourth was an ABB structure.

The decline of the chorus, prompted either by economic necessity or by a preference for solo singing, was evident in the final version of Poppea, where an expanded number of small ensembles (duets in particular) assumed the functions of the chorus. 38 Altogether, Poppea contains eight duets and one trio. These nine ensembles are freed from the strict confinement of the strophic bass format, which is used only once, and the ensembles emerge in a variety of forms. Of the eight duets: four are

38Donald J. Grout, A Short History of Opera (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1947), 80.
built over an ostinato pattern in the bass, three are through-composed forms, and one is ternary. The only trio of the opera combines both strophic bass and ostinato variation.

**Ostinato duets**

The ground bass for three of the four ostinato duets involve the basic pattern given in example

![Example Pattern]

These three duets fall at important positions in the opera, the opening prologue (MCO XIII, 9), the middle of the opera II, 7 (MCO XIII, 146), and the final duet III, 8 (MCO XIII, 246). The first of these, the duet "Human non celeste core" (MCO XIII, 9) occurs near the end of the prologue. It is sung by Fortuna and Virtu and is the first of a series of love duets in the opera. The duet is built over an interesting bass line which is constructed from a series of repeated descending scalar motives. The pattern of repetitions includes the octave species g-G, f#-F#, e-E, followed by a descending scale from d-G and cadence. The repetition of this scalar motif outlines the four-note ostinato g, f#, e, d of the ostinato duets.
The vocal lines of the duet employ canonic entrance during the first two repetitions of the bass (measures 1-8). However, during the next two repetitions, the two voices move freely in points of imitation and parallel thirds.

The "Bucca, Bucca" II, 7 (MCO XIII, 146) between Lucano and Nerone is an extended duet praising the beauty of the seductive Poppea. Nerone's only interjections are the dramatic "ah!" and "ah! destina," while Lucano carries the fast-moving, florid vocal line. The duet is built over the ostinato pattern outlined in "Human non e." Like the opening of the "Human non e," the first four measures of
"Bocca, Bocca" move down a diatonic C major scale from c to d. In the fifth and sixth measures the ostinato pattern appears and continues to move steadily in dotted breves throughout the duet.

The third occurrence of this ostinato pattern (G F# E D) is found in the closing love duet "Fur ti miro" from III, 8 (MCC XIII, 246). The aria has four sections A B B A. The four-note ostinato is the basis of the A sections, while a new bass line is formed for the B sections.

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Schrade considered this duet a fully developed da capo form. However, the absence of contrasting harmonic level and material in the B section, indicate that the structure of the duet is better described as a two-part arch form A B B A.

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A chief attraction of the piece rests in the almost breathless exchange of the two voices, in which the highest ecstasy of the lovers, who are finally united, is expressed. In the first part of the duet the two voices are linked in imitation. The two voices function as one. Each seems to be the logical response to the other.

The ostinato motive of the duet from III, 5, "Non più s'interporrà noia o dimora" (MGGO XIII, 222) between Nerone and Poppea, is not related to the four-note motive of the other three love duets of the opera. The duet is similar to the aria from I, 10 in that the bass has three
different ostinato motives. The first six measures of both strophes are quite similarly constructed even though the ostinato pattern is not yet present. The bass lines of these six measures are typical strophic basses.

Opening measures of Strophe 1

Opening measures of Strophe 2

In measure seven of strophe one, the first ostinato pattern enters:

followed in measure nine by the second pattern:
and in measure twenty by the third pattern:

\[ \text{Symbol} \]

The motives appear in the same sequence for both strophes of the duet. However, the vocal lines of the second strophe vary slightly from those of the first strophe.

**Duets in ternary form**

There is one ensemble from the opera that is in ternary form. This is the duet "Hor che Seneca e morto?" from II, 7 (MGG XIII, 141), which is sung by Nerone and Lucano. The duet shows an A B A' construction: A-- measures 1-32; B-- measures 32-56; A'-- measures 56-66.

The vocal parts of all three sections contain extended points of imitation and parallel movement. Their elaborate ornamentation requires the greatest vocal agility. After an independent line, "Hor che Seneca e morto, Cantiamo, cantiamo Lucano," the A section begins. The vocal part, which is always florid, recalls a madrigalistic setting of such words as "cantiamo," "ridente," and "glorie." At times the bass is concerted with the voice; at others, it serves purely as harmonic support. The triple-meter 2 section contrasts the excessively florid duple-meter
A section. The bass line, which is freely developed, parallels and imitates the vocal lines.

**Through-composed duets**

The two through-composed duets "Imperiamo da g'occhi" 1, 2 (MCO XIII, 27) and "A te sovrano Augusta" from III, 8 (MCO XIII, 240) are typical examples of the two-voice continuo madrigal style, the two voices move together in a series of points of imitation and parallel intervals. There is one through-composed duet which has an arch form similar to that of the final duet of the opera. In this duet "O cero" (MCO XIII, 139) sung by the two domestics, Damigella and Valletto, one can conclude from the bass, since the upper voices are missing in part, that a similar symmetry was intended A B B' A'.
The B section starts on the upbeat to measure five and continues to the first half of measure fifteen. In measures fifteen to eighteen, the bass line of the B section is repeated in part. The bass for part A' begins in the nineteenth measure and literally repeats except for the initial octave jump.

The trio—"Non morire Seneca"

Of the nine ensembles of the opera, there is only one trio, "Non morire Seneca," from Act II, 3 (KCO XIII, 128). The trio is composed of three sections: "Non morire Seneca," "It per me morire non vo," and "Questa vitae dolce troppo." Like the previous example, these three sections are in arch form A B C C' B A. The A sections are built on ostinato repetitions of a rising chromatic motive in all three voices.
The B sections present a falling diatonic motive, which is imitated in the three voices.

However, unlike the A and B sections which merely repeat the initial text and music, the second occurrence of the C section, presents a new text.

The two halves of this arch are separated by a seven-measure ritornello which is stated after the first B section and after the final A section. The bass line of the ritornello is drawn from that of the C section.
Incidentally, the bass line of the C sections and the ritornello have the same rhythmic pattern as the vocal line of the strophic song "Vi ricorda o boschi ombrosi" from Orfeo.

Vi ricorda: \[ \text{Diagram} \]
Ritornello bass: \[ \text{Diagram} \]
C section bass: \[ \text{Diagram} \]

The trio and its ritornelli can be diagrammed:
Formal structures within scenes and acts.

Each of the individual arias and ensembles shows the effects of musical repetition which imposes a unity on a segment of the dramatic action. At times, these encompass most of a scene; while at others, only a short part of a scene is involved. Besides these arias and ensembles, the unifying effect of musical repetition is evident in the various refrain sections. These are of three kinds: Sinfonia, ritornelli, and vocal refrains. The most frequent refrains are the instrumental sinfonia and ritornelli.

Sinfonia

As in Orfeo, the sinfonie distinguish themselves from the ritornelli in function and overall length. In Orfeo, four of the opera's five acts were opened by a sinfonia. In Poppea four of the six sinfonie appear at important points in the drama: to open the prologue, to open act III, and to frame the coronation ceremonies of the last scene of the opera. That the libretto provides further opportunities for the introduction of solemn and festive sinfonie is evident, but apparently Monteverdi chose to create the dramatic effects primarily through the vocal music rather than through extensive instrumental pieces. The dramatic force comes out of the text and its
setting, and not from purely instrumental passages which merely point the drama.

The introductory sinfonia is a chordal structure in four sections, A B A' B'. It is built on a simple bass motive which enters successively on C, G, G, C, thus suggesting the alternation of minor and relative major. The repetitions of the bass motive define the four sections and its rhythmic pattern is reflected in the upper parts.
Of the remaining five sinfonie, three abandon the strictly chordal construction (MCO XIII, 198, 239, 243) in favor of more contrapuntal writing. Poppea also contains two others that bear the title 'sinfonia' but are repeated between the strophes of a song in a ritornello-like fashion. One of these in II, 10 (MCO XIII, 170) is also designated at its third appearance as a 'ritornello'. This sinfonia, which is only six measures long and basically chordal, does serve to introduce an aria. However, when compared to the other instrumental pieces which bear this inscription, it is apparent that in overall length, style, and function, this is clearly a ritornello. In the same light, the sinfonia of I, 11 (MCO XIII, 95) should also be labeled ritornello. In Poppea, the single statement and the greater expansion speak for the sinfonia, whereas, the strict chordal movement and refrain repetition between strophes speak more for the ritornelli.

**Ritornello**

The ritornello is by far the most common refrain in both operas. They function in *Poppea* as in *Orfeo*, mainly as repetitive refrains to divide the strophes of an aria or ensemble. Like the ritornelli in *Orfeo*, the repetitions are usually literal. However, unlike the use in *Orfeo* of
the same ritornello in different scenes and even in different acts; in Poppea, once a ritornello has been used for a section, it is not recalled later in the opera. Therefore the unifying effect of a specific ritornello is limited to the requirements of an individual scene. As we shall see the ritornelli of Poppea are more closely related to the music of individual scenes than similar structures in Orfeo. This increased awareness of musical relationships within individual scenes, results in a greater cohesion of both the individual scenes and the entire opera.

There are among the eleven ritornelli of the opera, two examples: in 1, 3 and 1, 5 (MCO XIII, 32 and 56), which have only one occurrence in a sinfonia fashion. However, the short, chordal nature of these movements clearly establishes the character of a ritornello.

A motivic relationship between the ritornello bass and the bass of the following song, which could be seen only once in Orfeo ("Qual honor" MCO XI, 121) is more common in Poppea. The ritornello from 1, 3 (MCO XIII, 32) anticipates, with slight variations, the bass of Nerone's song "In un sospir." The following example shows this relationship.
Ritorcimento

(Andante mosso)

In un as, aspetta che vien dal profondo del cor. In un as.

...ospir che vien...
In another ritornello I, 1 (MOO XIII, 14) the first three measures of the bass are taken from the bass of the preceding recitative (measures five to eight) and are found again transposed in the first two measures of the following strophe.

The bass which underlies Poppea's aria "Speranza tu mi vai" in I, 4 (MOO XIII, 39) is a simplification of the preceding ritornello bass.
In the same fashion, the bass of Ottone's aria "Sprezza me quanto" in II, 8 (MCO XIII, 153) grows out of the ritornello bass which enframes the aria and separates its three strophes.

Ritornello bass

Strophic bass

As far as meter is concerned, the ritornelli with one exception II, 13 (MCO XIII, 188) are in agreement with the songs which belong to them. As far as a common pitch level is concerned, there is some variance. Such variance, although not as extensive, was also observed in Orfeo. In Poppea, Monteverdi employs a dramatic contrast of pitch levels within a musical unit. The device was not
used in Orfeo and appears to be a product of his mature style. The instrumental movement in C which ends the prologue, and is taken up after Ottone’s first aria in I, 1 “E pure io torno” (MCO XIII, 12) belongs neither to the Gb center of Amor’s last recitative in the prologue, nor to Ottone’s D major aria. The strophes of “Caro tetto amoroso” (MCO XIII, 14-18) are in D and are separated by repetitions of a ritornello in C. As there are no instructions for transposition of these ritornelli, one has to assume that Monteverdi intended this dramatic contrast of pitch levels.

Indeed, this procedure of setting off the textual strophe through a contrast of pitch level, is applied to other scenes in the opera. In the dialogue between Ottone and Poppea “Ad altri tocca in sorte” (MCO XIII, 95-103), the ritornelli before Poppea’s strophes are in agreement with the harmonic center of each strophe. However, the ritornelli before Ottone’s strophes always appear a tone below the strophe. Thus Monteverdi emphasizes the dramatic situation by pointing up the strophes of the weaker character. As we have noted this duet contrasts the two dramatic personalities and is a rather unusual dramatic and musical unit.

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See discussion page 64.
Vocal Refrains

Similar to the function of the ritornello-chorus in *Ariodante*, are three short vocal refrains which serve to unify brief sections of *Poppea*. The first of these is in Act I, 4. The libretto for this scene (MCO XIII 38-49), aside from Poppea's opening aria, consists of an extended strophic bass aria from Arnalta. Monteverdi binds the scene together through the repetitions of a strophic bass and by inserting into the aria and recitative passages, two short vocal refrains "No non teno" and "Per me guerreggia Amor" and two instrumental ritornelli.

Following Poppea's motto aria "Speranza tu mi vai" and the two short refrains, Arnalta sings two short recitatives and the five-fold strophic bass aria "La pratica con regi." The two instrumental ritornelli unify the two major arias of the scene and are restricted to these segments. However, the two vocal refrains "No non teno" and "per me guerreggia Amor" are employed to create a much larger unit. Indeed, they span most of the scene. The two refrains appear together after the opening aria and before the final short aria of the scene "Sono sei pazza." In their other appearances, they appear alone. The two vocal refrains function as ritornelli to bind together recitative passages and coupled with Ritornello II, to bind together Arnalta's strophic bass aria "La pratica..."
coi regi." The whole scene may be diagrammed:

x  Ritornello I
A  Speranza tu mi vai, Motto aria, Poppea
x  Ritornello I
A  Speranza tu mi vai
B  No non teco
C  Per me guerreggia Amor
x  Ritornello I

recit  Recitativo, Arnalta
B  No non teco
recit  Recitativo, Arnalta
C  Per me guerreggia Amor

D  La pratica coi regi, strophic bass aria, Arnalta
Y1  Ritornello II
D  La pratica coi regi, Strophe 2
B2  No non teco
D  La pratica coi regi, Strophe 3
Y3  Ritornello II
D  La pratica coi regi, Strophe 4
Y4  Ritornello II
D  La pratica coi regi, Strophe 5
B  No non teco
recit  Recitativo, Arnalta
B  No non teco
C  Per me guerreggia Amor
E  Da capo aria, Ben sei pazzz, Arnalta.
In I, 12, the second refrain occurs (MCIII, 105). Within Ottone's solo scene, a short triple-meter refrain appears three times. The refrains: "Otton, Otton torna, torna in te stesso," "Mio car, mio car torna, torna in te stesso," "Otton, torna torna in te stesso" recall the closing phrase of the opening song of I, 1 "E pure io torno" in meter, mood, and aspects of the vocal and bass lines.
In this scene Ottone has decided to murder the 'treacherous Poppea! and the refrains, in addition to unifying his free soliloquy, serve to express his inner anxiety.

The third refrain is from II, 10 and 11. Scene 10 opens with Drusilla's da capo aria "Felice cor mio festeggiami in seno" which is filled with joy and enthusiasm. Monteverdi added the rising triadic opening of this piece twice in the next scene between Ottone and Drusilla (MCO XIII, 175 and 178). This musical reminiscence unites the two scenes and reproduces the way Drusilla, in the midst of these outbursts of joy, at first fails to hear Ottone's interruptions "senti, senti." She continues singing the motif "festeggiami" until Ottone abruptly brings her to silence in the middle of a sentence. After explaining his plan to murder Poppea, Drusilla again breaks into the "festeggiami" motif.
The complete opera as an entity

In such an extended structure as Poppea, it is indeed difficult to see the overall cohesive elements. In Orfeo, which is considerably shorter than Poppea, there was a closed harmonic unit that could be defined. Indeed, much of the unity of Orfeo appeared to be tied to this harmonic structure. In Poppea such harmonic ties are less evident. Indeed, the purely musical compactness is significantly less than that of the earlier work. The overall harmonic ties which in Orfeo dominated individual scenes and encompassed the whole work, are not as pervasive in Poppea.

In both operas the major and minor modes are represented at various pitch levels but there is a predominance of modes on G and B. However, in Poppea no single pitch level appears as prominently as the modes on G which dominate more than half of Orfeo.

In Orfeo we noted that the prologue and four of the five acts were closed harmonic units. However, in Poppea, only a few scenes are closed together in their harmonic plan, for example, the prologue and the Seneca episode at the beginning of the second act. But still there can be no talk of a musically formal or even a total harmonic structure, either in the individual parts or in
the total work. That such a consideration was not the concern of Monteverdi at that time, is proved by the numerous transposition details and directions that are found in the Venetian score and which often involve entire roles. These changes can easily be explained out of the accommodation of a song to the voice of an individual singer, yet their frequent appearance indicates that apparently Monteverdi did not oppose such changes.

The last opera shows further evidences of the growing sense of the major/minor tonal system: the almost exclusive use of major and minor modes, the use of consonant progressions including dominant-tonic cadences, and the clear transposition of phrases or entire passages to a new pitch level. Besides these, in Poppea there is an increased awareness and discrimination in chord handling. Clearly defined cadential passages and sequences in fifths occur frequently in the opera. The 'passacaglia' "Giove nel tuo bel volto" (MCO XIII, 236) has a sequential pattern of alternate thirds and first inversions which progresses around the diatonic fifth circle: $A, D, G, C, F, G, A$.

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41. Anna Amalie Abert, Claudio Monteverdi und das musikalische Drama, (Lipstadt, 1934), 97.
42. ibid.
In *Poppea*, as in *Orfeo* there are numerous examples where Monteverdi achieves a clear design and cohesive structure by the nearly exact repetition of short phrases at different pitch levels. The opening sinfonia of *Poppea*, which is founded on a simple bass motive that enters successively on $a$, $C$, $a$, $C$, is divided into four sections by these entrances. The entrances suggest the related areas of relative minor and major.
Ex. 75 Sinfonia from Prologue of Poppea
In the extended sinfonia in Act III (MCO XIII, 239) a feeling of movement toward a strong cadence is evident at several places, for examples, measures eight and nine a V-I in F; measures eleven and twelve a V-I in F. This tonal cadential feeling is especially strong in the last two measures: Gb I vi IV vi I I I V I.

(Andante sostenuto, in due)
Very significant to an evolving concept of tonality is the development of a vocal style in which tonal harmonies are clearly outlined by simple and graceful melodic lines that flow along smoothly over a firm, harmonic bass. In
Popped, there are many examples where such tonal direction is apparent. The vocal line of the aria "Chi professa virtù" (MCO XIII, 4) shows harmonic outlines which are clearly related to the very active bass which supports this aria.
Beyond the considerations of harmonic ties, there are two thematic links that are apparent in the drama. The first of these is the close relationship of Ottone's three solo scenes: I, 1; I, 12; and II, 8 (NCO XII, 12-21; 105-107; 151-156) which asserts itself despite their location so far apart in the drama. The aria "E pure io torno" which opens Act I serves as an introduction to Ottone and almost as a leitmotif of his character. In the text of this aria, the image of his vacillating and indecisive character, which plays such a part in the drama, is established. The parallel scene, I, 12 refers back to the opening scene through the triple-meter refrains "Orton, torno in te stesso." 43

In the third solo scene Act II, 8 (NCO XII, 153) the three strophes of his aria "Spressa me quarto" refer to the three strophes of "Caro tetto amoroso" in the middle of Act I, 1, in meter, pitch level, and details of the bass and vocal lines. In all three scenes, not only a musical remembrance is taken up but also a reassertion of the characteristic musical personality of Ottone is reaffirmed. 44

43 See page 119.
44 See page 71.
CONCLUSION

In the above discussion, the role of musical repetition in Monteverdi's first and last operas has been described. Repetition in various forms plays an important part in the organization and unification of both operas. It serves to define the structure of the arias and ensembles; the recurrent instrumental and vocal movements bind together segments of the drama and define larger formats; and, repetition in a broader sense of pervasive thematic and harmonic relationships, affects the total unity and cohesion of both works.

In Orfeo the devices of musical repetition are applied in a general way. Yet the individual repetitions are not flexible; they are usually literal repetitions; for example, the use of a recurrent strophic bass and the exact repetition of phrases or sections occurs frequently. Even the instrumental formats have a part in the influence of musical repetition. We noted above, the recurrence of ritornelli and sinfonie not merely within one scene but at various points throughout the drama. Although these instrumental movements affect the overall unity, they are inflexible movements which are not musically aligned to specific arias and scenes.
In both operas there are many examples where Monteverdi's extension of the explicit textual rhyme-scheme is apparent. Such extensions often involve musical repetitions that go beyond the scope of the text to create a larger integrated musical format. Indeed, in these cases, the music seems to dominate rather than to 'serve the text.'

Even subtle musical remembrances—such as the use of the descending diminished fifth as a motive of grief, the four-note ostinato motive associated with the love duets, or the short refrains—are important elements of the musico-dramatic unity of these operas. We are aware of these subtleties, not as full-blown leitmotifs, but in a much more general association and cohesion of mood and character.

It is not surprising that in Monteverdi's late style there are subtle changes in the application of various devices of musical repetition. In his last operas, Poppea, the scope of musical repetition is narrowed, yet the musical repetition itself is more flexible. In this opera, there is less dependence on the stiff strophic bass formula and more reliance on the varied repetition of phrases and sections. This change is evident in the greater variety of aria forms, many of which are shaped by sectional repeats, and in the frequent appearance of arch forms.
The use of vocal refrains in *Poppea* follows that of the ritornello-chorus in *Orfeo* in organizing large segments of the drama. However, the ritornello-choruses of *Orfeo* were usually literal repetitions, but in *Poppea* the vocal refrains are varied repetitions. While each recurrence maintains a basic idea, there is variety in the expression of this idea. The vocal refrains are more flexible, more sensitive to the requirements of the individual scene. Indeed, the cohesive quality is enhanced by this sensitivity which results in a musically integrated scene.

Instrumental passages in the form of sinfonie and ritornelli occur frequently in both operas. In *Orfeo*, there were five different sinfonie which appeared a total of ten times. There were also ten different ritornelli which occurred a total of thirty times. Despite the additional length of *Poppea*, the number of sinfonie and ritornelli has not increased significantly. There are only six sinfonie which occur a total of twelve times and eleven ritornelli which appear a total of twenty-five times.

The stylistic differences established in *Orfeo* between the ritornello and the sinfonie are clearly evident in *Poppea*. However the frequent designation of
instrument combinations found in Orfeo are not found in Poppea. Nino Pirrotta has commented that these unusual designations were given as a record of what had been done in the original performance and as a guide, but not necessarily a rule, to future performance. It seems that most of the orchestration and much of the music for the orchestral instruments was worked out in rehearsal and was frequently omitted from the score.

A further change is evident in the number of parts for these movements. In Orfeo most of the movements are written in five parts, while a few are in only three parts. In Poppea, all the ritornelli in the Naples manuscript are in four parts. In the Venetian manuscript, with the exception of the sinfonia at the end of Act II, which is written in four parts, most of the other pieces are written in three parts, some have only two parts, and a few are given only in figured bass.

There is also a change in the kinds of instruments employed. Robert Weaver has compared the orchestral

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46 Valignano, addenda notes to volume XIII of Monteverdi works, 253; also, Anna Amalie Abert, Claudio Monteverdi und das musikalische Drama (Lippestadt, 1932); and Giacomo Benvenuti, "Il manoscritto veneziano della incoronazione di Poppea," Rivista Musicale Italiana, XLI (1937)
requirements of Orfeo with the requirements of the Renaissance intermedii.\footnote{Robert L. Weaver, "Sixteenth Century Instrumentation," Musical Quarterly, XLVII (1961), 363.} Denis Arnold recently has defined as appropriate to Monteverdi's last operas, an orchestra composed of strings, trumpets, and tympani.\footnote{Denis Arnold, "L’Incoronazione di Poppea" and its orchestral requirements," Musical Times CIV (1963), 176; supported also by Henry Prunières, Cavalli et l’Opéra Venitien au XVIIe siècle (Paris, 1731), 17.}

In Poppea, the span of the individual unit defined by a repetitive device is more limited than in Orfeo. Unlike Orfeo, where the same movement could be used at various points in the drama without any apparent loss of continuity, the instrumental movements of Poppea are designed to meet the requirements of specific scenes and appear only in that scene.

In the last opera, there is a change in the kinds of arias and ensembles employed. A novel feature is the use of ostinato basses. The use of this repetitive device allows formality of structure and yet great freedom of application. The top voice is a continuous variation and Monteverdi does not hesitate to change the ostinato pattern as the text, the emotion, or the musical needs demand. Therefore, the ostinato device, which is often regarded as very rigid, is used to create a flexible form which attains great variety within a solid framework of unity.
For the most part, this discussion of musical repetition has been concerned with the set pieces of each opera. It has neglected a consideration of musical repetition in the less formal structures: the recitatives, the through-composed songs, and the arioso passages. In both operas there are laments which are very important dramatic scenes: Orfeo's "Tu se morta" (MCO XI, 62) and Ottavia's "Disprezzata Regina" and "A Dio Roma" (MCO XIII, 49 and 229). It is noteworthy that in these intensely dramatic scenes, musical repetition does not play a prominent part. Monteverdi must have felt a complete responsibility to the dramatic impulse of the text. Perhaps he was recalling the doctrines of the Camerata which emphasized poetic values at the expense of musical values. At any rate these laments are flexible formats which utilize minor aspects of musical repetition as: sequential phrases and rhythmic repetition. However, there seems to be no need for the larger structure provided by the strophic bass or sectional repetition. Perhaps Monteverdi felt that at these intensely dramatic moments there was no place for the orderly presentation and devices of traditional aria formats. Indeed, he may have felt that here the music must 'serve the text'.

In all three cases, Monteverdi created a very dramatic, expressive movement in which the elements of expression are unified not by extensive repetition, but by his creative genius.
The total impression of either opera is one of complete awareness of both musical and dramatic needs. It is Monteverdi's overpowering musico-dramatic insight to the broad pull towards unity which pervades the scenes and acts of these two operas. Indeed, Monteverdi made many significant contributions to the development of opera and even if none of his other works existed, the extant operas would rank him as one of the foremost composers of his day.
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