104

CHRISTOPH WILLIBALD GLUCK (1714–1787)

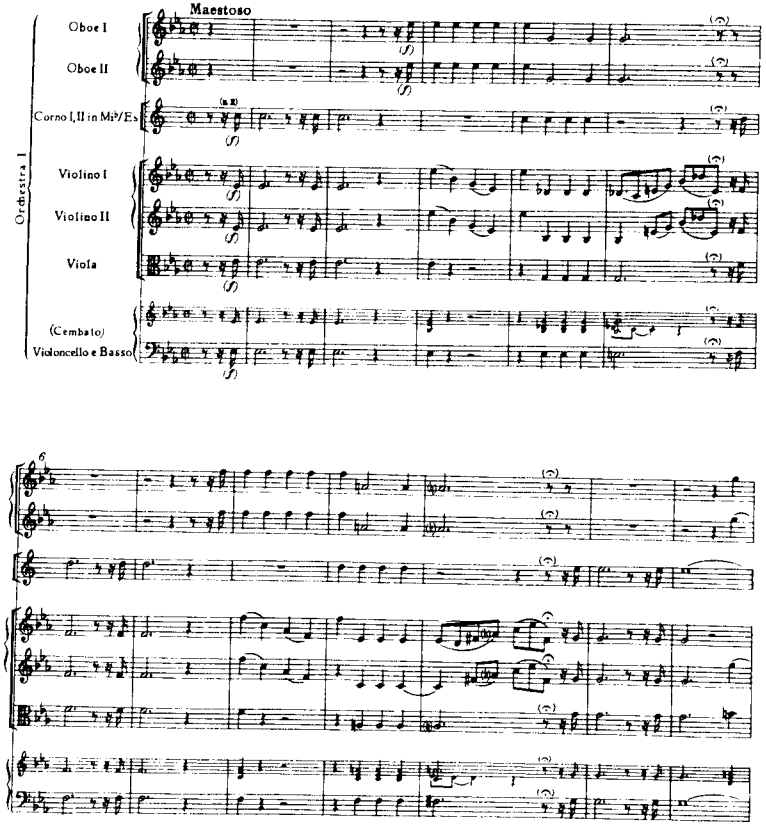
Orfeo ed Euridice: Excerpt from Act II, Scene 1

Opera

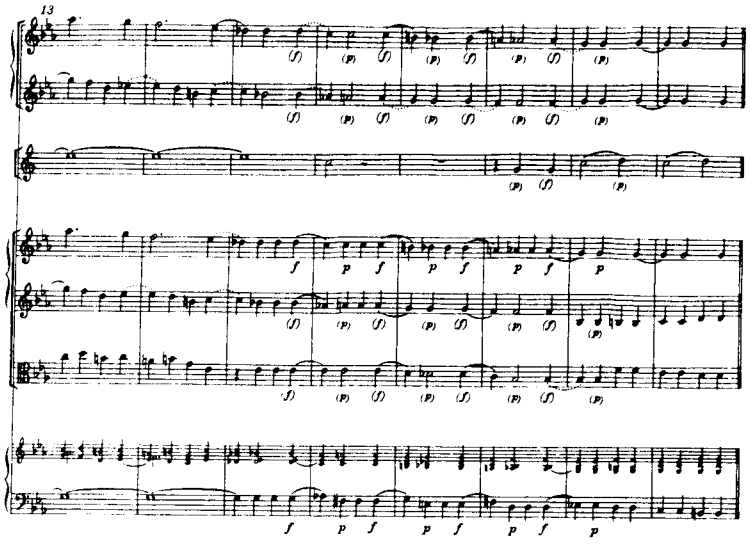
1762

CD 7|16

Ballo



Christoph Willibald Gluck, *Sämtliche Werke*, ser. 1, vol. 1, ed. Anna Amelie Abert and Ludwig Finscher (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1963), 55–75. Reprinted by permission.



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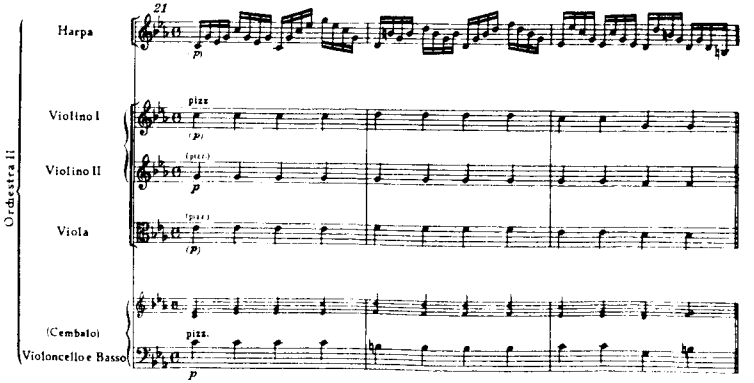
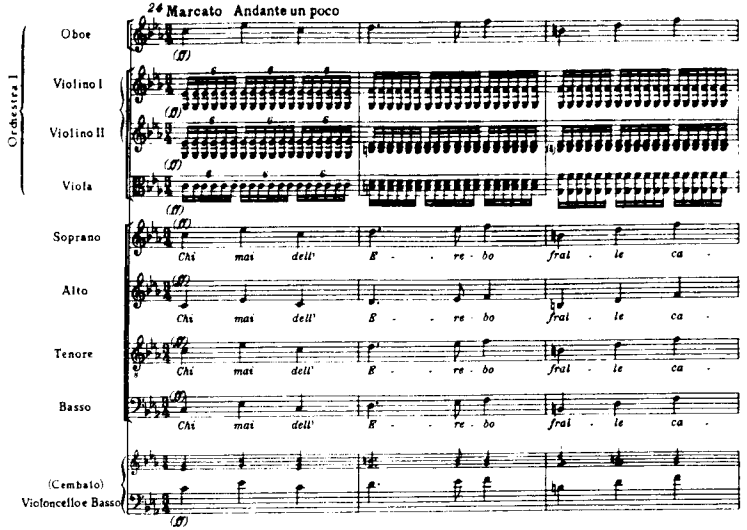
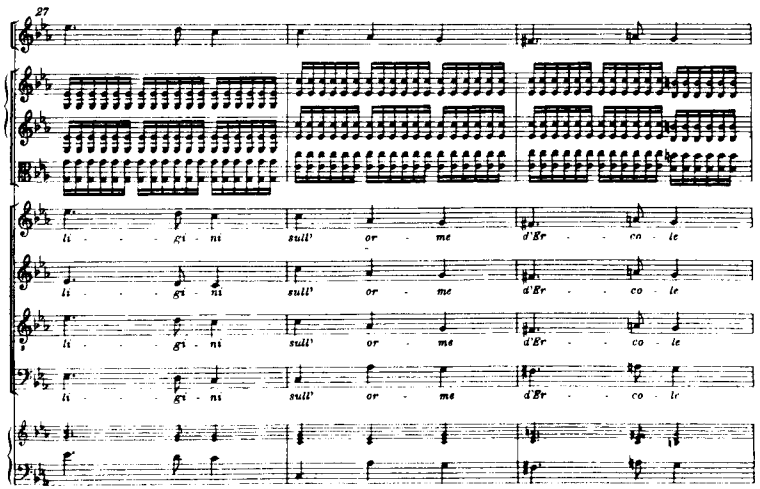
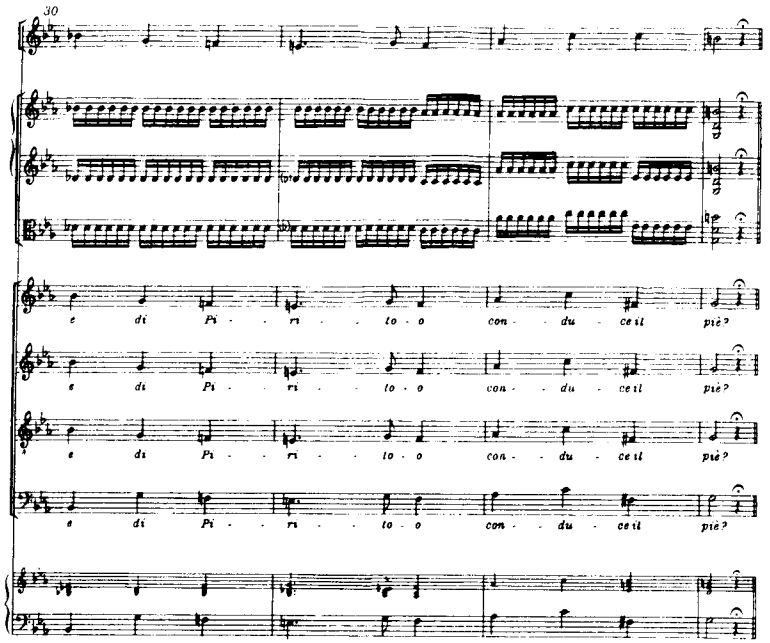


Coro

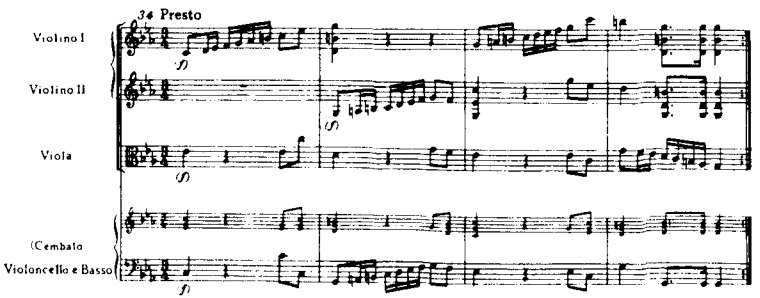


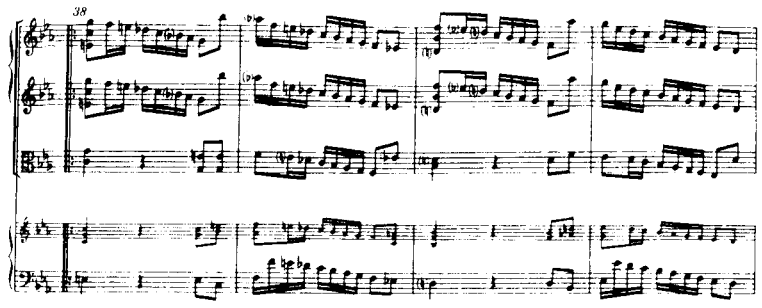




Ballo

18

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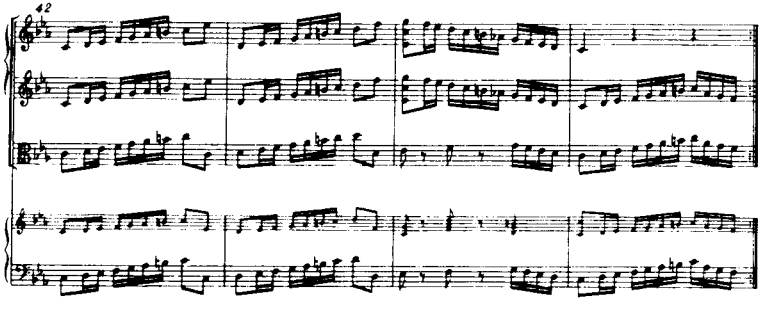
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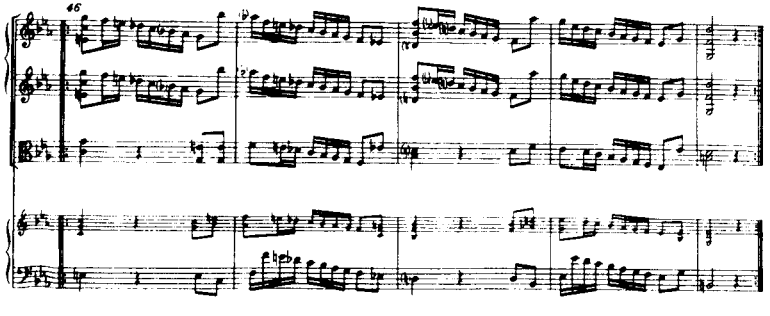
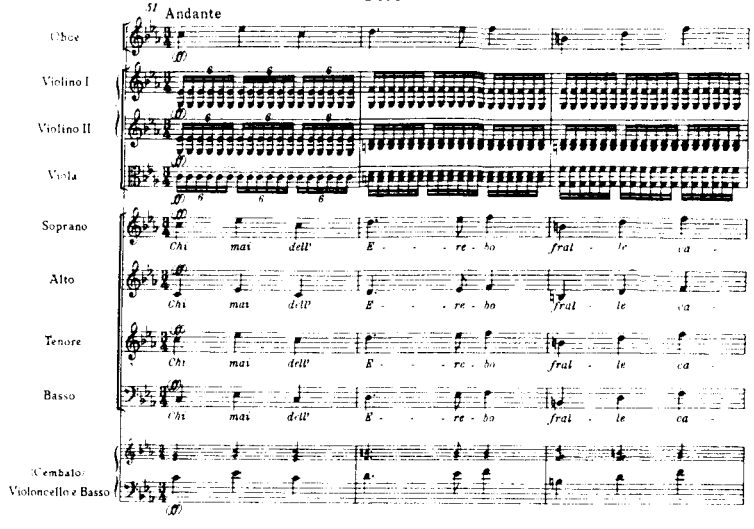
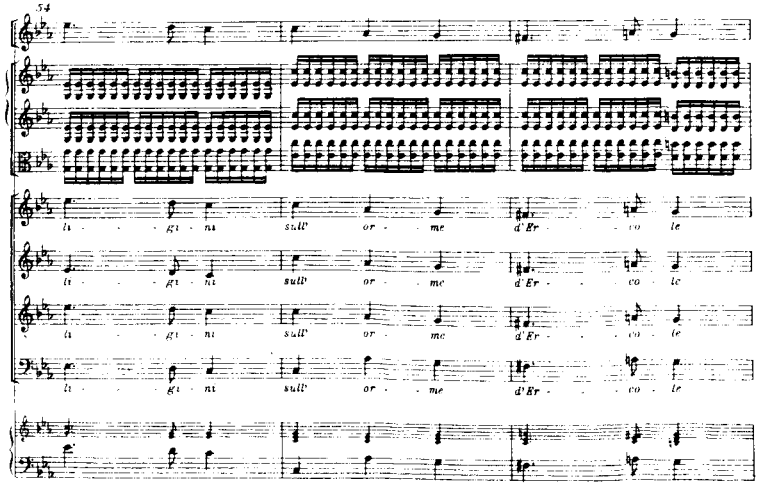
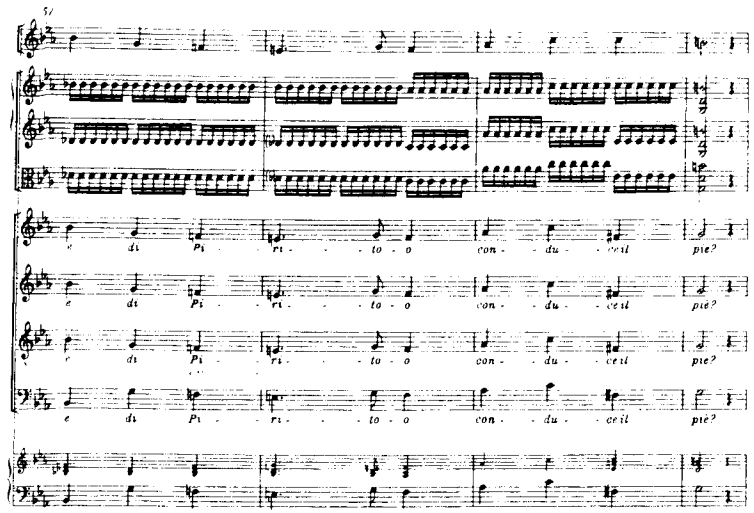

46

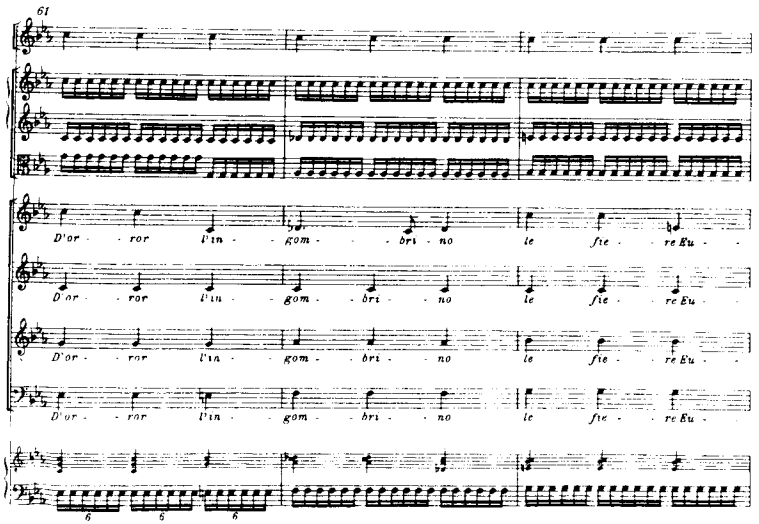
19

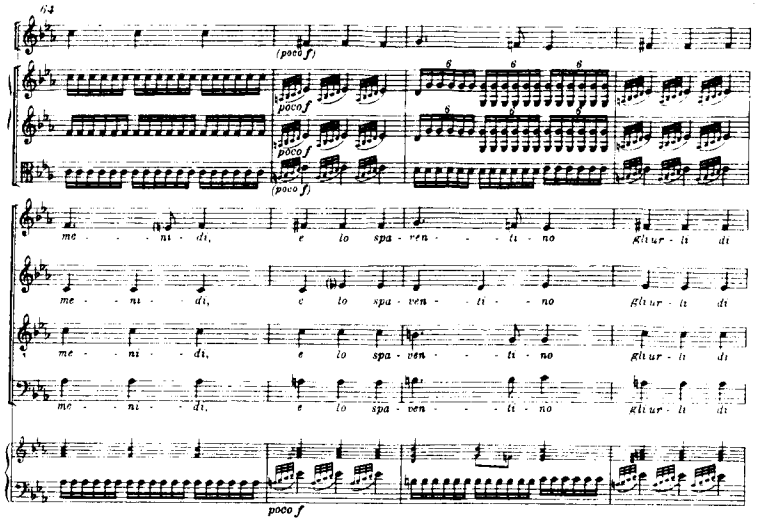
Coro

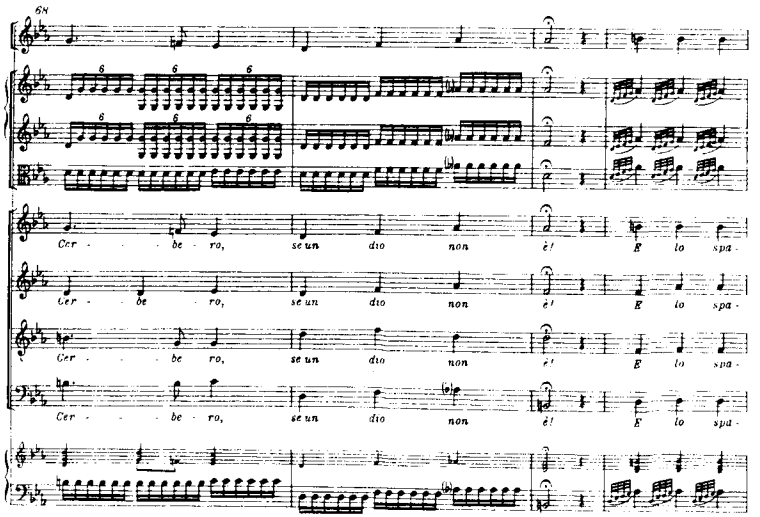

51
Andante
Oboe
Violino I
Violino II
Viola
Soprano
Alto
Tenore
Basso
Chi mai dell' E - re - bo fral - le ca -
Cembalo
Violoncello e Basso

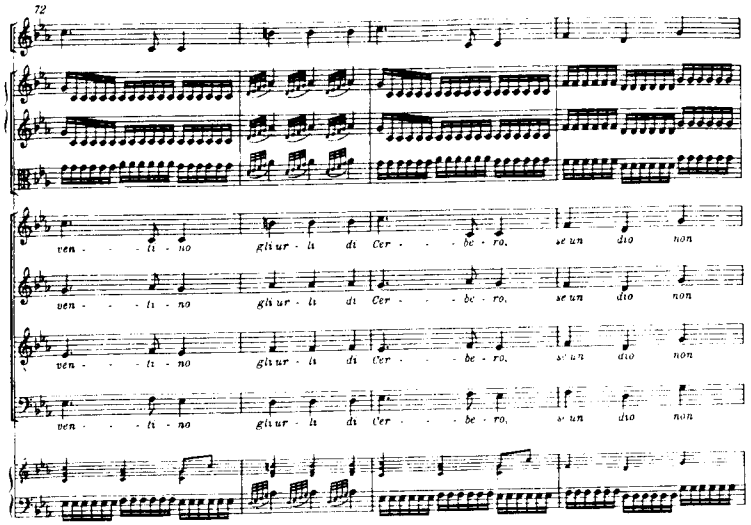

54
li - gi - ni sull' or - me d'Er - co - le

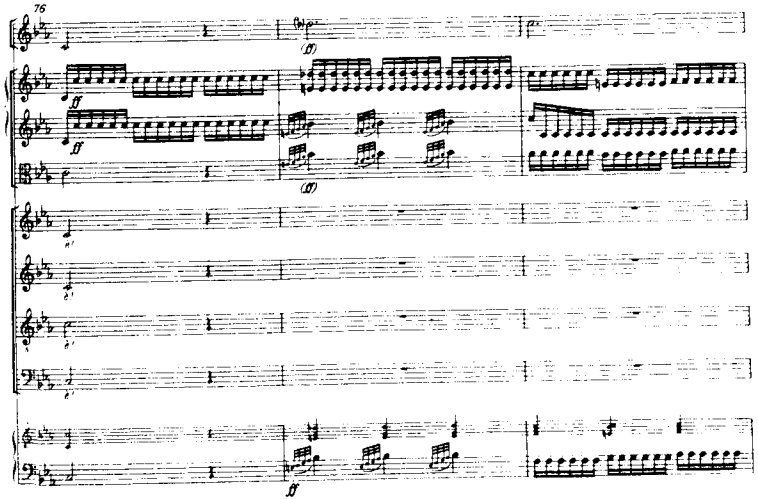

57
e di Pi - ri - to o con - du - ce il piè?
e di Pi - ri - to o con - du - ce il piè?
e di Pi - ri - to o con - du - ce il piè?
e di Pi - ri - to o con - du - ce il piè?

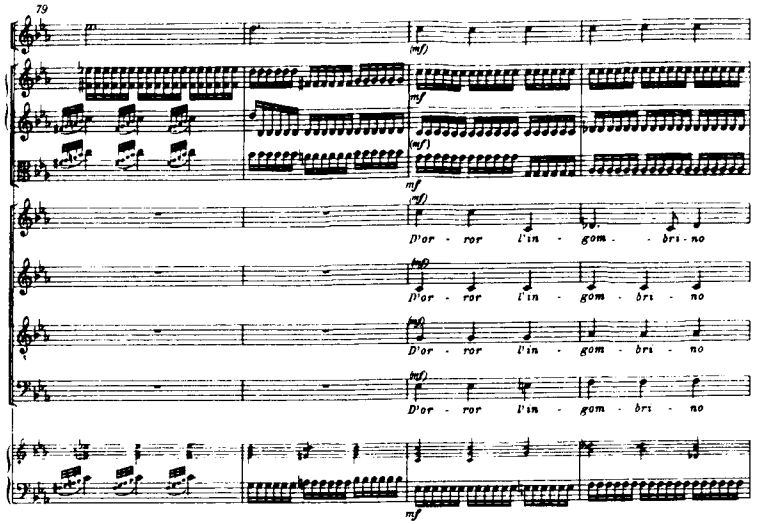

61
D'or - ror l'in - gom - bri - no le fie - re Eu -
D'or - ror l'in - gom - bri - no le fie - re Eu -
D'or - ror l'in - gom - bri - no le fie - re Eu -
D'or - ror l'in - gom - bri - no le fie - re Eu -

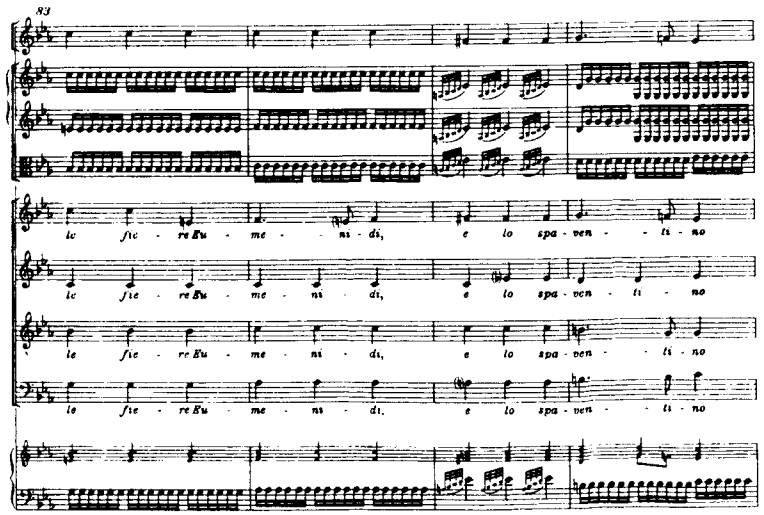

64
(poco f)
poco f
poco f
(poco f)
me - ni - di, e lo spa - ven - ti - no
me - ni - di, e lo spa - ven - ti - no
me - ni - di, e lo spa - ven - ti - no
me - ni - di, e lo spa - ven - ti - no
poco f

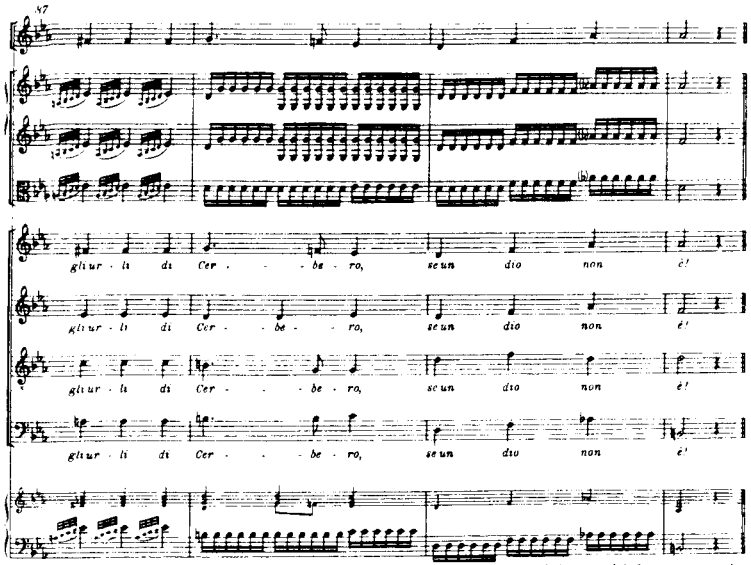

68
Cer - be - ro, se un dio non è! E lo spa -
Cer - be - ro, se un dio non è! E lo spa -
Cer - be - ro, se un dio non è! E lo spa -
Cer - be - ro, se un dio non è! E lo spa -


72
ven - - - ti - no gli ur - li di Cer - - - be - ro, se un dio non
ven - - - ti - no gli ur - li di Cer - - - be - ro, se un dio non
ven - - - ti - no gli ur - li di Cer - - - be - ro, se un dio non
ven - - - ti - no gli ur - li di Cer - - - be - ro, se un dio non


76
ff
ff
ff
ff
ff


79
mf
mf
mf
mf
mf
D'or - ror l'in - gom - bri - no
D'or - ror l'in - gom - bri - no
D'or - ror l'in - gom - bri - no
D'or - ror l'in - gom - bri - no
mf

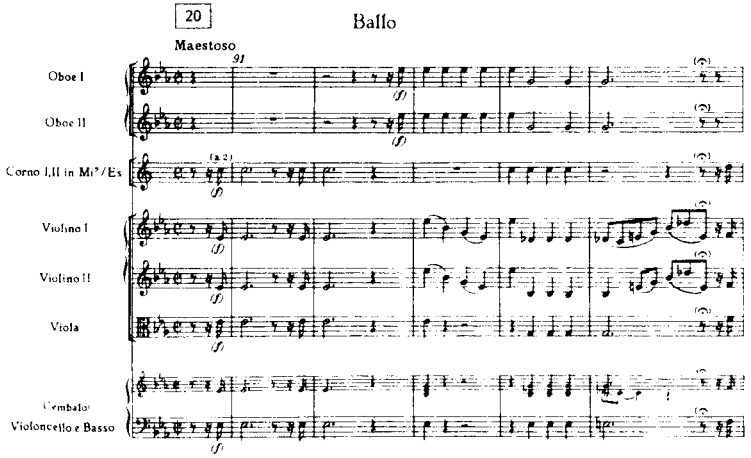

93
le fie - re Eu - me - ni - di, e lo spa - ven - - ti - no
le fie - re Eu - me - ni - di, e lo spa - ven - ti - no
le fie - re Eu - me - ni - di, e lo spa - ven - - ti - no
le fie - re Eu - me - ni - di, e lo spa - ven - ti - no

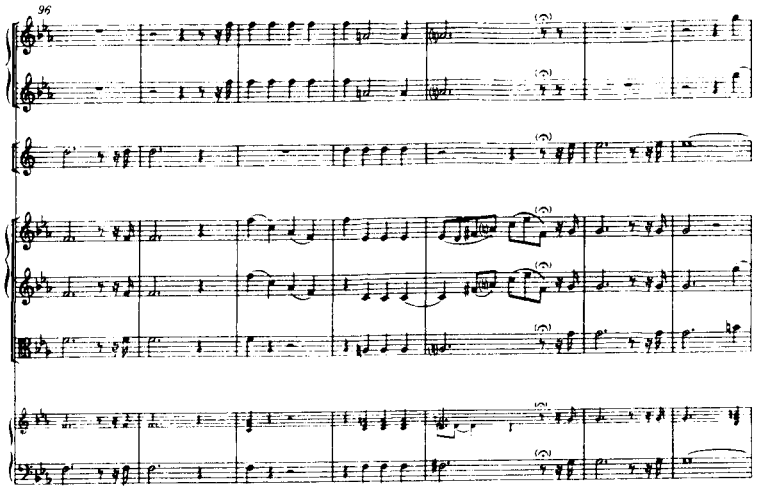


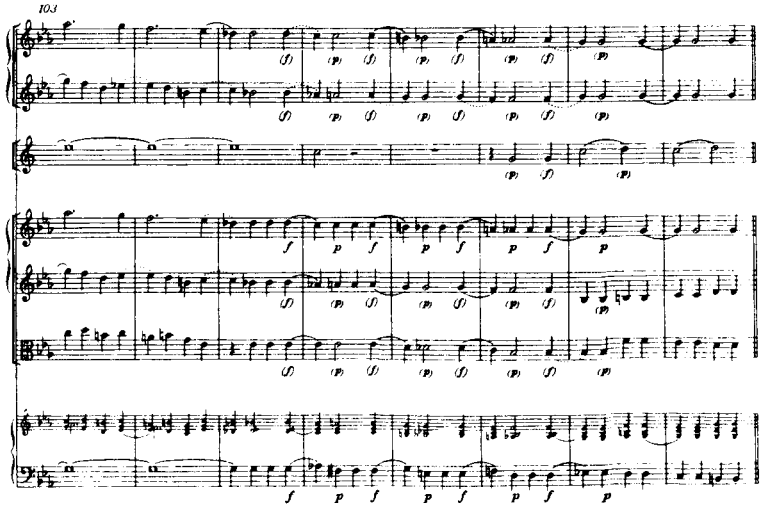
Segue il Ballo, girando intorno ad Orfeo per spaventarlo.

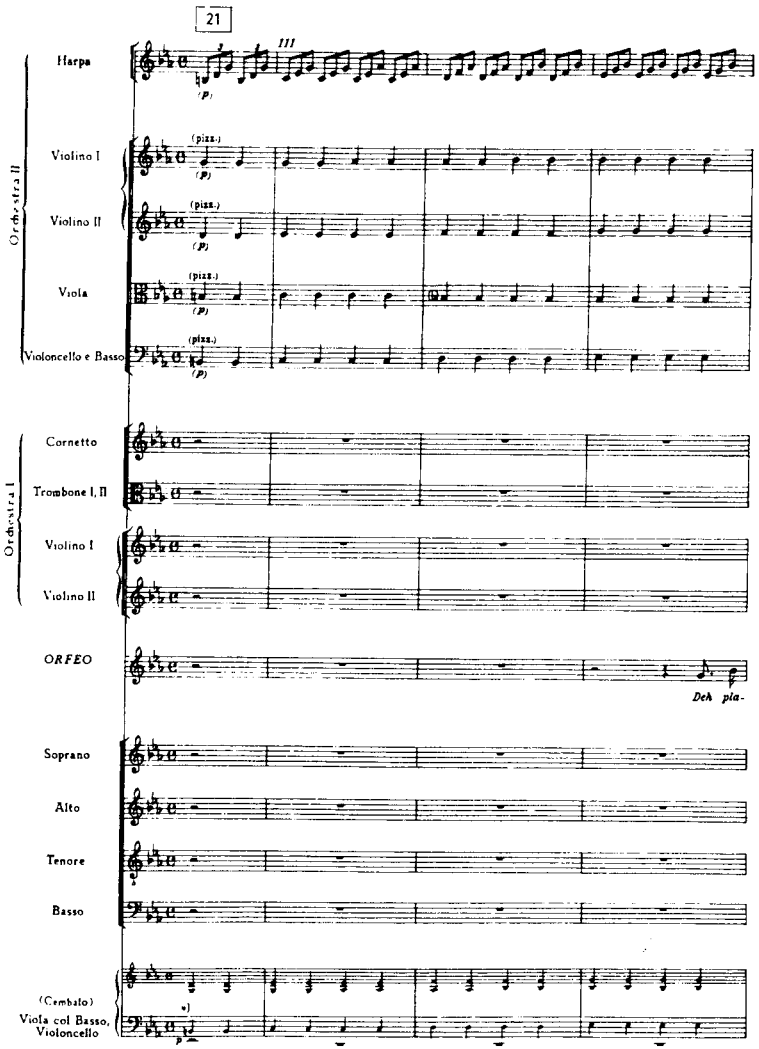
20 **Ballo**

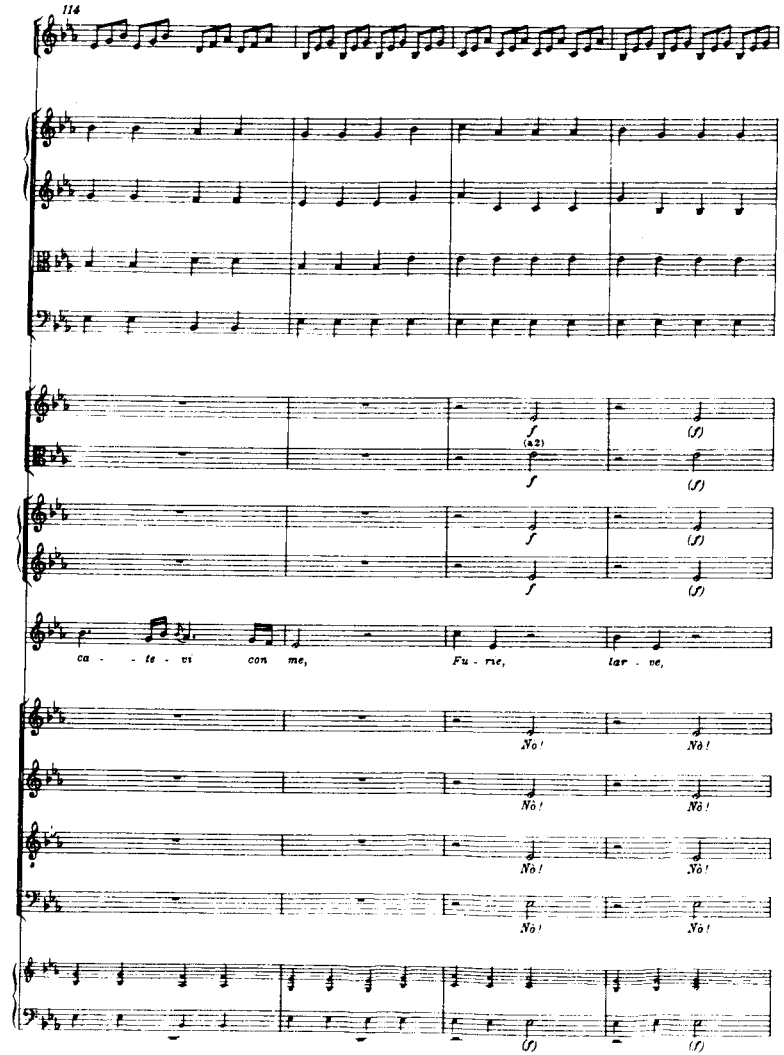
Maestoso

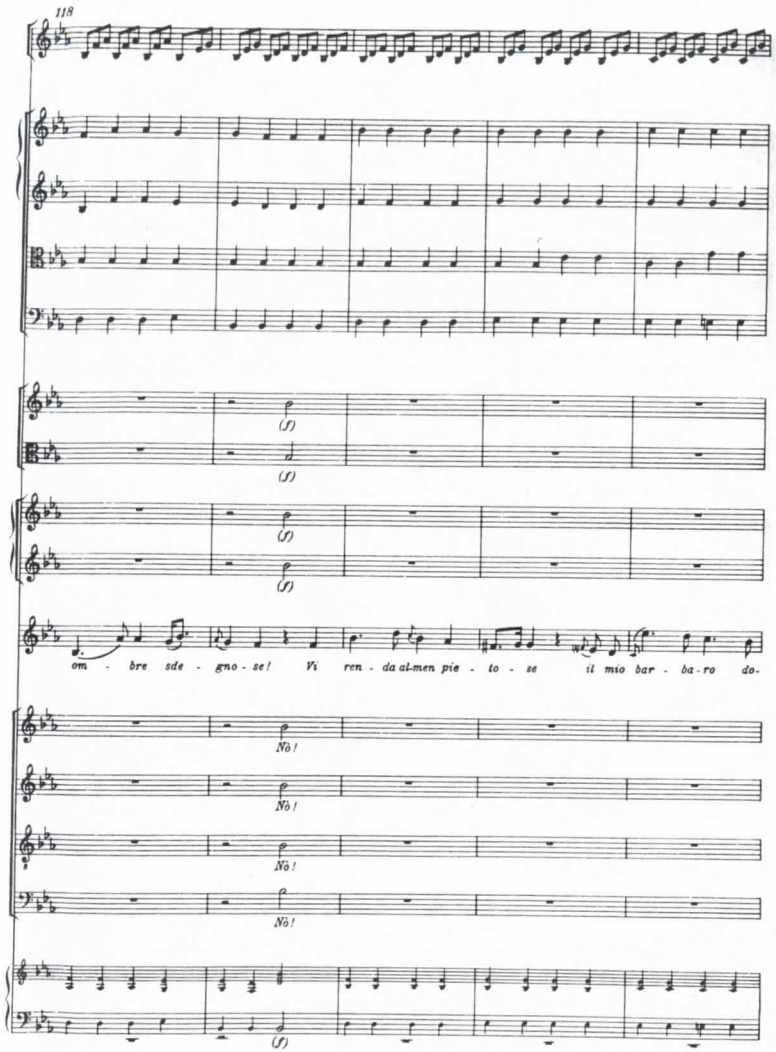


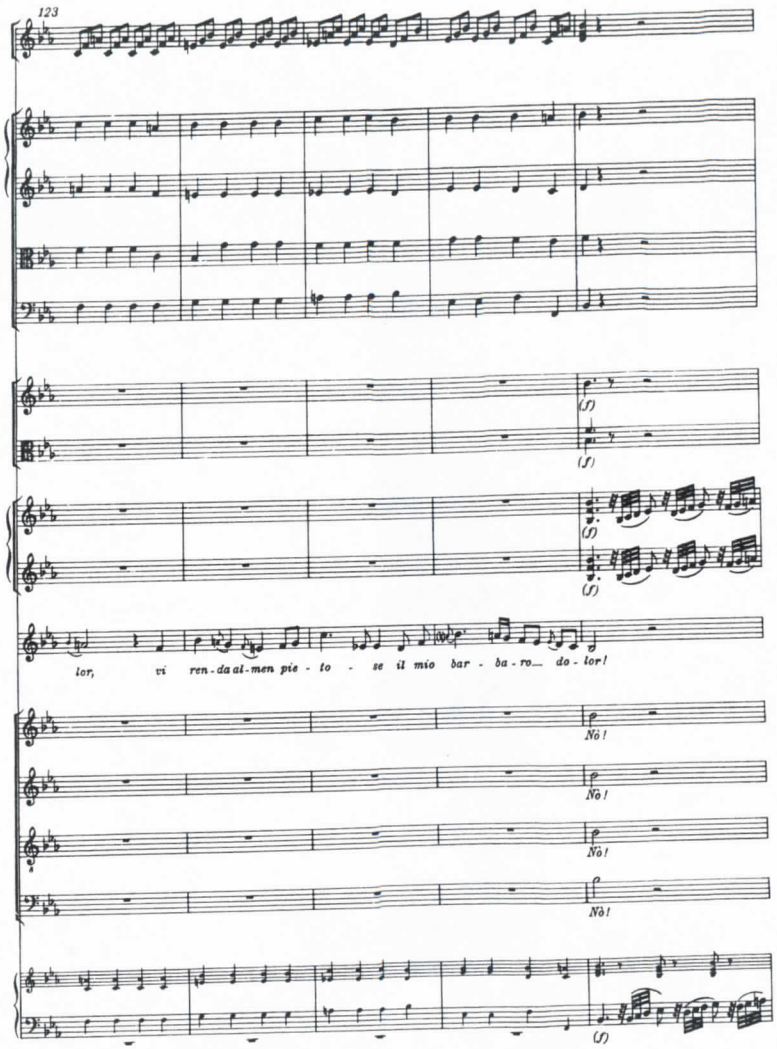


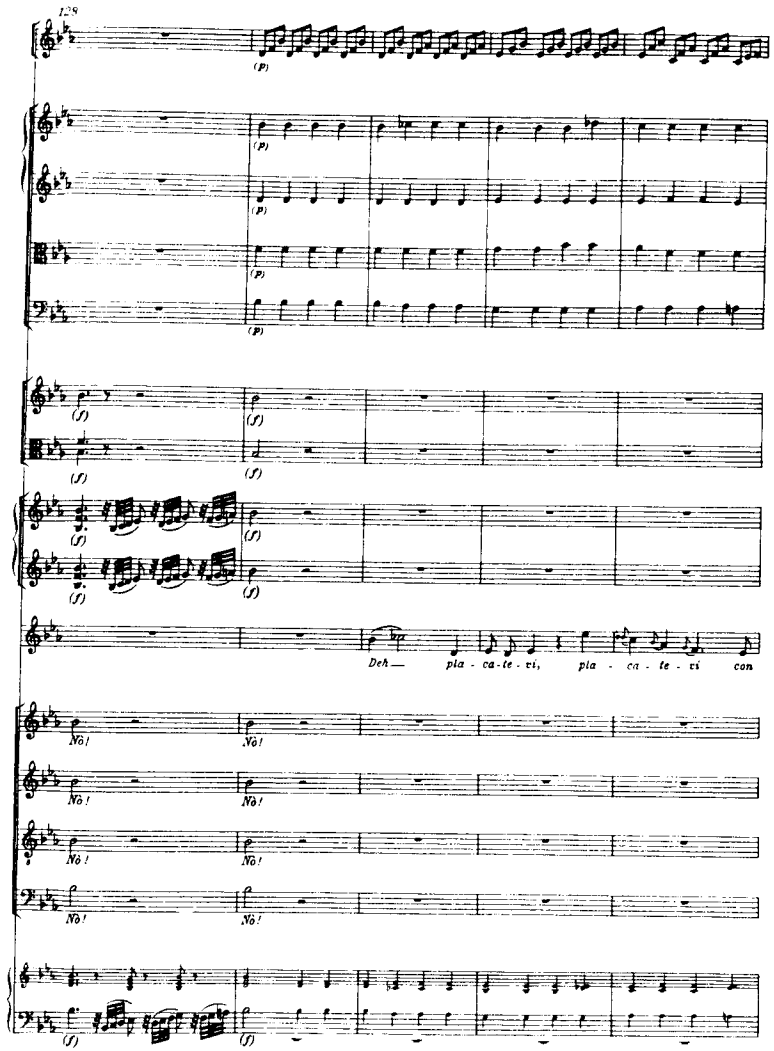


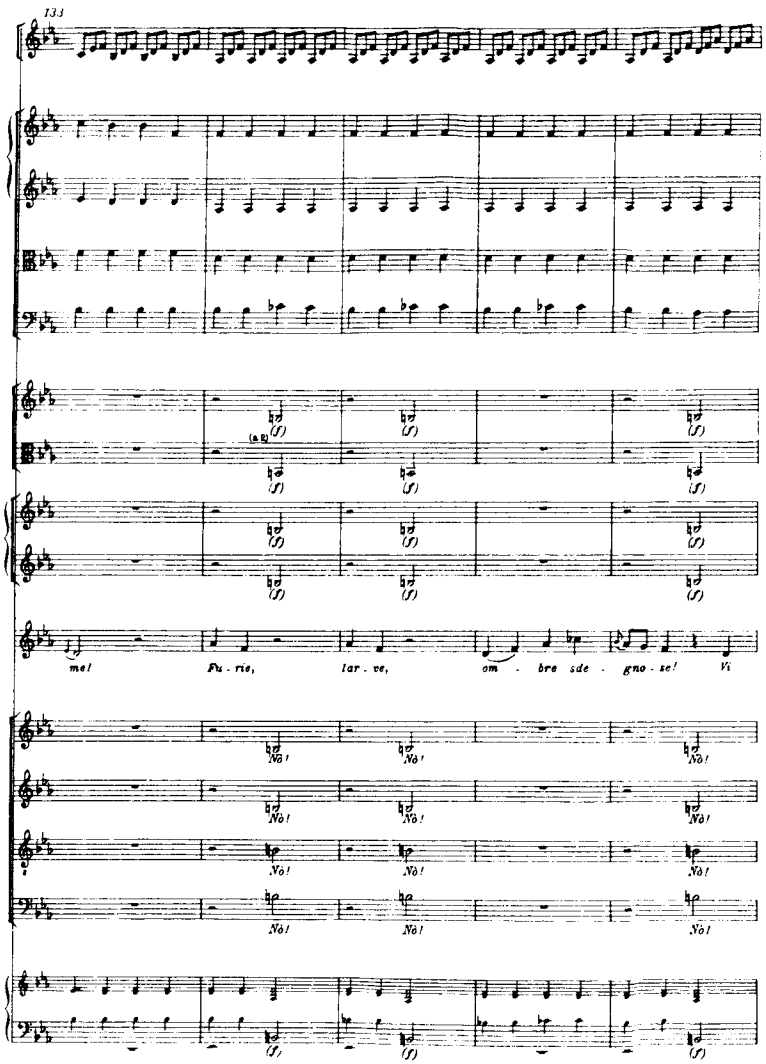

21
111
Harpa
(p)
Orchestra II
Violino I
Violino II
Viola
Violoncello e Basso
(pizz.)
Orchestra I
Cornetto
Trombone I, II
Violino I
Violino II
ORFEO
Deh pla-
Soprano
Alto
Tenore
Basso
(Cembalo)
Viola col Basso, Violoncello

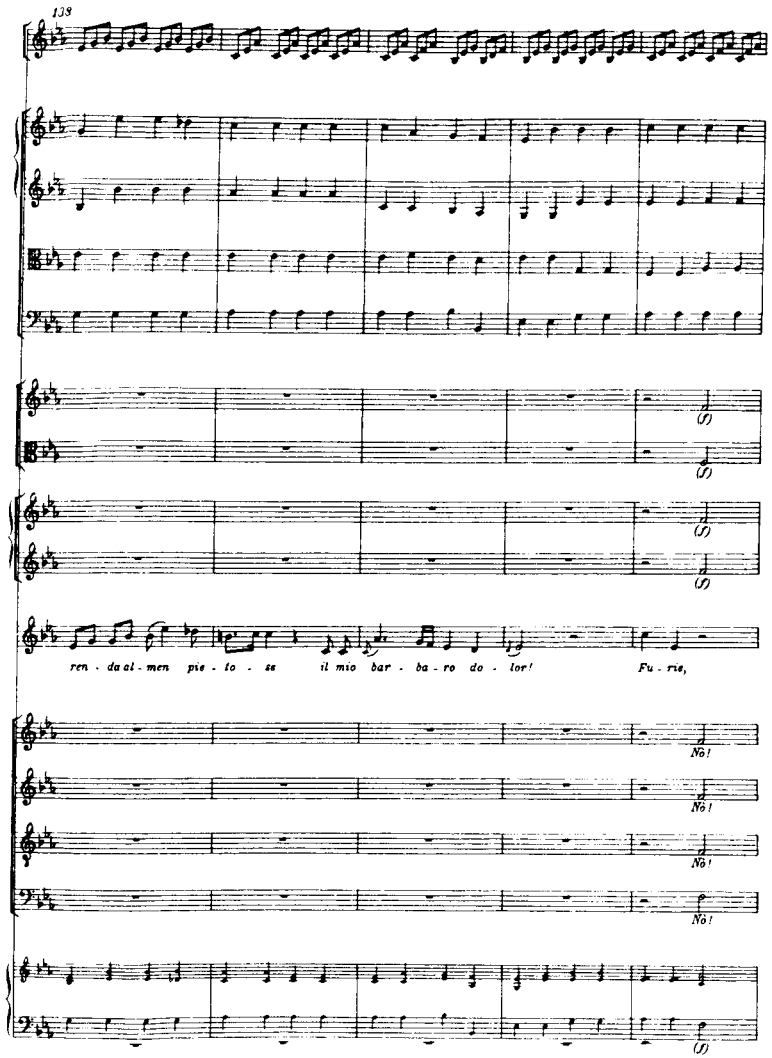

114
(a2)
ca - te - vi con me,
Fu - rie,
lar - ve,
No!

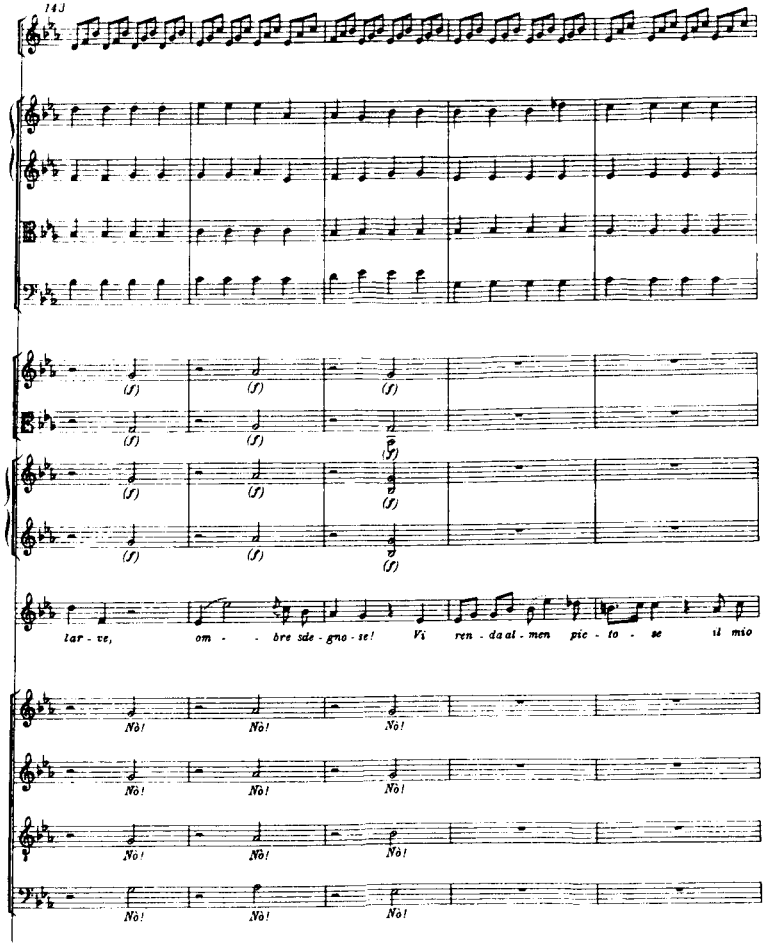

118
om - bre sde - gno - se! Vi ren - da al-men pie - to - se il mio bar - ba - ro do-
Nò!
Nò!
Nò!
Nò!

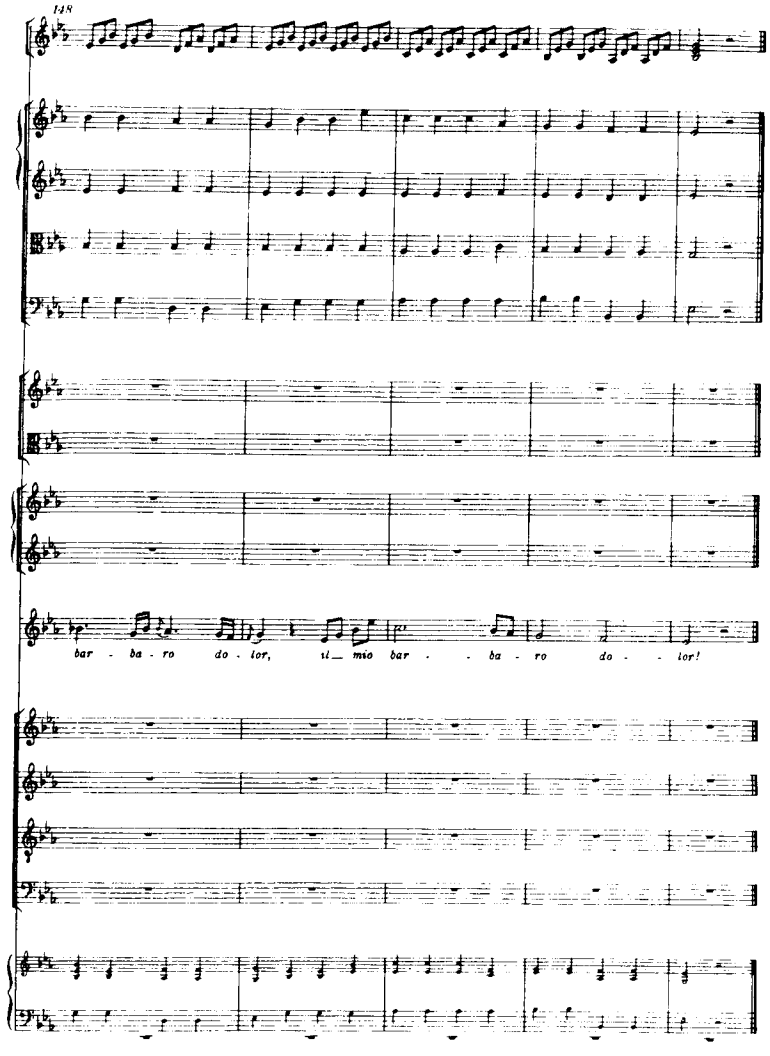

123
lor, vi ren - da al - men pie - to - se il mio bar - ba - ro... do - lor!
Nò!
Nò!
Nò!
Nò!


128
(P)
(F)
Deh — pla - ca-te - vi, pla - ca - te - vi con
No!


133
(a 2)
(F)
mel Fu - rie, lar - ve, om - bre sde - gno - se! Vi
No!


138
ren - da al - men pie - to - se il mio bar - ba - ro do - lor! Fu - rie,
(f)
No!


143
lar - ve, om - - bre sde - gno - se! Vi ren - da al - men pie - to - se il mio
(f)
(fp)
No!



CHORUS

Chi mai dell'Erebo	Who from Erebus
Fralle caligini	through the dark mists,
Sull'orme d'Ercole	in the footsteps of Hercules
E di Piritoo	and of Peirithous
Conduce il piè?	would ever set forth?

D'orror l'ingombrino	He would be blocked with horror
Le fiere Eumenidi,	by the fierce Eumenides
E lo spaventino	and frightened by
Gli urli di Cerbero,	the shrieks of Cerberus,
Se un dio non è.	unless he were a god.

(The Furies dance, circling around Orfeo to frighten him.)

ORFEO

Deh, placatevi con me.	Please, be gentle with me.
Furie, Larve, Ombre sdegnose!	Furies, specters, scornful phantoms!

CHORUS

No! . . . No! . . .	No! . . . No! . . .

ORFEO

Vi renda almen pietose	Let it at least make you merciful,
Il mio barbaro dolor!	my cruel pain!

RANIERO DE CALZABIGI

Orfeo ed Euridice, produced in Vienna in 1762, was the first of three operas on which Christoph Willibald Gluck and the poet Raniero de Calzabigi (1714–1795) collaborated in an effort to reform Italian opera. As Gluck stated some years later in the preface to his French opera *Alceste* (1769), he aimed "to confine music to its true function of serving the poetry by expressing feelings and the situations of the story."

The impressive choral scene included here takes place in the cavernous spaces of the underworld, obscured by thick dark smoke and illumined only by flames. Orfeo (Orpheus) has traveled there in search of his bride Euridice, but he is stopped by the Furies. There are two orchestras. The first, with two oboes, two horns, strings, and harpsichord, later joined by cornetto and two trombones, accompanies the ballet and chorus sections in which the menacing Furies try to obstruct Orfeo's passage. The second orchestra accompanies Orfeo and includes only plucked strings—harp, pizzicato strings, and harpsichord—to imitate Orfeo's playing on the lyre as he attempts to calm the Furies with his song. Gluck marshaled the powerful new resources of the symphony orchestra, calculated key relationships, and unprepared diminished and dominant seventh chords in different inversions to contrive a terrifying and suspenseful theatrical experience.

The first ballet of the Furies begins with emphatic unisons on E♭, the key in which Orfeo later begins his pleading, but it quickly modulates through chromaticism and dissonance to C minor, the key in which the chorus of Furies then sings as it blocks Orfeo's path to Euridice. The Furies express their menace in three ballets and two choruses before Orfeo begins his song, which is punctuated with unison exclamations by the chorus. Gluck uses a variety of means to make the

Furies seem threatening: suddenly loud dynamics, tremolos in the strings, chromatic motion, dissonant chords (including diminished seventh chords at the ends of phrases, as at measure 90), and blasts from the brass (as at measures 116–17). Unlike the divertissements of Lully's operas, in which dance and choral music were used for decoration, this scene features a ballet and chorus that are integrated with the central action of the drama.

Gluck prided himself on the simplicity of his melodies, sparseness of embellishment, and economy of melodic and text repetition, all of which are illustrated in Orfeo's song to the Furies. His song proceeds in the balanced two- and four-measure phrases of the contemporary Italian style, but with a more limited range and with very simple melodic ornamentation—mostly sighing appoggiaturas—that would not have offended French tastes. Characteristic of Gluck, this scene combines Italian style with French elements, including the chorus (marked "coro" in the score), dances (marked "ballo"), and evocative use of instrumental timbre.

The role of Orfeo was written for a castrato, as was typical of heroic male roles in Italian operas of the eighteenth century. In Gluck's later French adaptation of the opera for performance in Paris, Orfeo (now Orphée) was recast as a tenor because castrati were not in fashion on the French stage. Since the modern revival of historical performance practice has not extended to the creation of castratos, the part of Orfeo is now normally sung by either by a male countertenor or a female mezzo-soprano. As was typical in Gluck's time, the countertenor on the recording accompanying this anthology adds some improvised embellishment to the melody, especially in the final phrase.

WILLIAM BILLINGS (1746–1800)

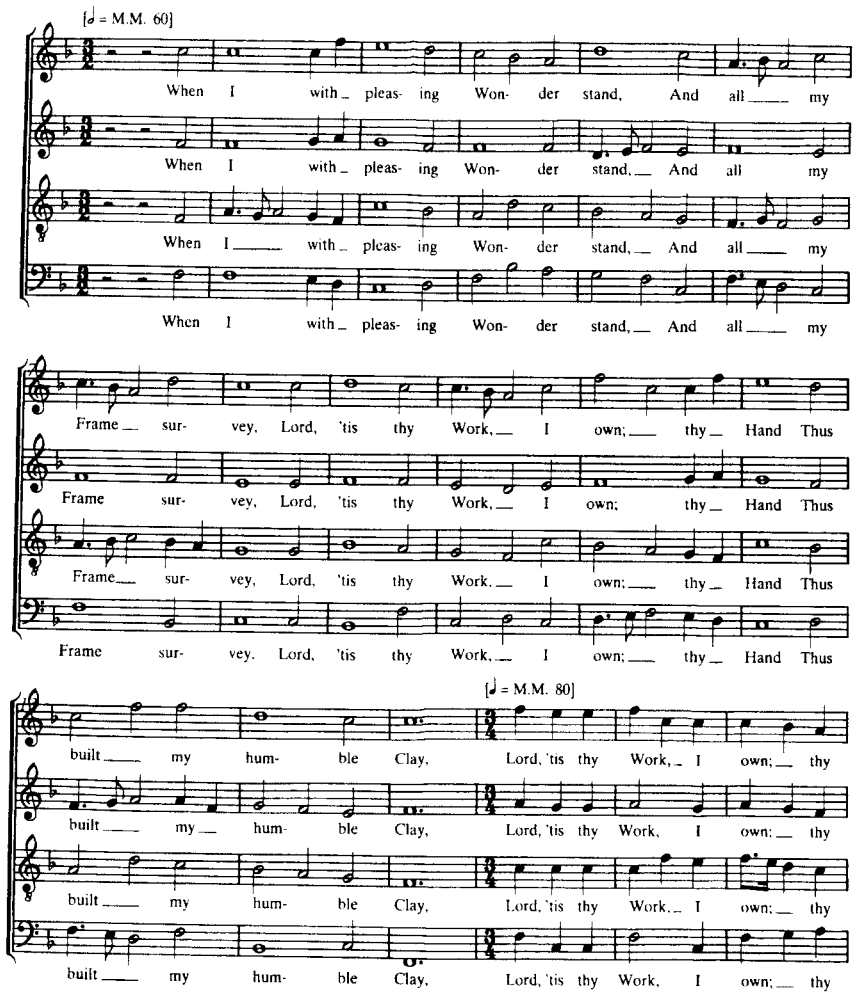
Creation, from *The Continental Harmony*

Fuging tune

CA. 1794

105

CD 7|22



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