

# *Music through the Microscope*



**Claudio Monteverdi**

**Ohimè, se tanto amate**

**A musical analysis**

**Music through the Microscope Volume 3**

Introduction.....	4
Sources & acknowledgement.....	4
Claudio Monteverdi .....	6
Ohimè, se tanto amate .....	6
Text.....	6
Translation .....	7
Style.....	8
Prima Prattica & Seconda Prattica .....	8
Voices.....	8
Setting & texture.....	10
Rhythm.....	11
Motifs .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Ohimè Motif .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Doloroso Motif.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Structure.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Through composed .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
A Section .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
B Section .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
C Section .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
D Section.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Tonality.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>

Key signature.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

    Temporary Modulation.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Tonal structure.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Harmony .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

    A section .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

    B section .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

    C Section.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

    D Section .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Score.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Nick Redfern.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Music through the Microscope .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

    Other publications from Music through the Microscope ..... **Error!**  
**Bookmark not defined.**

Cloud Factory Publications Limited .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

## Introduction

This document is a detailed analysis of Claudio Monteverdi's five part madrigal *Ohimè, se tanto amate*. The purpose of this analysis is to aid the study of the work by isolating aspects of structure, melody and melodic development, harmony, orchestration techniques, texture, rhythm, etc.

This study is not a critique of the composer and does not seek to explore the cultural, contextual or historical aspects of the music.

If some of the illustrations appear too small then a free copy of the illustrations can be downloaded as a PDF file from:

[http://www.nickredfern.co.uk/Cloud\\_Factory\\_Publications.htm](http://www.nickredfern.co.uk/Cloud_Factory_Publications.htm)

## Sources & acknowledgement

The primary source of this analysis and illustrations are from the open score version by publisher **Daniel Van Gilst** made available under Creative Contributions Attribution 4.0. The score is public domain and available at IMSLP:

[http://burrito.whatbox.ca:15263/imglnks/usimg/1/1e/IMSLP318459-PMLP514827-Monteverdi\\_C - Ohim se tanto amate - EN 2014-78.PDF](http://burrito.whatbox.ca:15263/imglnks/usimg/1/1e/IMSLP318459-PMLP514827-Monteverdi_C_-_Ohim_se_tanto_amate_-_EN_2014-78.PDF)

I offer my very sincere thanks to the publisher for this most valuable resource. Further versions of the score for Monteverdi's Fourth Book of Madrigals, including the First Edition, are available at IMSLP at [http://imslp.org/wiki/Madrigals, Book 4, SV 75%E2%80%939393](http://imslp.org/wiki/Madrigals,_Book_4,_SV_75%E2%80%939393) (

[Monteverdi, Claudio](#)). Reductions of the score in short score format are  
notated using Sibelius and available at  
[http://www.nickredfern.co.uk/Cloud\\_Factory\\_Publications.htm](http://www.nickredfern.co.uk/Cloud_Factory_Publications.htm)

Nick Redfern

## **Claudio Monteverdi**

An Italian composer (1567 to 1643), Monteverdi was one of the most influential and innovatory composers of the late Renaissance and early Baroque. He was important for developing the new style of homophonic music, where harmony itself, rather than polyphonic texture, was the chief means for musical expression (see *Prima Prattica* and *Seconda Prattica*). The preoccupation with animating the text in vocal music led to the development of a style of music which was overtly dramatic, of which *Ohimè, se tanto amate* is a prime example. It is not surprising that Monteverdi was the composer of one of the earliest operas.

He was a prolific composer of madrigals, publishing nine books.

### **Ohimè, se tanto amate**

From Monteverdi's Fourth Book of Madrigals published in 1603.

#### **Text**

Ohimè, se tanto amate

Di sentir 'ohimè', deh perchè fate

Chi dice 'ohimè' morire?

S'io moror, un sol potrete

Languido e doloroso 'ohimè' sentire.

Ma se, cor mio, volete

Che vita habbia da voi,

E voi a me havrete  
Mill' e mille dolc' `ohimè'

## **Translation**

Alas, if you so love  
To hear 'Alas' why do you make those  
Who say 'Alas' die?  
If I die just one  
Languid and painful 'Alas' you will hear.  
But if, my heart, you want  
Me to receive life from you  
And you will receive from me  
Thousand and thousand sweet 'Alas'

Translating this text is problematic in terms of achieving a balance between the dramatic and poetic intentions of the original with the narrative setting. Some versions have sought to over embellish the translation and so the meaning of the text has been compromised and the relationship to the setting changed. This version is by the author and is intended merely as a simple insight into the text.

# Style

## Prima Prattica & Seconda Prattica

Prima Prattica refers to an early style of vocal composition where the words were deemed to be of a lesser importance than the music. The style required the adherence to strict rules which governed the use of polyphonic textures and the employment of harmony. Dissonance had to be prepared, executed and released in a linear manner and vocal settings did not make overt painting of the texts, which was often set in an extensively melismatic manner. Melisma is where a syllable of the text could be spread over a melodic phrase.

Seconda Prattica refers to a later style of vocal composition where the words, the narrative and emotional implications within the text are deemed to be an important factor of a composition. So the style was freer in its use of textures and dissonance and could be regarded as being more spontaneous, more dramatic and more representative of the inherent emotions of the text. Unprepared dissonance and the employment of tritones (augmented fourths or diminished fifths) in part movement is not uncommon. Settings are largely syllabic, where each syllable of the text is given its own note, making the text more audible. Settings were therefore more naturalistic, being based on natural speech patterns.

## Voices

Five parts: Canto, Quinto, Alto, Tenor and Bass.



The image shows a musical score for five vocal parts: Canto, Quinto, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. Each part is on a separate staff. The lyrics are: "Ohi-mè, ohi-mè, se tan-to a-ma-te Di-sen - tir dir ohi -". The Canto and Quinto parts are on the upper staves, and the Alto, Tenor, and Bass parts are on the lower staves. The Alto and Tenor parts are written an octave lower than they sound. The Bass part is written as it sounds. The score is in 4/4 time and has a key signature of one flat (B-flat).

**Figure 1 Vocal parts**

Where the score appears in full, open score then the parts will always refer to this order but will not be labelled. Please note that in the open score the Alto and Tenor sound an octave lower than written. In the short score upper stave the voices are Alto, tails down, and above Quinto and Canto, tails up; in the lower stave is the Bass, tails down, and the Tenor, tails up. All parts are written as they sound.

The image shows a short score for five vocal parts: Canto, Quinto, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The score is written on five staves. The Canto and Quinto parts are on the upper staves, and the Alto, Tenor, and Bass parts are on the lower staves. The Alto and Tenor parts are written an octave lower than they sound. The Bass part is written as it sounds. The score is in 4/4 time and has a key signature of one flat (B-flat).

**Figure 2 Voice order in short score**

## Setting & texture

The setting is almost entirely syllabic and there are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, the necessity for clarity of text and the employment of natural speech patterns or rhythms are inherent in the style. The overtly homophonic texture is an extremely effective vehicle for syllabic setting.

44

a - vre - te a - vre - te a - vre - te Mil - l' e mil - le dol - ci ohi - m è, ohi - m è, ohi -

a - vre - te a - vre - te a - vre - te Mil - l' e mil - le dol - ci ohi - m è, ohi - m è, ohi -

a - vre - te a - vre - te

a - vre - te a - vre - te

a - vre - te a - vre - te a - vre - te Mil - l' e mil - le dol - ci ohi - m è, ohi - m è, ohi -

57

mè, ohi - mè, ohi - mè, a - vre -

mè, ohi - mè, ohi - mè, a - vre -

a - vre - te Mil - l'e mil - le dol - ci ohi - mè, ohi - mè, ohi - mè, a - vre -

a - vre - te Mil - l'e mil - le dol - ci ohi - mè, ohi - mè, ohi - mè, a - vre -

mè, ohi - mè, ohi - mè, a - vre - te, a - vre -

57

te, a -

te, a -

te; a - vre - te Mil - l'e mil - le dol - ci ohi - mè, ohi - mè, ohi - mè, ohi - mè, a -

te, a - vre - te Mil - l'e mil - le dol - ci ohi - mè, ohi - mè, ohi - mè, ohi - mè, a -

te, a - vre - te Mil - l'e mil - le dol - ci ohi - mè, ohi - mè, ohi - mè, ohi - mè, a -

**Figure 3 Syllabic setting & homophonic texture bar 44 to 61**

## Rhythm

As described in **Setting & texture** the rhythm of the spoken word is highly influential on the setting and rhythm of the text.