Lamento della Ninfa:

Particularly interested in the down beat, Lamento della Ninfa is organized so that the primary vocalist, the men harmonizing and the accompaniment are creating coinciding wave-like structures. The bass laments, descending repetitively, giving into ornamentation occasionally but maintaining emphasis on this four note decent. The down beat exposes itself. It is alone for the first measure before other instrumentations fill the spaces it creates. And it is not the only beat being adhered to; the vocalist adds her own timing that can confront or complement the down beat, often what sounds like a harpsichord is playing in between and skipping over it. But the down beat remains as a structural element that can not be ignored. I can't help but wonder if the change of pitch and the lament descending is adding to its power. So I found versions of the Lamento with minimal accompaniment. I found that as the primary vocalist began the male voices harmonizing still held a remanence of down beat. Before this point it was difficult to discern that there was a guiding beat at all. Then, listening to the vocalist alone there is still a beat hidden within her somewhere. I am wondering if the longing, gaspy, emotional nature of the piece requires that there be a beat to disguise human response and storytelling as music. If adding the element of timing, repetitive timing, respected timing, emphasized timing is a musical necessity.

Lamento Della Ninfa

We talked in class about the embellished basso continuo in the *Lamento Della Ninfa*. The difference between basso continuo and motif came up. Part of the difference seems to be simply where the motif occurs, whether in the bass or in the higher voices/instruments. One suggestion is that the movements revolve around the motif in a way that they don't need to with the basso continuo, there doesn't necessarily need to be that relationship. Though I'm not sure if that's true, especially in this song. The main difference to me, whether this is true all the time, seems to be that the basso continuo is repeated exactly the same, whereas the motif is a unit that is changed and built on and doesn't necessarily even need to be played itself.

Here, however, I think the basso continuo could be taken as the main motif in the piece, which doesn't change or build on itself, but is referenced in the singer's movements. I see this in sections 35-38, where the high voice descends in a way that mimics the unembellished version of the basso continuo. It starts two notes higher, then descends through the basso continuo movement to one note lower, then breaks the pattern by rising. This was the most interesting part of the piece to me because of the recognizable pattern that caused me to relax, and the final twist which was startling. We talked in class about the tension between the descending bass part and the ascending movements of the high voice. I thought of this as a pitiful and useless hope constantly crushed by the basso continuo. In this moment in section 38, the singer takes their most powerful stab at the hopelessness.

Can tension and resolution exist in both the sound of notes and the length of notes? Tension is created when something is collapsed or stretched, giving it a kinetic energy that you anticipate releasing, or resolving. Tension and resolution normally refer to the sounds of notes. Either in reference to intervals in a scale which are intuitively unnatural, like the interval of the 7th in the diatonic order. Or, a tense sound might come with a sharp or flat, notes which are not in the mode that the rest of the piece is in. We get a tense sound, a moment of pitch-related tension, in the violin part before 0:25. It is a tension which is reaching for something, it wants to be resolved at a higher pitch. And at 0:25 when the notes' sounds feel resolved, the tempo speeds up. In this condition of resolution, we as listeners feel satisfaction that we don't want to lose. I assume the performer shares in this feeling. When one of the violin parts finds resolution in a series of notes, it desperately attempts to maintain the resolved condition and by consequence, the tempo of the resolved notes speed up with the performer's urgency. At the same time the other violin part interjects infrequently with a dissonant sound. Why is he unconcerned with resolution but the other performer is concerned with resolution? Here we see resolution in pitch which leads to a natural speeding up of the more resolved tone and a slowing down of the less resolved tone (maybe this is music natural selection). The tempo difference creates even more distance between the two parts. The more distance, the better the resolution. Another form of temporal, rather than pitch-related, resolution/tension is made by elongating certain notes. It feels like resolution in that elongation feels like taking a breath. This happens at 1:44, where one part of the violin is playing just a little too fast for the listener to understand the harmonic motion which the faster tempo implies as desperate to be conveyed, but the 2nd violin part interjects with a buh buh, a slowing down, a catching of the breath, a re-centering which is satisfying for the listener.

Words and Music week 4

I frequently find solace in listening to Bach's "Chaconne," especially during moments of sorrow and sadness. Writing a little page on Chaconne seems to be a great chance for me to analyze this captivating piece from a more rational music-theoretical perspective.

The aspect I wish to delve into is why the melody Chaconne by Bach sounds so mysterious or, in a more accurate word, unpredictable. Initially, I did not like Chaconne, and even felt annoyed and physically nauseous when I first listened to it because I felt lost about where this melody is going. This reaction can likely be attributed to the piece's dramatically variable melody.

The main reason for my reaction probably is that its melody is dramatically variable. I perceive a certain inclination in Bach's "Chaconne" where, once he establishes the theme in the opening sentence, the melody progressively becomes more intricate until transitioning from D minor to D major. However, even after the tune switching, the first sentence in the D major is simple and bright, but the same pattern just happens again, the melody varying swiftly and unpredictably with a tendency of increasing complexity.

Upon Comparing Chaconne to another violin solo piece by Bach, Sonata for Violin Solo No. 1 in G Minor, BWV 1001, I noticed that Sonata seems to have a repetitive melody. This melody appears throughout the whole piece ,creating a sense of familiarity and anticipation with each recurrence. Conversely, Chaconne,representing a Partita, generally avoids repeating an identical melody. The melody in the Partita appears to be more akin to a dance, continuously evolving based on the preceding phrases, occasionally punctuated by sudden and significant changes. The form of Partita offers Chaconne the freedom and variability of its melody, which can be counted as a reason for the unpredictability of Chaconne's melody, broadly.

One thing I was able to recognize by listening to the song and looking at the score of "Flow, My Tears" was that the Lute plays both mode of Major and Minor.

At first, I thought the mode was minor. This was because it did sound minor, but also the fact that we are listening to Lament gesture did make me think it must be a minor mode.

Yet, as I was following the score and listen to the song, I heard a point where the tone of the song seems to be changing. And as I heard it again, I was able to tell it resolved into major mode. Moreover, the more I listen to it, I could hear Lute playing major cord here and there.

One striking part was where the singer plays the exact same two note of G# to A, but the Lute plays the different mode. Then, it was like the reverse of how different starting note of the same shape created a different mood and mode. Though the singer was singing the same note the Lute playing different note made it sound very different from each other. This made me wonder how this piece would sound if I were to just here the singer singing the song, or the Lute alone playing the song.

Listening to Dido's Lament for the first time, I was struck by the musical progression of the introduction. There are many things that make these first nine measures beautiful and fascinating, but two that stand out to me are the *chromaticism* and the shifting of the *anchor note*. The vocalist begins singing on C and progresses nearly an entire octave down the scale to D, touching every half-step in between. The chromaticism from the introduction is then echoed in the basso continuo, played first as a cello solo and then repeated throughout the entire piece. Intertwined with this chromaticism is the progression of the anchor note. The very first note sung is a C, supported by a C minor chord in the continuo, which leads the listener to believe that this is the anchor of the piece. The vocalist progresses down the scale, however, landing on an A natural at the beginning of the third measure, the continuo demonstrating the anchor note to now be F. This pattern occurs three more times in the introduction alone! By measure five, the anchor has shifted again, this time to E flat. Measure seven shows the anchor to now be C, similar to the very first note, but this time supported by a major chord instead of a minor. In measure nine, the anchor is G, finally reaching here the G minor key of the rest of the piece. To my ears, the skill with which the composer is able to change the entire anchor of the piece so completely and beautifully is a testament to his talent.

In *Flow My Tears*, a particular motivic unit is used and modified in a way that alters the emotional resonance of the song. This unit is present from the very first measure of the song: an desesnding order of A, G, F, and E, which is followed up by an ascended G. This same relationship can be observed in some form or another throughout the song. In measure four, the basic patten of four descending notes followed by a high one is replicated with the exception of the first note being flat, the fourth being flat, and the high note being four notes from its predecessor rather than six. There is also less time following the high note before the next note than there was previously. Both the lessened jump between notes and its lack of emphasis makes for a less dramatic moment in the music than was experienced in the very first measure. In measure six, the pattern holds except for the high note being three notes from its predecessor. Holding the final note for a longer period of time holds here as it does in the first measure. This creates a feeling of return to the first measure. In measures seven and eight the pattern is stretched out, as the same pattern now takes a longer period of time to be completed. This makes the music feel more contemplative, while also keeping us in the overall feeling of the piece.

The repetition of this motivic unit creates a recognizable melody. This fall and rise is a resonant part of the music which will stick with the listener. Its repetition throughout the music creates a stable base for the piece to play around with for changes to the sound of the piece. The nature of this melody helps to create the mood of the piece. The descending four notes are a part of the grief in the lament, while the rising of extension of the final note is a way in which that suffering is being emphasied and exulted by the singer.

Pitch and anticipation, *Dido's Lament.*

In *Dido's Lament*, anticipation is frequent, specifically in measures 33 onwards, as Dido begins to implore "Remember me, remember me, but ah! Forget my fate." Immediately, some sense of urgency is felt, the vocals beginning an eighth note before the end of the measure, an unwillingness to even wait for the song itself. This "remember me," and the one following are all sung in a single pitch, diluting the urgency with a restrained sorrow. As the lyrics continue,"but Ah," this monotony is broken, the pitch fluctuating, dipping and rising twice, ending a note lower than before, an oppressing sorrow. It then raises with "forget my fate," each set of syllables a note higher than the one proceeding, ultimately returning to the pitch from measure 33. The composure is cracking, the rising pitch betraying a further desperation cutting through the despair.

The lyrics repeat, starting at the same pitch as before, once again an eighth early, and after, rising even further, jumping drastically and holding for the rest of "remember me." The composure is gone, the sorrow drowned by this need, this plea. Remember me. The second "remember me" is fully lost to anticipation, our early eighth leading directly into the latter half of the lyrics. The pitch starts lower than before, and though it rises at first, the passion is gone, it falls, further and further, the need, the desperation, sinking deeper and deeper into sorrow. With our final note comes resolution, acceptance. Resignation.

I am going to simply consider the eighth early start as anticipation, because while not contrasting a previous version that begins with the measure, it has a very similar effect caused by starting at an irregular and unexpected time, and I don't know what term would better fit.

Words and Music Week 4 - Time Signature of Pulse in Lamento della Ninfa

In Lamento della Ninfa, the time signature is just a three, which strikes me as unusual. This time signature suggests to me that the piece will have an overall sense of "three-ness", but the sensible pulse of the music feels a bit more complicated. When listening, the motif in the bass grounds the piece in time and gives it a sense of steadiness. This line has two dotted double whole notes per measure, which could make sense in a lot of equivalent time signatures: 6/1, 12/2, even 24/4. 6/1 seems the most natural choice to me since much of the melody moves in whole notes and it's not too fast or slow to conduct accurately. And this fits well with the sung lines, which often move in whole notes. Listening to the piece with 6/1 in mind brings the music's "three-ness" forward, with each note of the bass line feeling like three beats, and many sections of the melody dividing nicely the same way. But if I'm counting in 6/1 and feeling a further division into three, I might just divide the measures in half and count in 3/1. This would put the start of each dotted double quarter at the start of a measure and make counting the melody even easy.

This makes me wonder why the author of the score chose this time signature over any other. The most intuitive pulse, for me, is on the whole notes and in groups of three, yet I think this drawn-out time signature, dictating how the music is written down and more indirectly impacting how it is read and performed, does contribute to the mournful feel. Especially in the soprano line, the long measures and bigger groupings encourage me to hear a few sweeping motions rather than a more subdivided series of rhythms. Maybe this would also force performers to play more this way, following the lament gesture in the bass more than a very active conductor and letting phrases be long and heartfelt.