

## Madrigal Performance Guide

YouTube Links:

[Luca Marenzio - Solo e pensoso i più deserti campi](#)  
[Madrigal by Chester Biscardi](#)

1. Les Thimmig's "Mother Chord" from *Arrhythmia* contains eight pitches—A C# D# E F# G B b Cb, with four remaining—Bb Db Fb G#. In *Madrigal*, the two chords made from the "Mother Chord" and the four remaining notes are first used musically in mm. 13-15. The minor 7<sup>th</sup>, from D# (E-flat)→C#, is recurrent in much of my music, a musical signature of sorts.

2. In his madrigal, Luca Marenzio uses a chromatic scale in the sopranos, starting on G to A (a 9<sup>th</sup> above) and then back down to D (over 24 measures in 4/4) in setting the first two lines of the poem, "Solo e pensoso." The first six notes are transposed down a m3rd, starting with E, E#(F), F#, G, G#(A-flat), but only reach the A when the "Mother Chord" is revealed in m. 13. Contrast the opening five measures with the more forceful mm. 8-10.

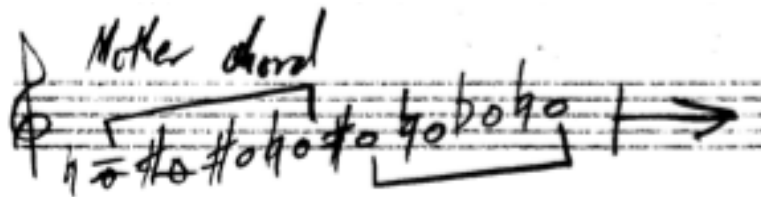
3. "Solo e pensoso" ("Sonnet XXXV") is part of the *Canzoniere (Rerum vulgarium fragmenta)*, written by Petrarch while riding along the banks of the Rhône River between Lyons and Avignon. The poet wanders through desolate fields to escape human contact and hide his lovesick grief, only to realize that Love follows him everywhere. The poem speaks to the universal need for intimate human contact and connection.

### 4. Madrigal Program Note

*Madrigal* is written in memory of the remarkable Les Thimmig, composer, virtuosic improviser and performer, musical architect, bold and gentle spirit, and my mentor and friend. It also pays homage to Luca Marenzio's 1599 madrigal, "Solo e pensoso," based on "Sonnet XXXV" (1345) by Francesco Petrarca. Thimmig's 1973 *Arrhythmia*, a dynamic, haunting work for wind ensemble, musically evokes Fellini's *Satyricon*. In turn, *Madrigal* incorporates *Arrhythmia*'s "Mother Chord" and echoes Marenzio's setting of the first two lines of the Petrarchan sonnet (the entire poem follows below).

*Solo e pensoso i più deserti campi*  
*Vo misurando a passi tardi e lenti*

Alone and pensive, the deserted fields  
I measure with steps deliberate and slow



*Les Thimmig's autograph of "Mother Chord." Shared with the composer in 1973.*

The cover of the *Madrigal* score, *Havana (Cuba)*, by Paul Stetzer, is a photo of a man walking alone, his head bowed.

Solo e pensoso i più deserti campi  
Vo misurando a passi tardi e lenti;  
E gl'occhi porto, per fuggire, intenti,  
Dove vestigio uman l'arena stampi.  
Altro scherno non trovo che mi scampi  
Dal manifesto accorger de le genti;  
Perchè negli atti d'allegrezza spenti  
Di fuor si legge com'io dentro avampi:

Si ch'io mi credo homai che monti e piagge  
E fiumi e selve sappian di che tempre  
Sia la mia vita, ch'è celata altrui.  
Ma pur sì aspre vie nè sì selvagge  
Cercar non sò, ch'Amor non venga sempre  
Ragionando con meco, et io con lui.

—FRANCESCO PETRARCA (PETRARCH)

Alone and pensive, the deserted fields  
I measure with steps deliberate and slow;  
and my eyes I hold in readiness to flee  
from a place marked by human footsteps.  
No other defense I find that can save me  
from the peering eyes of people:  
because when laughter and cheer are spent,  
from outside can be read my inner flame.

So I have come to believe that mountains and beaches  
and rivers and woods know of what fibers  
is made my life, hidden from others.  
Yet paths neither so rough nor wild  
can I find where Cupid does not seek me always  
to debate with me, and I with him.