

Monteverdi's Gloria for 8 voices M 39

Find out about the structure of the Gloria

By the time Monteverdi wrote the Gloria he was an experienced, accomplished and acclaimed composer in his 50s. He had numerous secular and sacred pieces under his belt, was used to writing for large forces and had contributed to the development of an innovative art form – opera. He knew how to create dramatic and moving effects. He was always keen to ensure there was variety, by alternating sections for everyone and smaller groups. He also wanted a coherent structure for larger pieces. The colours in the table show sections which are the same or similar, giving the piece its strong structure. As he was composing for the Catholic church, Monteverdi didn't have to ensure all the words were clear and unadorned – he could delight in emotions his music conveyed. The first column includes the clock for the Youtube recording.

The table below shows the piece's structure. There are some technical terms in column 3:
 tutti = everyone imitative = music made out of a pattern that is copied
 in thirds = two parts have the same tune 3 notes apart triple time = 3 beats in a bar
 homophonic = everyone sings more or less the same words at the same time in the same rhythm

Bar / time	text	translation	setting
1 →	Gloria in excelsis Deo	Glory to God in the highest	Tutti. Imitative.
16 0.43	Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.	and on earth peace, good will towards men.	A and T. Mainly in pairs. Imitative.
32 → 1.43	Laudamus te, benedicimus te, adoramus te, glorificamus te,	We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee,	Voices enter in descending order. Accumulative effect. Pairs of voices in thirds then homophonic tutti.
46 → 2.37	Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam,	we give thanks to thee for thy great glory.	Tutti. Homophonic.
51 → 3.00	Domine Deus, Rex caelestis, Deus Pater omnipotens.	O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.	A1, T1, B1. Homophonic in bars 51 – 54, then imitative in triple time.
70 → 3.50	Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe	O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ;	S1 and 2. Homophonic in bars 70 – 73 then imitative.
88 → 5.04	Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris,	O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,	A2, T2, B2. Homophonic in bars 88 – 90 then imitative in triple time.
108 → 5.51	Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis;	that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.	S, A, T with choir 1 leading – homophonic echoes, then tutti
120 → 6.26	Qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem nostram.	Thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer.	B1 and 2, imitative.
138 → 7.36	Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserere nobis.	Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us.	S, A, T with choir 2 leading – homophonic echoes, then tutti
150 → 8.08	Quoniam tu solus Sanctus, tu solus Dominus, tu solus Altissimus, Jesu Christe	For thou only art holy; thou only art the Lord; thou only, O Christ,	Homophonic start then S, A, T enter in pairs in thirds in triple time. From 220, the parts accumulate, ending homophonically
230 → 10.07	Cum Sancto Spiritu	with the Holy Ghost,	Tutti, homophonic – rather like 46
234 →	In gloria Dei Patris. Amen	art most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.	Reprise of music from beginning