

CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI
L'ORFEO
– a tale in music

Ensemble Lundabarock
Höör Barock
Ensemble Altapunta
Fredrik Malmberg

MONTEVERDI, Claudio (1567–1643)

L'Orfeo

Favola in musica

Libretto by Alessandro Striggio (?1573–1630)

First performed in Mantua, 1607

La Musica (Music)	<i>allegorical figure</i>
Orfeo (Orpheus)	<i>musician and poet, demigod and son of Apollo</i>
Euridice (Eurydice)	<i>bride of Orpheus</i>
Messaggiera (Messenger)	<i>a nymph and companion of Eurydice</i>
Speranza (Hope)	<i>allegorical figure</i>
Caronte (Charon)	<i>ferryman of the Underworld</i>
Proserpina	<i>wife of Pluto</i>
Plutone (Pluto)	<i>King of the Underworld</i>
Apollo	<i>Sun god, patron of music and poetry, father of Orpheus</i>
Ninfe e pastori	<i>nymphs and shepherds</i>
Spiriti infernali	<i>spirits of the Underworld</i>

Disc 1 [47'19]

- | | | |
|---|---------|------|
| 1 | Toccata | 1'27 |
|---|---------|------|

Prologo / Prologue

- | | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|-----------|------|
| 2 | Ritornello. Dal mio Permesso amato | La Musica | 5'30 |
|---|------------------------------------|-----------|------|

Atto primo / Act I

- | | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|--|------|
| 3 | In questo lieto e fortunato giorno | Pastore 2 | 1'34 |
| 4 | Vieni Imeneo, deh vieni | Choro | 0'53 |
| 5 | Muse, honor di Parnaso | Ninfa 1 | 0'55 |
| 6 | Lasciate i monti (Balletto) | Choro | 1'56 |
| 7 | Ma tu gentil cantor | Pastore 1 | 0'38 |
| 8 | Rosa del Ciel, vita del Mondo | Orfeo | 2'05 |
| 9 | Io non dirò | Euridice | 0'50 |
| 10 | Lasciate i monti (Balletto) | Choro | 0'59 |
| 11 | Vieni Imeneo, deh vieni | Choro | 0'57 |
| 12 | Ma s'il nostro gioir | Pastore 2 | 0'49 |
| 13 | Ritornello – Alcun non sia | Pastori 2 & 3; Ninfa 2, Pastori 1 & 4; | 4'27 |
| | | Pastori 1 & 2; Ninfa 2, Pastori 1,2,3,4; | |
| | | Choro | |

Atto secondo / Act II

23'44

14	Sinfonia – Ecco pur ch'a voi ritorno	Orfeo, Pastori 2 & 3, Choro	5'45
15	Ahi caso acerbo	Messaggiera, Pastori 1 & 2, Orfeo	2'54
16	In un fiorito prato	Messaggiera, Pastori 2 & 3	3'48
17	Tu se' morta	Orfeo	2'17
18	Ahi caso acerbo	Choro	1'03
19	Ma io – Sinfonia	Messaggiera	2'30
20	Chi ne consola ahi lassì?	Pastori 2 & 3, Choro	5'24

Disc 2 [58'20]

Atto terzo / Act III

25'26

1	Sinfonia		1'27
2	Scorto da te, mio Nume	Orfeo	1'23
3	Ecco l'atra palude	Speranza	2'36
4	Dove, ah dove te'n vai	Orfeo	0'49
5	O tu ch'innanzi morte	Caronte	1'35
6	Sinfonia – Possente Spirto	Orfeo	8'06
7	Sol tu, nobile Dio	Orfeo	1'03
8	Ben mi lusinga alquanto	Caronte, Orfeo	2'44
9	Ei dorme	Orfeo	2'08
10	Sinfonia – Nulla impresa per huom	Choro di Spiriti	3'30

Atto quarto / Act IV

16'40

11	Signor, quell'infelice	Proserpina	2'28
12	Benchè severo e immutabil fato	Plutone	1'58
13	O degli habitator	Spirito Infernale 1 & 2	1'03
14	Quali grazie ti rendo	Proserpina, Plutone	1'35
15	Pietade oggi	Choro di Spiriti, Spirito infernale 1	0'40
16	Ritornello – Qual honor	Orfeo, Spirito Infernale 3	3'38
17	Ahi vista troppo dolce	Euridice, Spirito infernale 1, Orfeo	2'04
18	Sinfonia – È la virtute un raggio	Choro di Spiriti	3'10

Atto quinto / Act V

15'45

19	Ritornello		0'41
20	Questi i campi di Tracia	Orfeo	7'05
21	Sinfonia – Perchè a lo sdegno e al dolor	Apollo	2'04
22	Padre cortese	Orfeo, Apollo	2'28
23	Saliam cantando al Cielo	Apollo, Orfeo	1'16
24	Ritornello – Vanne Orfeo felice a pieno	Choro	1'20
25	Moresca		0'48

TT: 105'39

Ensemble Lundabarock

Johan Linderöth *tenor*

Kristina Hellgren *soprano*

Christine Nonbo Andersen *soprano*

Maria Forsström *mezzo-soprano*

Anna Zander *mezzo-soprano*

Adam Riis *tenor*

Daniel Åberg *baritone*

Steffen Bruun *bass*

Karl Peter Eriksson *baritone*

Ann-Margret Nyberg *soprano*

Rasmus Gravers Nielsen *tenor*

Staffan Alveteg *bass*

Hedvig von Schantz *soprano*

Staffan Solén *tenor*

Petter Östberg *tenor*

Orfeo

La Musica, Proserpina, choir

Ninfa 1, Euridice, choir

Messaggiera, choir

Pastore 1, Speranza, choir

Pastore 2, Apollo, Eco, choir

Pastore 3, Spirito infernale 2, choir

Caronte

Pastore 4, Plutone, choir

Ninfa 2, choir

Spirito infernale 1, choir

Spirito infernale 3, choir

choir

choir

choir

Language coaches: Stefano Olcese, Valentina Polani, Arianna Benigno & Paulo Giraudi

Höör Barock

Hannah Tibell *violin*

Kanerva Juutilainen *violin*

Rastko Roknic *viola*

Marie Becker *viola*

Hanna Thiel *viola da gamba, lirone*

Joakim Peterson *violone*

Mattias Frostensson *violone*

Dohyo Sol *theorbo*

Vegard Lund *theorbo, baroque guitar*

Peter Lönnerberg *harpsichord, organ, regal*

Emma Huijsser *baroque harp*

Emelie Roos *recorder*

Pia Loman *recorder*

Per Nord *percussion*

Ensemble Altapunta

Judit Pacquier *cornett*

Liselotte Emery *cornett*

Ole-Kristian Andersen *trombone, trumpet*

Erik Björkquist *trombone*

Brian Bindner *trombone*

Daniel Stighäll *trombone*

Thomas Dahlkvist *bass trombone*

Kristina Schjelde Husum *trumpet*

Gustav Blomsterberg *trumpet*

Fredrik Malmberg *musical direction / organ*

L' O R F E O
FAVOLAINMVSICA
DA CLAVDIO MONTEVERDI
RAPPRESENTATA IN MANTOVA

L'Anno 1607. & rſouamente data in luce.

AL SERENISSIMO SIGNOR
D. FRANCESCO GONZAGA
Principe di Mantoua, &c di Monferato, &c.



In Venetia Appreſſo Ricciardo Amadino.

M D C I X.



The only certain portrait of Claudio Monteverdi, from the title page of *Fiori poetici*, a book of commemorative poems for his funeral published in Venice, 1644

L'Orfeo

Favola in musica

L'Orfeo by Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643) is often described as the first true opera, with good reason: it is made up of five acts, has a large gallery of characters, a detailed orchestral score specifying some forty instruments and, like so many later operas, its libretto is based on a classical myth. Monteverdi's work thus becomes a sort of matrix for the entire genre – with one exception: the narrative of this 'tale in music' is direct, succinct and to the point. Emotions are expressed – with great intensity – purely through the music, a music which underpins the text, the plot and the tale word for word. To modern ears the musical heritage of *L'Orfeo* is more to be found in the Lieder tradition than in the grand opera of the nineteenth century in which the words often are more difficult to distinguish – a drawback which is to some extent counterbalanced by the sheer beauty of the music and the singing. Monteverdi uses the description 'favola in musica' – a musical tale – to describe his work. Perhaps one could decide to let *L'Orfeo* to form its very own genre?

L'Orfeo came into being in a specific social and cultural context. What we now know as Italy consisted of numerous small principalities and city states such as Florence and Venice, alongside the Papal States and areas under Spanish dominion. Between the various states, rivalry and one-upmanship were constant, and a favourite means of making one's mark was cutting-edge art and architecture. A proper Renaissance prince wanted to gather the best artists and artisans at his court in order to increase his own prestige. Their nationality was of no interest, which for instance is why we see a large influx of Flemish musicians and composers to Italian courts and churches during the sixteenth century, while outstanding Italian instrumentalists (primarily violinists) travelled in the opposite direction, to the courts of northern

Europe. An artistic European Union, thus – albeit élitist and miniature – with free movement and exchange of artistic goods and services.

This was the backdrop as opera gradually took form during the 16th century. The process can be said to begin with the *intermedio*, a new genre which from the years around 1500 was gaining importance at the princely courts of Italy. Particularly festive occasions, such as weddings in the ruling families, would normally include performances of classical plays and between the acts specially devised interludes were often performed. These *intermedii* involved music and often dance, and aimed at impressing the audience with spectacular stage sets using elaborate machinery. With time, they became more and more lavish, often eclipsing the plays they were complementing.

Meanwhile intellectuals, poets and musicians were joining forces in the attempt to reconstruct the dramatic style of Classical Greece, in terms of melody and declamation. The result was monody – one solo voice singing a melodic part over an independent bass line and with a simple accompaniment, often from a lute. Over time, more declamatory, speech-like sections developed into the vocal style we know as recitative, while the accompaniment was the prototype for basso continuo, the harmonic foundations of all baroque music.

In the midst of this, in 1567, Claudio Monteverdi was born. The son of an apothecary from Cremona, he received his musical training from Marc'Antonio Igneneri, *maestro di cappella* at the Cathedral of Cremona. By the age of fifteen he had already published a collection of madrigals, and it was in this genre he first made a name for himself as a pioneer among composers. In 1591, Monteverdi was hired by the ducal court of Mantua as a singer and violist working under the Flemish *maestro di cappella* Giaches de Wert. It seems that he became a valued performer and composer and he accompanied Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga on various travels. When de Wert died he was nevertheless passed over in favour of an older colleague,

and had to wait until 1601 to be appointed *maestro di cappella*.

That same year, a great wedding was celebrated in Florence between Maria de' Medici and King Henry IV of France. The celebrations included a performance of *Euridice* by Jacopo Peri, who four years earlier had composed *Dafne*, the very first opera. Duke Vincenzo was among the wedding guests, and it is possible that Monteverdi witnessed the performance as a member of his employer's retinue. The idea of composing an opera based on the same myth as *Euridice* may have been born at this time: the story of Orpheus was one of the most popular at the time, and as early as around 1500 the court in Mantua had staged *La favola di Orfeo*, a lyrical drama by Angelo Poliziano – at least half of which had been sung rather than spoken. Also part of the duke's following in Florence was the lawyer and diplomat Alessandro Striggio the younger. The son of the composer with the same name, and himself a competent musician, Striggio began work on a libretto largely based on the accounts of the myth by Virgil in the *Georgics* and by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*.

By this time, Monteverdi had become a leading proponent of 'seconda pratica', a new method of composing which represented a different aesthetic approach to the writing of vocal music than that of the 'prima pratica' of Palestrina and his contemporaries. Inspired by the inventors of monody, Monteverdi believed that the role of music was to express and emphasize the literal as well as figurative aspects of the text. A prime example of his method can be found in the third act of the new opera, where Orfeo has recourse to a set of new techniques and musical means of expression in his heartfelt prayers for the return of his beloved Euridice. For Monteverdi, *L'Orfeo* was a splendid opportunity to use all the modern tools that he had been perfecting in his madrigals on a larger canvas, and to show his employer that he was indeed a true maestro. Maybe he even saw a parallel in how Orfeo through his incredibly virtuosic and modern singing convinced Caronte, the ferryman to the world of the dead, to let him cross.

L'Orfeo was first performed during the carnival on 27th February 1607, in the Palazzo Ducale of Mantua. Where in the palace isn't known but possibly the performance took place in the Galleria dei Fiumi, which is of a size to house a stage, an orchestra and a small audience.

The striking opening – a Toccata played by five trumpets and then repeated by the full orchestra – has become something of a hit tune. It is however possible that it doesn't really 'belong' to the opera: Monteverdi reused it three years later to open his *Vespers* and it has been suggested that the fanfare was actually the personal trumpet call of his employers, the Gonzaga family. If so, it may have been played to indicate that the Duke was arriving at his seat, and as a greeting to him and his entourage – an expedient solution to the complex problem of how to combine court protocol with theatrical performance.

In the Prologue, La Musica herself greets the audience and announces the subject of the evening's entertainment. It opens with a ritornello (a short instrumental interlude) that returns between each of La Musica's lines, with a barcarolle-like rocking motion that becomes a melancholy leitmotif and sets the mood. This ritornello will be heard again, at the end of Act II and at the beginning of Act V.

The first act features a pattern of ritornellos appearing between choruses and brief monodic arias supported by a harmonised bass line. These conjure up the image of a peaceful and carefree bucolic idyll, while shepherds and nymphs tell us of the coming wedding between Orfeo and Euridice. The two lovers also make an appearance, assuring us and each other of their happiness.

A Sinfonia opens Act II with musical material that leads straight into Orfeo's greeting of his beloved woods and hills of Thrace. Two shepherds join him in praising the beauties of nature. The music has a wonderful vivacity and illustrates Orfeo's joy and contentment: he is quite simply a man on top of the world. This is related and commented upon in monodies and choruses, but darkness falls as a messenger

(Messaggiera) announces that Euridice has died after being bitten by a snake. The musical landscape shifts, and the monodies that up to this point have mainly been short songs or arias now become dramatic narratives – at times (Messaggiera) almost chantlike – and a slow Sinfonia with a highly chromatic bass line reinforces the mournfulness. The act closes with the ritornello that was first heard in the prologue, providing a melancholic but restrained ending.

The beginning of Act III is in stark contrast to what has gone before: in the opening Sinfonia the two cornettos and five trombones make their first entry, accompanied by a regal. The soundworld is completely new – frightening but also imposing music illustrates how extraordinary and dramatic Orfeo's descent into the underworld is. An impassioned dialogue between Orfeo and his guide Speranza (Hope) is brusquely interrupted by Caronte (Charon), the ferryman. Accompanied by the reedy sound of the regal, his commanding entry makes a forceful impression in part because this is the first time in the opera a deep voice is heard.

The quiet sinfonia that follows prepares the listener for the meekness with which Orfeo addresses Caronte in *Possente Spirto* ('Powerful Spirit'). This is Orfeo's longest aria in the entire opera, and the most modern music ever written up to that time. Interrupted by brief ritornellos from, in turn, two violins, two cornettos and finally the harp, Orfeo presents his arguments and increasingly fervid pleas to Caronte. Various ornaments are employed for heightened intensity, such as the so-called *trillo*, a rapid repetition of the same note and vowel. Only after a long harp ritornello does Orfeo clearly state who he is and his purpose: to enter the world of the dead in order to bring back Euridice to the living. Caronte compliments him on his singing – but turns down his request! Orfeo's response is high-pitched and dramatic, and he invests all his feeling in a final plea: 'Give me back what is mine, Gods of Tartarus'!

The sinfonia which preceded Orfeo's aria returns, during which Caronte falls asleep, causing Orfeo to observe that if his lyre couldn't sway the ferryman, his

singing must have made him drowsy. In any case, he has succeeded in getting past Caronte and proceeds to cross the river in his boat. Orfeo's arrival in the world of the dead is accompanied by the cornettos and trombones in a return of their imposing Sinfonia which grows seamlessly into a male choir of Spirits, accompanied by five trombones.

The fourth act takes place at the court of Plutone (Pluto), the ruler of the underworld. His spouse, Proserpina, pleads Orfeo's case, and Pluto agrees to let Euridice return to life – on one condition: Orfeo mustn't set his eyes on her until they are safely in the world of the living again. As Orfeo makes his way back with Euridice walking behind him, the music is joyful and triumphant, reminiscent of the opening of the second act. But suddenly the mood changes, as Orfeo begins to doubt that Euridice is actually following him. He has to make sure, turns around – and sees Euridice disappear forever. The act ends with another sinfonia for winds, and a chorus of Spirits.

The ritornello that opened the first act and closed the second returns for the fifth act. Orfeo is back in Thrace, alone in the very spot where he first received word of Euridice's death. Grieving and bereft of hope, he turns to the woods and cliffs for sympathy and comfort, in a long soliloquy only interrupted by a mournful echo. Suddenly Apollo appears, descending from the sky on a cloud. The god of music, who once taught Orfeo to play the lyre, now invites him to join him in the heavens, offering him immortal life. Orfeo accepts and, singing, the two ascend into the sky.

This ending is Alessandro Striggio's very own, and has nothing to do with the original account, in which Orfeo was torn to pieces by the Maenads, female followers of Dionysos, who resented Orfeo's worship of Apollo. In Striggio's and Monteverdi's version we are instead treated to a lively final chorus which wishes Orfeo eternal happiness and finishes with a moral: that 'he who sows in sorrow reaps the fruit of all grace.' This unexpectedly happy ending is emphasized by the

final, boisterous Moresca – a dance that, like the Toccata that opened the opera, has its roots in the fifteenth century.

And now, let the curtain be raised and the tale of Orfeo and his metamorphosis begin:

Once upon a time...

© *Ole-Kristian Andersen 2020*

This recording of Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* is the result of a collaboration between three ensembles in the south of Sweden: Lundabarock, Höör Barock and Altapunta, under the direction of **Fredrik Malmberg**, who received his training at the Malmö Academy of Music. Previously the conductor of the Danish National Vocal Ensemble, Fredrik is currently professor of choral conducting at the Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm as well as principal conductor of the Eric Ericson Chamber Choir. With his ensemble Vokalharmonin (Harmony of Voices) he has made several acclaimed recordings of early as well as contemporary music.

In the past, **Ensemble Lundabarock** has primarily been active as an organiser of early music concerts in the university town of Lund, successfully collaborating with the vocal ensemble Vox Scaniensis, directed by Peter Wallin, when mounting its own productions, including an acclaimed recording of Buxtehude's *Membra Jesu Nostri*. For the present production Lundabarock provides the vocal element, mainly made up of singers based in the south of Sweden and Denmark and active in the Øresund Region and across Europe.

Not far from Lund, the small community of Höör has become the home of several specialists in early music. Forming the ensemble **Höör Barock**, they have received international acclaim for their previous recordings on BIS, including the *Golovin Music* by J. H. Roman, which received a Swedish Grammis in 2020. The

ensemble's lutenist **Dohyo Sol**, who regularly takes his theorbo to play with the leading baroque ensembles and opera companies in Scandinavia, is one of the driving forces behind the present recording.

Also based in the very south of Sweden, the trombone player **Ole-Kristian Andersen** is a member of the Helsingborg Symphony Orchestra, but with a past in the early music wind ensemble Concerto Palatino he also find the time to work with conductors such as Philippe Herreweghe and John Eliot Gardiner. Ole has performed *L'Orfeo* on some hundred occasions and has previously participated on no less than four recordings of the work. Through his **Ensemble Altapunta** he contributes the cornetts and trombones.

As Orfeo we hear **Johan Linderöth**, with a long career of performing and recording music by the masters of the Renaissance and early baroque – Dowland, Purcell, Blow, Schütz, Monteverdi and Buxtehude. In recent years he has enjoyed a regular collaboration with Paul Hillier. For Johan focus is always on the text, and lately he is taking on more recent repertoire: lute songs are gradually being replaced by Lieder.

Kristina Hellgren appears as the allegorical La Musica as well as Proserpina, the highly emotional queen of the underworld. After studies at the Malmö Academy of Music, including courses with Steven Stubbs and Erin Headley in baroque interpretation, Kristina has been mainly active as a church musician and concert soloist, but has also appeared in baroque finery at the Drottningholm Palace Theatre.

No fewer than four of our singers are also members of the Danish National Vocal Ensemble (DNVE). These include Euridice, **Christine Nonbo Andersen**, specialising in early music and a great lover of Renaissance polyphony. By way of Schütz and Buxtehude, Carl Nielsen and Britten, the tenor **Adam Riis** has also premièred *Poème automobile*, a work written for him and eight Renaults. Based in Lund, the baritone and choral conductor **Daniel Åberg** was raised on early music from child-

hood, and is the lucky owner of the regal heard on the recording. Finally, among the basses of DNVE we find our Caronte: **Steffen Bruun** is increasingly active on the operatic stage, and made his debut at the Royal Danish Opera in 2019, as Zuniga in *Carmen*.

Moving northwards in Sweden, Gothenburg contributes with the mezzo-soprano **Maria Forsström**, with a range from Monteverdi to Mahler, via Mozart and her collaboration with Teodor Currentzis. From the same city comes baritone **Karl Peter Eriksson**, a singer who besides a passion for chamber music and modern opera also has a firm footing in the early music, as a member of Göteborg Baroque. And finally – from Stockholm we welcome **Anna Zander**, whose mezzo-soprano has brought her to work with some of the foremost in the field of baroque music: Ton Koopman, Reinhard Goebel, Andrew Manze and Philippe Pierlot.



Fredrik Malmberg *musical director / organ*

Photo: © Mats Bäcker



Johan Linderöth *Orfeo*

Photo: © Per Buhre



Kristina Hellgren *La Musica, Proserpina*

Photo: © Frasse Franzén



Christine Nonbo Andersen *Euridice*

Photo: © Per Morten Abrahamsen



Maria Forsström *Messaggiera*

Photo: © Ateljé Marie Fotostudio/Peter Nilsson



Anna Zander *Speranza*

Photo: © Ulf Tjärnström



Adam Riis *Apollo*

Photo: © Per Morten Abrahamsen



Daniel Åberg *Pastore 3, Spirito infernale 2*

Photo: © Per Morten Abrahamsen



Steffen Bruun *Caronte*

Photo: © Jan Windszus



Karl Peter Eriksson *Plutone*

Photo: © Per Buhrø

L'Orfeo

Favola in musica

L'Orfeo von Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643) wird oft als die erste echte Oper bezeichnet, und das aus gutem Grund: Sie besteht aus fünf Akten, verfügt über eine Vielzahl von Charakteren, eine detaillierte Orchesterpartitur, die rund vierzig Instrumente spezifiziert, und über ein Libretto, das – wie fortan so viele Opern – auf der antiken Mythologie basiert. Monteverdis Werk wurde zu einer Art Matrix für die gesamte Gattung – mit einer Ausnahme: Die Handlung dieser „in Musik gesetzten Erzählung“ ist direkt, prägnant und auf den Punkt. Emotionen werden – mit großer Intensität – allein durch die Musik ausgedrückt, eine Musik, die den Text, die Handlung und die Erzählung Wort für Wort unterstreicht. Aus heutiger Sicht findet sich das musikalische Erbe von *L'Orfeo* eher in der Liedtradition als in der Großen Oper des 19. Jahrhunderts, in der der Text oft schwieriger zu verstehen ist – ein Nachteil, der in gewisser Weise durch die reine Schönheit der Musik und des Gesangs ausgeglichen wird. Um sein Werk zu beschreiben, verwendet Monteverdi die Bezeichnung „Favola in musica“ – musikalische Erzählung. Vielleicht billigen wir *L'Orfeo* einfach eine ganz eigene Gattung zu?

L'Orfeo ist in einem spezifischen sozialen und kulturellen Kontext entstanden. Das, was wir heute Italien nennen, bestand damals aus zahlreichen kleinen Fürstentümern und Stadtstaaten wie Florenz und Venedig, hinzu kamen der Kirchenstaat sowie Gebiete unter spanischer Herrschaft. Rivalität und Geltungssucht prägten das Verhältnis der Staaten untereinander, und beliebte Mittel, sich hervorzutun, waren Glanzleistungen in Kunst und Architektur. Wer als Renaissancefürst etwas auf sich hielt, strebte danach, die besten Künstler und Handwerker an seinem Hof zu versammeln, um sein Ansehen zu steigern. Ihre Nationalität war nicht von Belang, weshalb wir zum Beispiel im 16. Jahrhundert an italienischen Höfen und

Kirchen einen großen Zustrom flämischer Musiker und Komponisten beobachten können, während andererseits herausragende italienische Instrumentalisten (vor allem Violinisten) an die Höfe Mittel- und Nordeuropas gingen: eine Europäische Union in Sachen Kunst – wenn auch elitär und *en miniature* – mit freiem Verkehr und Austausch von künstlerischen Gütern und Dienstleistungen.

Vor diesem Hintergrund nahm die Oper im Laufe des 16. Jahrhunderts allmählich Gestalt an. Den Beginn dieser Entwicklung dürfte das *intermedio* markieren, eine neue Gattung, die seit den Jahren um 1500 an den Fürstenhöfen Italiens an Bedeutung gewann. Bei besonders festlichen Anlässen wie etwa herrschaftlichen Hochzeiten kamen in der Regel klassische Schauspielstücke zur Aufführung, und zwischen die Akte wurden oft eigens geschaffene Zwischenspiele eingeschoben. Diese *intermedii* enthielten Musik, oft auch Tanz, und sie zielten darauf ab, das Publikum mit spektakulären Bühnenbildern samt raffinierter Maschinerie zu beeindrucken. Mit der Zeit wurden sie immer aufwendiger und stellten die Stücke, die sie ergänzten, oft in den Schatten.

Gelehrte, Dichter und Musiker bemühten sich damals mit vereinten Kräften darum, den dramatischen Stil der griechischen Klassik im Hinblick auf Melodie und Textvortrag zu rekonstruieren. Und so wurde die Monodie (wieder)geboren: Eine Solostimme singt eine Melodie über einer unabhängigen Basslinie mit einfacher Begleitung, oft von der Laute ausgeführt. Mit der Zeit entwickelten sich die deklamatorischen, sprachähnlichen Teile zu jenem Gesangsstil, den wir als Rezi-tativ kennen, während die Begleitung der Prototyp für den Generalbass oder Basso continuo war, die harmonische Grundlage aller Barockmusik.

Mitten hinein in dieses Geschehen wurde im Jahr 1567 Claudio Monteverdi geboren. Der Sohn eines Apothekers aus Cremona erhielt seine musikalische Ausbildung bei Marc'Antonio Igneneri, *maestro di cappella* am Dom von Cremona. Im Alter von nur fünfzehn Jahren veröffentlichte er eine Sammlung mit Madrigalen,

und es war diese Gattung, die ihm erste Anerkennung als innovativer Komponist verschaffte. Im Jahr 1591 erhielt Monteverdi eine Anstellung am herzoglichen Hof zu Mantua als Sänger und Violaspieler unter dem flämischen *maestro di cappella* Giaches de Wert. Offenbar konnte er sich als Musiker und Komponist Achtung verschaffen, und er begleitete Herzog Vincenzo Gonzaga auf verschiedenen Reisen. Als de Wert starb, wurde ihm jedoch ein älterer Kollege vorgezogen, und so musste er bis 1601 warten, um zum *maestro di cappella* ernannt zu werden.

Im selben Jahr wurde in Florenz die Hochzeit von Maria de' Medici und König Heinrich IV. von Frankreich gefeiert. Zu den Festlichkeiten gehörte eine Aufführung der Oper *Euridice* von Jacopo Peri, der vier Jahre zuvor mit *Dafne* die erste Oper überhaupt komponiert hatte. Herzog Vincenzo gehörte zu den Hochzeitsgästen, und es ist möglich, dass Monteverdi der Aufführung im Gefolge seines Dienstherrn beiwohnte. Die Idee, eine Oper nach demselben Mythos wie *Euridice* zu komponieren, könnte in dieser Zeit entstanden sein: Die Geschichte von Orpheus gehörte damals zu den populärsten Mythen, und bereits um 1500 war am Hof in Mantua das lyrische Drama *La favola di Orfeo* von Angelo Poliziano aufgeführt worden, das mindestens zur Hälfte gesungen und nicht gesprochen wurde. Zur Gefolgschaft des Herzogs in Florenz zählte auch der Anwalt und Diplomat Alessandro Striggio d.J., Sohn des gleichnamigen Komponisten und selber ein tüchtiger Musiker. Striggio machte sich an ein Libretto, das weitgehend auf den mythologischen Erzählungen in Vergils *Georgica* und Ovids *Metamorphosen* basierte.

Zu dieser Zeit war Monteverdi zu einem führenden Vertreter der „seconda pratica“ geworden, einer neuen Art des Komponierens, die im Hinblick auf die Vokalmusik eine andere Ästhetik vertrat als die „prima pratica“ Palestrinas und seiner Zeitgenossen. Inspiriert von den Erfindern der Monodie vertrat Monteverdi die Ansicht, die Rolle der Musik bestünde darin, sowohl die wörtlichen als auch die figurativen Aspekte des Textes auszudrücken und hervorzuheben. Ein Musterbeispiel für

seine Methode findet sich im dritten Akt der neuen Oper, wo Orfeo in seinen innigen Gebeten um die Rückkehr seiner geliebten Euridice eine Reihe neuer Techniken und musikalischer Ausdrucksmittel einsetzt. Für Monteverdi war *L'Orfeo* eine großartige Gelegenheit, alle modernen Werkzeuge, die er in seinen Madrigalen perfektioniert hatte, auf einer größeren Leinwand einzusetzen und seinem Auftraggeber zu zeigen, dass er in der Tat ein echter *maestro* war. Vielleicht sah er sogar eine Parallele darin, dass Orfeo durch seinen unglaublich virtuos und modernen Gesang Caronte, den Fährmann in die Welt der Toten, überzeugte, ihn passieren zu lassen.

L'Orfeo wurde während des Karnevals am 27. Februar 1607 im Palazzo Ducale zu Mantua uraufgeführt. Wo genau die Aufführung im Palast stattfand, ist nicht überliefert, vermutlich aber in der Galleria dei Fiumi, in der eine Bühne, ein Orchester und ein kleines Publikum Platz haben.

Die markante Eröffnung – eine von fünf Trompeten angestimmte Toccata, die dann vom gesamten Orchester wiederholt wird – ist zu einer Art „Hit“ geworden. Es ist jedoch möglich, dass sie nicht wirklich zur Oper gehört: Monteverdi benutzte sie drei Jahre später erneut, um seine *Marienvesper* zu eröffnen, und man hat gemutmaß, dass es sich bei dieser Fanfare in Wirklichkeit um das musikalische Emblem seiner Dienstherrn, der Familie Gonzaga, handele. Sollte dem so sein, dürfte ihr Erklingen des Herzogs Ankunft an seinem Platz angezeigt und zugleich als offizielle Begrüßung für ihn und sein Gefolge gedient haben: zweckmäßige Lösung der vertrackten Aufgabe, höfisches Protokoll und Theateraufführung miteinander zu verbinden.

Im Prolog begrüßt La Musica höchstselbst das Publikum und verkündet das Sujet der abendlichen Unterhaltung. Er beginnt mit einem Ritornell (kurzes instrumentales Zwischenspiel), das nach jeder von La Musicas Strophen wiederkehrt; sein Barkarolenschaukeln wird zu einem melancholischen Leitmotiv, das die

Grundstimmung vorgibt. Am Ende des zweiten Aktes und zu Beginn des fünften Aktes wird uns dieses Ritornell wiederbegegnet.

Der erste Akt weist ein Gerüst aus Ritornellen auf, die zwischen Chören und kurzen, von einer harmonisierten Basslinie begleiteten monodischen Arien erklingen. Sie beschwören das Bild einer friedvollen, sorglosen bukolischen Idylle herauf, während Hirten und Nymphen uns von der bevorstehenden Hochzeit von Orfeo und Euridice berichten. Auch die beiden Liebenden treten auf und versichern sich und uns ihres Glücks.

Eine Sinfonia eröffnet den zweiten Akt mit musikalischem Material, das geradewegs in Orfeos Gruß an seine geliebten thrakischen Wälder und Hügel überleitet. Zwei Hirten preisen mit ihm die Schönheiten der Natur. Die Musik ist von wunderbarer Verve und illustriert Orfeos Freude und Behagen: Bersten könnte er vor Glück! Monodische Gesänge und Chöre erzählen und kommentieren dies, doch es bricht Dunkelheit herein, als eine Botin (Messaggiera) die Nachricht überbringt, Euridice sei an einem Schlangenbiss gestorben. Die musikalische Szenerie schlägt um, und aus den Monodien, die bis hierher hauptsächlich kurze Lieder oder Arien waren, werden nun dramatische, manchmal (Messaggiera) fast choralartige Erzählungen; eine langsame Sinfonia mit hochchromatischer Basslinie unterstreicht die obwaltende Trauer. Der Akt endet mit dem Ritornell, das erstmals im Prolog erklang und nun einen melancholischen, aber verhaltenen Abschluss bildet.

Der Beginn des dritten Akts steht in krassem Gegensatz zu dem, was zuvor geschehen ist: In der eröffnenden Sinfonia erklingen erstmals die beiden Zinken und die fünf Posaunen, begleitet von einem Regal (einer Kleinorgel). Diese Klangwelt ist völlig neuartig: Die erschreckende, aber auch imposante Musik illustriert, wie außergewöhnlich und dramatisch Orfeos Abstieg in die Unterwelt ist. Ein leidenschaftlicher Dialog zwischen Orfeo und Hoffnung (Speranza), seiner Führerin, wird von dem Fährmann Caronte (Charon) brüsk unterbrochen. Sein gebieterischer, von

den schnarrenden Klängen des Regals begleiteter Auftritt erzeugt eine starke Wirkung, u.a. weil zum ersten Mal in der Oper eine tiefe Stimme zu hören ist.

Die folgende ruhige Sinfonia veranschaulicht, wie demütig sich Orfeo an Caronte in *Possente Spirto* („Mächtiger Geist“) wendet. Dies ist Orfeos längste Arie in der gesamten Oper und die modernste Musik, die bis dahin irgend komponiert wurde. Unterbrochen durch kurze Ritornelle von zuerst zwei Violinen, dann zwei Zinken und schließlich der Harfe, schildert Orfeo Caronte seine Lage und bittet ihn immer flehentlicher, ihm zu helfen. Zur Steigerung der Intensität dienen verschiedene Verzierungen, wie z.B. der sogenannte *trillo*, d.h. die rasche Wiederholung desselben Tons und Vokals. Erst nach einem langen Ritornell der Harfe offenbart Orfeo seinen Namen und sein Ansinnen: die Welt der Toten zu betreten, um Euridice zu den Lebenden zurückzubringen. Caronte rühmt seinen Gesang, versagt ihm aber die Bitte. Orfeo antwortet in hoher Lage und dramatisch, all seine Empfindungen schickt er in ein letztes Flehen: „Gebt mir meine Geliebte zurück, Götter des Tartaros“!

Zu den wieder einsetzenden Klängen der Sinfonia, die Orfeos Arie vorausgegangen war, versinkt Caronte in Schlaf, was Orfeo zu der Bemerkung veranlasst, seine Lyra habe den Fährmann vielleicht nicht erweichen können, sein Gesang aber habe ihn offenbar schläfrig gemacht. Wie dem auch sei – es ist ihm gelungen, Caronte zu überwinden; nun kann er in seinem Boot den Fluss überqueren. Orfeos Ankunft in der Welt der Toten begleiten Zinken und Posaunen mit einer Reprise ihrer achtungsgebietenden Sinfonia, die nahtlos in einen von fünf Posaunen begleiteten Männerchor der Geister übergeht.

Schauplatz des vierten Akts ist der Hof von Plutone (Pluto), Herrscher der Unterwelt. Proserpina, seine Gattin, ergreift Partei für Orfeo, und Pluto erklärt sich bereit, Euridice ins Leben zurückkehren zu lassen – unter einer Bedingung: Orfeo darf sie erst dann wieder anschauen, wenn sie wohlbehalten in der Welt der Lebenden ange-

kommen sind. Fröhliche, triumphierende Musik, die an den Beginn des zweiten Akts erinnert, begleitet Orfeo und die ihm folgende Euridice auf ihrem Rückweg. Plötzlich aber ändert sich die Stimmung, denn Orfeo beginnt zu zweifeln, ob Euridice ihm tatsächlich folge. Er muss sich vergewissern, dreht sich um – und sieht Euridice auf immer entschwinden. Der Akt endet mit einer weiteren Sinfonia für Bläser und einem Geisterchor.

Das Ritornell, das den ersten Akt eröffnet und den zweiten beendet hat, kehrt im fünften Akt wieder. Orfeo ist zurück in Thrakien, allein an jenem Ort, an dem er einst die Nachricht von Euridices Tod erhielt. Voll Trauer und ohne Hoffnung sucht er in einem langen Monolog, der allein von einem traurigen Echo unterbrochen wird, Mitgefühl und Trost bei Wäldern und Felsen. Da erscheint, auf einer Wolke vom Himmel herabsteigend, Apollo. Der Gott der Musik, der Orfeo einst das Spiel der Lyra lehrte, lädt ihn nun ein, ihm in den Himmel zu folgen und unsterblich zu werden. Orfeo willigt ein; singend steigen beide in den Himmel empor.

Dieser Schluss stammt von Alessandro Striggio und hat nichts mit der ursprünglichen Geschichte zu tun, in der Orfeo von den Mänaden, Anhängerinnen des Dionysos, zerrissen wurde, weil sie ihm die Anbetung Apollos verübelten. In der Version von Striggio und Monteverdi erklingt stattdessen ein frohgemuter Schlusschor, der Orfeo ewiges Glück wünscht und mit einer Moral endet: „Wer unter Schmerzen sät, erntet von aller Gnade die Frucht.“ Das unerwartete Happy End wird zu guter Letzt durch eine ausgelassene Moresca besiegelt – ein Tanz, der wie die Toccata zu Beginn der Oper seine Wurzeln im 15. Jahrhundert hat.

Doch nun „Vorhang auf!“ – möge die Geschichte von Orfeo und seiner Metamorphose beginnen:

Es war einmal ...

© *Ole-Kristian Andersen 2020*

Diese Aufnahme von Monteverdis *L'Orfeo* ist das Ergebnis einer Zusammenarbeit dreier südschwedischer Ensembles: Lundabarock, Höör Barock und Altapunta unter der Leitung von **Fredrik Malmberg**, der seine Ausbildung an der Musikakademie Malmö erhielt. Fredrik, ehemals Dirigent des Nationalen Dänischen Vokalensembles, ist derzeit Professor für Chorleitung an der Königlichen Musikakademie in Stockholm sowie Chefdirigent des Eric Ericson Kammerchors. Mit seinem Ensemble Vokalharmonin hat er mehrere gefeierte Aufnahmen sowohl alter als auch zeitgenössischer Musik vorgelegt.

Bislang hat das **Ensemble Lundabarock** insbesondere Konzerte mit alter Musik in der Universitätsstadt Lund veranstaltet; bei seinen eigenen Produktionen – darunter eine gefeierte Aufnahme von Buxtehudes *Membra Jesu Nostri* – arbeitete es erfolgreich mit dem Vokalensemble Vox Scaniensis unter der Leitung von Peter Wallin zusammen. Bei der vorliegenden Produktion sorgte Lundabarock fürs Vokale; die Sängerinnen und Sänger stammen zumeist aus Südschweden oder Dänemark und sind in der Öresundregion und in ganz Europa aktiv.

Unweit von Lund hat sich die kleine Gemeinde Höör zur Heimat etlicher Spezialisten für Alte Musik entwickelt. Sie bilden das Ensemble **Höör Barock**, dessen Aufnahmen für BIS international große Anerkennung gefunden haben; J.H. Romans *Golovin-Musik* wurde 2020 mit einem schwedischen Grammis ausgezeichnet. **Dohyo Sol**, der Lautenist des Ensembles, der in den führenden Barock- und Opernensembles Skandinaviens regelmäßig auch zur Theorbe greift, ist eine der treibenden Kräfte hinter der vorliegenden Aufnahme.

Der ebenfalls im äußersten Süden Schwedens beheimatete Posaunist **Ole-Kristian Andersen** ist Mitglied des Helsingborger Symphonieorchesters; darüber hinaus findet das einstige Mitglied des Alte-Musik-Bläserensembles Concerto Palatino die Zeit, mit Dirigenten wie Philippe Herreweghe oder John Eliot Gardiner zusammenzuarbeiten. Ole hat an rund hundert Aufführungen von *L'Orfeo* mitge-

wirkt und war bis dato an nicht weniger als vier Aufnahmen des Werks beteiligt. Sein **Ensemble Altapunta** steuert die Zinken und Posaunen bei.

Als Orfeo hören wir **Johan Linderoth**, der die Meister der Renaissance und des Frühbarock – Dowland, Purcell, Blow, Schütz, Monteverdi und Buxtehude – in einer Vielzahl von Aufführungen und Aufnahmen interpretiert hat. Seit einigen Jahren verbindet ihn eine regelmäßige Zusammenarbeit mit Paul Hillier. Für Johan steht stets der Text im Mittelpunkt, und in jüngerer Zeit hat er sich auch neuerem Repertoire zugewandt: An die Stelle des Lautenlieds tritt zusehends das klavierbegleitete Lied.

Kristina Hellgren verkörpert sowohl die allegorische La Musica als auch die hochemotionale Königin der Unterwelt Proserpina. Nach Studien an der Musikakademie Malmö (u.a. Interpretationskurse zur Barockmusik mit Steven Stubbs und Erin Headley) war Kristina Hellgren vor allem als Kirchenmusikerin und Konzertsolistin tätig, trat aber auch im barockem Glanz des Schlosstheaters Drottningholm auf.

Nicht weniger als vier unserer Sängerinnen und Sänger sind Mitglieder des Nationalen Dänischen Vokalensembles. **Christine Nonbo Andersen** (Euridice) hat sich auf Alte Musik spezialisiert und schätzt insbesondere die Vokalpolyphonie der Renaissance. Via Schütz und Buxtehude, Carl Nielsen und Britten hat der Tenor **Adam Riis** auch das für ihn und acht Renaults geschriebene *Poème automobile* uraufgeführt. Der in Lund ansässige Bariton und Chorleiter **Daniel Åberg** wuchs von Kindheit an mit Alter Musik auf und ist der glückliche Besitzer des auf dieser Aufnahme zu hörenden Regals. Unter den Bässen des Nationalen Dänischen Vokalensembles finden wir schließlich unseren Caronte: **Steffen Bruun** gab 2019 sein Debüt an der Königlich Dänischen Oper als Zuniga in Carmen und ist zunehmend auf der Opernbühne aktiv.

Das nördlich gelegene Göteborg steuert die Mezzosopranistin **Maria Forsström**

bei, deren Bandbreite von Monteverdi über Mozart bis Mahler reicht und die u.a. mit Teodor Currentzis zusammengearbeitet hat. Aus ebendieser Stadt stammt der Bariton **Karl Peter Eriksson**, ein Sänger, der neben seiner Leidenschaft für Kammermusik und moderne Oper als Mitglied von Göteborg Baroque auch einen festen Platz in der Alten Musik hat. Und zu guter Letzt begrüßen wir aus Stockholm **Anna Zander**, deren Mezzosopran zur Zusammenarbeit mit einigen der Granden der Barockmusik geführt hat: Ton Koopman, Reinhard Goebel, Andrew Manze und Philippe Pierlot.





L'Orfeo

Favola in musica

L'Orfeo de Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643) est souvent nommé le premier véritable opéra, à juste titre : il compte cinq actes, comporte une vaste galerie de personnages, une partition orchestrale détaillée renfermant une quarantaine d'instruments spécifiés et, comme tant d'autres opéras ultérieurs, son livret repose sur un mythe classique. L'œuvre de Monteverdi devient ainsi une sorte de matrice pour le genre en entier – à une exception : la narration de ce « conte en musique » est directe, succincte et va droit au but. Les émotions sont exprimées – avec grande intensité – purement en musique, une musique qui étaye le texte, l'intrigue et le conte mot à mot. Aux oreilles modernes, l'héritage musical de *L'Orfeo* doit plus être trouvé dans la tradition des lieder que dans le grand opéra du 19^e siècle où les paroles sont souvent plus difficiles à distinguer – un recul qui est en quelque sorte contrebalancé par la pure beauté de la musique et du chant. Monteverdi choisit la description « favola in musica » – un conte musical – pour expliquer son œuvre. On pourrait peut-être décider de laisser *L'Orfeo* former son genre propre ?

L'Orfeo fut composé dans un contexte social et culturel spécifique. Ce que nous nommons maintenant Italie consistait en de nombreuses petites principautés et des états urbains comme Florence et Venise, en plus des États papaux et des régions sous la domination espagnole. Rivalité et concurrence étaient constantes entre les divers états et un moyen préféré de faire sa marque était de se distinguer en art et architecture. Un vrai prince de la Renaissance voulait rassembler les meilleurs artistes et artisans à sa cour pour mousser son propre prestige. Leur nationalité n'importait pas, c'est pourquoi on constate par exemple un grand afflux de musiciens et compositeurs flamands aux cours et églises italiennes au cours du 16^e siècle, tandis que des instrumentistes italiens exceptionnels (surtout des violonistes)

voyageaient dans la direction opposée, aux cours de l'Europe du nord. Il se formait ainsi une union européenne artistique – bien qu'élitiste et en miniature – avec liberté de mouvement et d'échange de marchandises et de services artistiques.

C'est sur cette toile de fond que l'opéra prit graduellement forme au cours du 16^e siècle. On peut dire que le processus commença avec l'*intermedio*, un nouveau genre qui gagnait de l'importance aux cours princières d'Italie autour des années 1500. Des fêtes comme des mariages dans les familles dirigeantes, incluaient normalement des représentations de théâtre classique et, entre les actes, on jouait souvent divers interludes spécialement conçus pour l'occasion. Ces *intermedii* comprenaient de la musique et souvent de la danse visant à impressionner le public avec des décors de scène spectaculaires utilisant une machinerie élaborée. Avec le temps, ils devinrent de plus en plus somptueux, éclipsant souvent les pièces qu'ils complétaient.

Entretemps intellectuels, poètes et musiciens unissaient leurs efforts pour essayer de reconstruire le style dramatique de la Grèce classique, en termes de mélodie et de déclamation. Le résultat fut la monodie – une voix solo chantant une partie mélodique sur une basse indépendante et avec un accompagnement simple, souvent un luth. Au fil du temps, les sections plus parlées, déclamées, se développèrent vers le style vocal que nous connaissons sous le nom de récitatif tandis que l'accompagnement formait le prototype de la basse continue, les fondations harmoniques de toute la musique baroque.

Claudio Monteverdi est né au milieu de tout cela en 1567. Fils d'un apothicaire de Crémone, il apprit la musique avec Marc'Antonio Igneneri, *maestro di cappella* à la cathédrale de Crémone. À quinze ans, il avait déjà publié une collection de madrigaux et il se fit un nom dans ce genre comme pionnier parmi les compositeurs. En 1591, Monteverdi fut engagé à la cour ducale de Mantoue comme chanteur et violiste travaillant pour le *maestro di cappella* flamand Giaches de Wert. Il semble qu'il devint un exécutant et compositeur estimé et il accompagna le duc Vincenzo

Gonzaga dans divers voyages. À la mort de de Wert, il fut néanmoins ignoré en faveur d'un collègue plus âgé et dut attendre jusqu'en 1601 pour être nommé *maestro di cappella*.

La même année, un grand mariage fut célébré à Florence entre Maria de' Medici et le roi Henri IV de France. Les célébrations comprenaient une représentation d'*Euridice* de Jacopo Peri qui, quatre ans plus tôt, avait composé *Dafne*, le tout premier opéra. Le duc Vincenzo se trouvait parmi les invités de la noce et il est possible que Monteverdi ait vu la représentation comme membre de la suite de son employeur. L'idée de composer un opéra basé sur le même mythe qu'*Euridice* pourrait être née à ce moment-là : l'histoire d'Orphée était l'une des plus populaires à l'époque et, en 1500 déjà, la cour à Mantoue avait monté *La favola di Orfeo*, un drame lyrique d'Angelo Poliziano – dont au moins la moitié avait été chantée au lieu de récitée. Le juriste et diplomate Alessandro Striggio le jeune faisait aussi partie de l'escorte du duc à Florence. Fils du compositeur du même nom et lui-même un musicien compétent, Striggio se mit à travailler sur un livret largement basé sur les récits du mythe de Virgile dans les *Géorgiques* et d'Ovide dans ses *Métamorphoses*.

À ce moment, Monteverdi était devenu un principal promoteur de la « seconda pratica », une nouvelle méthode de composition qui représentait une approche esthétique différente à l'écriture de musique vocale que celle de la « prima pratica » de Palestrina et de ses contemporains. Inspiré par les inventeurs de la monodie, Monteverdi croyait que le rôle de la musique était d'exprimer et de mettre en valeur les aspects littéraires et figuratifs du texte. Un excellent exemple de cette méthode se trouve dans le troisième acte du nouvel opéra où Orfeo a recours à une série de nouvelles techniques et moyens musicaux d'expression dans ses ferventes prières pour le retour de sa bien-aimée Eurydice. Pour Monteverdi, *L'Orfeo* était une splendide opportunité d'utiliser, sur une plus grande toile, tous les outils modernes qu'il

avait perfectionnés dans ses madrigaux, et de prouver à son employeur qu'il était en effet un véritable *maestro*. Il vit peut-être aussi un parallèle dans ce qu'Orphée, grâce à son chant incroyablement virtuose et moderne, convainc Caron, le passeur du monde des morts, de le laisser traverser.

L'Orfeo vit sa première au cours du carnaval le 27 février 1607 au palais ducal de Mantoue. On ignore où exactement au palais mais la représentation eut peut-être lieu dans la Galleria dei Fiumi dont les dimensions peuvent loger une scène, un orchestre et un petit public.

L'ouverture frappante – une toccata jouée par cinq trompettes et répétée ensuite par l'orchestre au complet – est devenue une sorte d'air à succès. Il est cependant possible qu'elle n'« appartienne » pas vraiment à l'opéra : Monteverdi la réutilisa trois ans plus tard pour l'ouverture de ses *Vêpres* et il a été suggéré que la fanfare était en fait l'appel personnel de trompettes de ses employeurs, la famille Gonzaga. Dans ce cas, elle pourrait avoir été jouée pour indiquer que le duc arrivait à son siège et servi de salutation pour lui et son entourage – une solution opportune au problème épineux d'agencer le protocole de cour avec une représentation de théâtre.

Dans le Prologue, La Musica elle-même salue le public et annonce le sujet du divertissement de la soirée. Il s'ouvre sur une ritournelle (un bref interlude instrumental) qui revient entre chacun des vers de La Musica, avec un mouvement oscillant de barcarolle qui devient un leitmotif mélancolique et fixe l'ambiance. Cette ritournelle sera entendue encore, à la fin du deuxième acte et au début du cinquième.

Le premier acte représente un modèle de ritournelles apparaissant entre les chœurs et les brèves arias monodiques soutenues par une basse harmonisée. Elles évoquent l'image d'une idylle bucolique paisible et insouciant tandis que les bergers et nymphes nous parlent du mariage prévu entre Orphée et Eurydice. Les deux amants font leur entrée, assurant le public et eux-mêmes de leur bonheur.

Une sinfonia ouvre le deuxième acte avec du matériel musical qui mène directe-

ment à la salutation d'Orphée aux forêts et collines de Thrace qu'il aime tant. Deux bergers se joignent à lui pour faire l'éloge des beautés de la nature. La musique y est merveilleusement vivace et illustre la joie et le contentement d'Orphée : il est tout simplement un homme au sommet du monde. Son humeur est signalée et commentée dans des monodies et chœurs mais l'obscurité tombe quand une messagère (Messaggiera) annonce qu'Eurydice est morte suite à une morsure de serpent. Le paysage musical change et les monodies, qui jusqu'ici ont été généralement de brèves chansons ou arias, deviennent maintenant des récits dramatiques – parfois (Messaggiera) presque une sorte de chant – et une sinfonia lente à la basse fortement chromatique renforce la tristesse. L'acte finit avec la ritournelle entendue d'abord dans le prologue, fournissant une fin mélancolique mais retenue.

Le début du troisième acte apporte un fort contraste à ce qui s'est passé avant : dans la sinfonia d'ouverture, deux cornets et cinq trombones font leur première entrée, accompagnés par un régale. Le monde sonore est entièrement nouveau – de la musique effrayante mais imposante aussi illustre l'extraordinaire et dramatique descente d'Orphée aux Enfers. Un dialogue passionné entre Orphée et son guide Espérance (Speranza) est brusquement interrompu par Caron, le passeur. Accompagnée par le son nasillard du régale, son entrée autoritaire fait une forte impression partiellement parce que c'est la première fois dans l'opéra qu'une voix grave est entendue.

La douce sinfonia qui suit illustre l'humilité dans la voix d'Orphée qui parle à Caron dans *Possente Spirto* (« Esprit puissant »). Voici la plus longue aria d'Orphée de tout l'opéra, et la musique la plus moderne jamais écrite jusqu'à cette date. Interrompu par de brèves ritournelles jouées par, à tour de rôle, deux violons, deux cornets et finalement la harpe, Orphée présente ses arguments et ses plaidoyers de plus en plus fervents à Caron. Divers ornements sont utilisés pour augmenter l'intensité dont le dit *trillo*, une répétition rapide de la même note et voyelle. Seulement après

une longue ritournelle à la harpe, Orphée expose qui il est et son but : entrer dans le monde des morts pour ramener Eurydice chez les vivants. Caron le complimente sur son chant – mais repousse sa demande ! La réponse d’Orphée est aiguë et dramatique et il investit tout son sentiment dans une supplication finale : « Retournez-moi ma bien-aimée, vous dieux de Tartaros ! »

La sinfonia qui a précédé l’aria d’Orphée revient, pendant laquelle Caron s’endort, portant Orphée à remarquer que si la lyre n’avait pas pu influencer le passeur, son chant avait dû le rendre somnolent. En tout cas, il avait réussi à dépasser Caron et il se mit à traverser la rivière dans son bateau. L’arrivée d’Orphée au monde des morts est accompagnée par les cornets et trombones dans un retour de leur imposante sinfonia qui s’intègre parfaitement au chœur de voix d’hommes des Esprits, accompagné par cinq trombones.

Le quatrième acte se passe à la cour de Pluton, le dirigeant des Enfers. Son épouse Proserpine plaide la cause d’Orphée et Pluton accepte de laisser Eurydice retourner à la vie – à une condition : Orphée ne doit pas poser son regard sur elle jusqu’à ce qu’ils soient de retour en sécurité dans le monde des vivants. Comme Orphée prend le chemin du retour avec Eurydice marchant derrière lui, la musique est joyeuse et triomphale, rappelant le début du second acte. Mais soudainement l’atmosphère change quand Orphée commence à douter qu’Eurydice le suive véritablement. Il doit s’en assurer, se retourne – et voit Eurydice disparaître pour toujours. L’acte se termine avec une autre sinfonia pour vents et un chœur des Esprits.

La ritournelle qui a ouvert le premier acte et terminé le second revient au cinquième acte. Orphée est de retour à Thrace, seul au même endroit où il avait reçu l’annonce de la mort d’Eurydice. En deuil et sans espoir, il se tourne vers les forêts et les falaises pour trouver confort et sympathie, dans un long soliloque interrompu seulement par un écho triste. Tout à coup Apollon apparaît, descendant du ciel sur un nuage. Le dieu de la musique, qui avait autrefois enseigné à Orphée à jouer de

la lyre, l'invite maintenant à se joindre à lui aux cieux, lui offrant la vie immortelle. Orphée accepte et les deux montent au ciel en chantant.

Cette fin est celle propre d'Alessandro Striggio et n'a rien à voir avec la narration originale dans laquelle Orphée est mis en pièces par les Ménades, les suiveuses de Dionysos, que le culte d'Orphée pour Apollon contrariait. Dans la version de Striggio et de Monteverdi, nous bénéficions plutôt d'un chœur final animé qui souhaite le bonheur éternel à Orphée et se termine par une morale : « celui qui sème dans les larmes, de toute grâce moissonnera le fruit ». Cette fin heureuse inattendue est soulignée par la bruyante moresca finale – une danse qui, comme la toccata à l'ouverture de l'opéra, provient du 16^e siècle.

Et maintenant, laissons le rideau se lever et le conte d'Orphée et sa métamorphose commencer.

Il était une fois...

© *Ole-Kristian Andersen 2020*

Cet enregistrement de *L'Orfeo* de Monteverdi est le résultat d'une collaboration entre trois ensembles du sud de la Suède : Lundabarroch, Höör Barock et Altapunta sous la direction de **Fredrik Malmberg** qui a étudié au conservatoire de musique de Malmö. Précédemment chef de l'Ensemble vocal national danois, Fredrik enseigne maintenant la direction chorale au Conservatoire royal de musique à Stockholm et est également principal chef du Chœur de chambre d'Eric Ericson. Avec son ensemble Vokalharmonin (Harmonie vocale), il a fait plusieurs enregistrements louangés de musique ancienne et contemporaine.

Dans le passé, l'**Ensemble Lundabarroch** a surtout travaillé comme organisateur de concerts de musique ancienne dans la ville universitaire de Lund, quand il montait ses propres productions dont un enregistrement acclamé de *Membra Jesu*

Nostri de Buxtehude. Dans la production actuelle, Lundabarock fournit l'élément vocal, maintenant formé de chanteurs basés dans le sud de la Suède et au Danemark, travaillant dans la région d'Øresund et à travers l'Europe.

Non loin de Lund, la petite zone urbaine de Höör est devenue le domicile de plusieurs spécialistes en musique ancienne. Formant l'ensemble **Höör Barock**, ils ont récolté une acclamation internationale pour leurs enregistrements précédents sur BIS dont *Golovinmusiken* de J.H. Roman qui reçut le prix suédois Grammis en 2020. Le luthiste de l'ensemble, **Dohyo Sol**, qui joue régulièrement du théorbe avec les meilleurs ensembles baroques et compagnies d'opéra en Scandinavie, est l'une des forces motrices de cet enregistrement.

Aussi établi dans le sud de la Suède, le tromboniste **Ole-Kristian Andersen** est membre de l'Orchestre symphonique d'Helsingborg mais, avec un passé dans l'ensemble à vents de musique ancienne Concerto Palatino, il trouve aussi le temps de travailler avec des chefs comme Philippe Herreweghe et Sir John Eliot Gardiner. Ole a joué *L'Orfeo* une centaine de fois et a déjà participé à non moins de quatre enregistrements de l'œuvre. Avec son **Ensemble Altapunta**, il fournit les cornets et trombones.

Orphée est chanté par **Johan Linderöth** qui jouit d'une longue carrière de chant et d'enregistrement de musique des maîtres de la Renaissance et du jeune baroque – Dowland, Purcell, Blow, Schütz, Monteverdi et Buxtehude. Ces dernières années, il a pris plaisir à travailler régulièrement avec Paul Hillier. Pour Johan, le centre d'intérêt est toujours posé sur le texte et il s'est récemment engagé dans un répertoire plus récent : les chansons pour luth sont graduellement remplacées par des lieder.

Kristina Hellgren est entendue comme l'allégorique La Musica ainsi que comme Proserpine, la très émotive reine des Enfers. Après des études au Conservatoire de musique de Malmö, y compris des cours avec Steven Stubbs et Erin

Headley en interprétation baroque, Kristina a surtout travaillé comme musicienne d'église et soliste de concert mais elle paraît aussi en parure baroque au théâtre du palais de Drottningholm.

Non moins de quatre de nos chanteurs font aussi partie de l'Ensemble vocal national danois (DNVE). Ceux-ci comprennent Eurydice, **Christine Nonbo Andersen**, spécialiste en musique ancienne et une grande passionnée de polyphonie de la Renaissance. En passant par Schütz et Buxtehude, Carl Nielsen et Britten, le ténor **Adam Riis** a également créé *Poème automobile*, une œuvre écrite pour lui et huit Renaults. Un résident de Lund, le baryton et chef choral **Daniel Åberg** côtoyait la musique ancienne dans son enfance déjà et il est l'heureux propriétaire du régale entendu sur le disque. Parmi les basses de DNVE nous trouvons finalement notre Caron : **Steffen Bruun** travaille de plus en plus sur la scène d'opéra et il fit ses débuts à l'Opéra royal danois en 2019 comme Zuniga dans *Carmen*.

Située plus au nord en Suède, la ville de Göteborg apporte sa contribution avec la mezzo-soprano **Maria Forsström** dont le répertoire s'étend de Monteverdi à Mahler en passant par Mozart et sa collaboration avec Teodor Currentzis. Le baryton **Karl Peter Eriksson** provient de la même ville ; en plus de sa passion pour la musique de chambre et l'opéra moderne, il est aussi solidement ancré dans la musique ancienne en tant que membre de Göteborg Baroque. Et finalement, de Stockholm, nous accueillons **Anna Zander** dont le mezzo-soprano l'a menée à travailler avec certains des meilleurs chefs dans le domaine de la musique baroque : Ton Koopman, Reinhard Goebel, Andrew Manze et Philippe Pierlot.





L'Orfeo

Favola in musica

Disc 1

[1] Toccata

PROLOGO

[2] Ritornello

La Musica

Dal mio Permesso amato à voi ne vegno
incliti Eroi, sangue gentil de' Regi,
di cui narra la Fama eccelsi pregi,
nè giunge al ver perch'è tropp' alto il segno.

Ritornello

Io la Musica son, ch' a i dolci accenti
sò far tranquillo ogni turbato core,
et hor di nobil ira, et hor d'amore
posso infiammar le più gelate menti.

Ritornello

Io sù Cetera d'or cantando soglio
mortal orecchio lusingar talhora,
e in questa guisa a l'armonia sonora
de la lira del Ciel più l'alme invoglio.

Ritornello

Quinci à dirvi d'ORFEO desio mi sprona,
d'ORFEO che trasse al suo cantar le fere,
e servo fè l'Inferno a sue preghiere,
gloria immortal di Pindo e d'Elicona.

Ritornello

Toccata

PROLOGUE

Ritornello

Music

From my beloved Permessus I come to you,
Glorious Heroes, noble bloodline of Rulers,
Of whom Fame relates high praise
Without quite attaining the truth, as it is too high a mark.

Ritornello

I am Music, who in sweet accents,
Can make peaceful every troubled heart,
And so with noble anger, and so with love,
Can I inflame the coldest minds.

Ritornello

Singing with my golden Lyre, I like
To charm, now and then, mortal ears,
And in such a fashion that I make their souls aspire more
For the resounding harmony of the lyre of Heaven.

Ritornello

Hence desire spurs me to tell you of ORFEO:
Of ORFEO who tamed wild beasts with his song
And made Hades answer his prayers,
To the immortal glory of Pindus and Helicon.

Ritornello

Hor mentre i canti alterno hor lieti, hor mesti,
non si mova augellin fra queste piante,
nè s'oda in queste rive onda sonante,
et ogni aurette in suo cammin s'arresti.

Ritornello

ATTO PRIMO

[3] Pastore 2

In questo lieto e fortunato giorno
ch'ha posto fine à gli amorosi affanni
del nostro Semideo, cantiam Pastori,
in sì soavi accenti
che sian degni d'ORFEO nostri concenti.

Oggi fatto è pietosa
l'alma già si sdegna
de la bella EURIDICE.

Oggi fatto è felice
ORFEO nel sen di lei, per cui già tanto
per queste selve ha sospirato e pianto.

Dunque in sì lieto e fortunato giorno
ch'ha posto fine à gli amorosi affanni
del nostro Semideo, cantiam Pastori,
in sì soavi accenti
che sian degni d'ORFEO nostri concenti.

[4] Choro

Vieni Imeneo, deh vieni,
e la tua face ardente
sia quasi un Sol nascente
ch'apporti a questi amanti i dì sereni,
e lunge homai disgombr
degli affanni e del duol gli orrori e l'ombre.

While I vary my songs, now happy, now sad,
No small bird shall move among these bushes,
Nor on these banks a sounding wave be heard,
And every breeze shall stay its wanderings.

Ritornello

ACT I

Shepherd 2

On this happy and auspicious day
Which ends the amorous torments
Of our Demigod, let us sing, Shepherds,
With sweet accents,
May our singing be worthy of ORFEO.

Today has made merciful
The formerly disdainful soul
Of fair EURIDICE.

Today has made happy
ORFEO in the bosom of her for whom he once
Sighed and wept throughout these woods.

Thus on such a happy and auspicious day
Which ends the amorous torments
Of our Demigod, let us sing, Shepherds,
With sweet accents,
May our singing be worthy of ORFEO.

Chorus

Come, Hymen, do come,
And may your ardent torch
Be like a rising sun
That brings these lovers peaceful days
And forever banish
The horrors and shadows of torments and grief.

[5] Ninfa

Muse, honor di Parnaso, amor del Cielo,
gentil conforto à consolato core,
vostre cetre sonore
squarcino d'ogni nube il fosco velo;
e mentre oggi propizio al nostro ORFEO
invochiam Imeneo
su ben temprate corde
sia il vostro canto al nostro suon concorde.

[6] Choro (Balletto)

Lasciate i monti,
lasciate i fonti,
ninfe vezzose e liete,
e in questi prati
ai balli usati
vago il bel piè rendete.

Qui miri il Sole
vostre carole
più vaghe assai di quelle
ond' à la Luna,
la notte bruna,
danzano in Ciel le stelle.

Ritornello

Lasciate i monti,
lasciate i fonti,
ninfe vezzose e liete,
e in questi prati
ai balli usati
vago il bel piè rendete.

Poi di bei fiori,
per voi s'honori
di questi amanti il crine,

Nymph

Muses, honour of Parnassus, love of Heaven,
Gentle comfort to the disconsolate heart,
The music of your lyres
Tears apart the dark veil of every cloud:
And while today, to favour our ORFEO,
We call to Hymen
On well-tempered strings,
Let our music tune with your song.

Chorus (Ballet)

Leave the mountains,
Leave the fountains,
Lovely and joyful Nymphs.
And in these meadows
To the traditional dances
Let your fair feet rejoice.

Here the sun beholds
Your dancing,
More lovely than
When, for the moon
In the dark night,
The stars themselves dance in Heaven.

Ritornello

Leave the mountains,
Leave the fountains,
Lovely and joyful Nymphs.
And in these meadows
To the traditional dances
Let your fair feet rejoice.

Then with fine flowers
Be ready to honour
These lovers' heads,

ch'hor de i martiri
de i lor desiri
godon beati al fine.

Ritornello

[7] Pastore 1

Ma tu gentil cantor s'a tuoi lamenti
già festi lagrimar queste campagne,
perc' hora al suon de la famosa cetra
non fai teco gioir le valli e i poggi?
Sia testimon del core
qualche lieta canzon che detti Amore.

[8] Orfeo

Rosa del Ciel, vita del Mondo, e degna
prole di lui che l'Universo affrena,
Sol, che'l tutto circondi e'l tutto miri
da gli stellanti giri,
dimmi, vedestù mai
di me più lieto e fortunato amante?
Fù ben felice il giorno,
mio ben, che pria ti vidi,
e più felice l'ora
che per te sospirai,
poi ch'al mio sospirar tu sospirasti;
felicissimo il punto
che la candida mano,
pegno di pura fede, à me porgesti.
Se tanti cori havessi
quant' occhi hà il Ciel eterno, e quante chiome
han questi colli ameni il verde Maggio,
tutti colmi sarieno e traboccanti
di quel piacer ch'oggi mi fà contento.

That after suffering
They may happily
Enjoy their desires at last.

Ritornello

Shepherd 1

But you, gentle singer, whose laments
Once made these fields weep,
Why not now, to the sound of your famous lyre,
Make the valleys and hills rejoice?
Let the witness of your heart be
Some happy song inspired by Love.

Orfeo

Rose of heaven, life of the world, and worthy
Heir of him who holds the Universe in sway:
O Sun, who encircles all and sees all
From your starry orbits,
Tell me, have you ever seen
A happier and more fortunate lover than I?
So happy was the day,
My love, when first I saw you,
And happier the hour
When I sighed for you,
Because at my sighs you sighed:
Happiest the moment
When your white hand,
Pledge of pure faith, you gave to me.
If I had as many Hearts
As eternal Heaven has eyes and as these
Lovely Hills in green May have leaves,
They would all be brimming and overflowing
With that pleasure that today makes me content.

[9] Euridice

Io non dirò qual sia
 nel tuo gioir ORFEO la gioia mia,
 che non hò meco il core,
 ma teco stassi in compagnia d'Amore;
 chiedilo dunque a lui s'intender brami
 quanto lieta gioisca, e quanto t'ami.

[10] Choro (Balletto)

Lasciate i monti,
 lasciate i fonti,
 ninfe vezzose e liete,
 e in questi prati
 ai balli usati
 vago il bel piè rendete.

Qui miri il Sole
 vostre carole
 più vaghe assai di quelle
 ond' à la Luna,
 la notte bruna,
 danzano in Ciel le stelle.

Ritornello**[11] Choro**

Vieni Imeneo, deh vieni,
 e la tua face ardente
 sia quasi un Sol nascente
 ch'apporti a questi amanti i di sereni,
 e lunge homai disgombrare
 degli affanni e del duol gli orrori e l'ombre.

Euridice

I will not say that
 In your joy, ORFEO, is my joy,
 For no longer do I possess my own heart.
 It is with you in the company of Love;
 Ask of it, then, if you want to know
 How happily it rejoices, and how much it loves you.

Chorus (Ballet)

Leave the mountains,
 Leave the fountains,
 Lovely and joyful Nymphs.
 And in these meadows
 To the traditional dances
 Let your fair feet rejoice.

Here the sun beholds
 Your dancing,
 More lovely than
 When, for the moon
 In the dark night,
 The stars themselves dance in Heaven.

Ritornello**Chorus**

Come, Hymen, do come,
 And may your ardent torch
 Be like a rising sun
 That brings these lovers peaceful days
 And forever banish
 The horrors and shadows of torments and grief.

12 Pastore 2

Ma s' il nostro gioir dal Ciel deriva,
com' è dal Ciel ciò che qua giù n' incontra,
giusto è ben che devoti
gli offriamo incensi e voti.
Dunque al Tempio ciascun rivolga i passi
a pregar lui ne la cui destra è il Mondo,
che lungamente il nostro ben conservi.

13 Ritornello

Due Pastori 2, 3

Alcun non sia che disperato in preda
si doni al duol, benchè talhor si assaglia
possente sì che nostra vita inforsa.

Ritornello

Ninfa e due Pastori 1, 4

Che poi che nembro rio gravido il seno
d' atra tempesta inorridito hà il Mondo,
dispiega il Sol più chiaro i rai lucenti.

Ritornello

Due Pastori 1, 2

E dopo l' aspro gel del Verno ignudo
veste di fior la Primavera i campi.

Ninfa e Pastori

Ecco ORFEO, cui pur dianzi
furon cibo i sospir, bevanda il pianto.

Choro

Oggi felice è tanto
che nulla è più che da bramar gli avanzi.

Shepherd 2

But if our joy derives from Heaven,
As from Heaven comes all that happens down here,
It is right and fair that we should devoutly
Offer incense and prayers.
So to the Temple let us turn our steps
To pray to him in whose right hand is the World,
That he may long keep us well.

Ritornello

Shepherds 2, 3

Let none be victim of despair
Or sorrow, though they assail us
In strength and threaten our life.

Ritornello

Nymph and Shepherds 1, 4

For, after the sudden storm and great flood
At the heart of a black tempest that has terrified the World,
The Sun more brightly displays its luminous rays.

Ritornello

Shepherds 1, 2

And after the harsh frost of naked Winter
Spring clothes the meadows with flowers.

Nymph and Shepherds

Here is ORFEO, for whom
Sighs had been food, and the tears drink.

Chorus

Today he is so happy
That there is nothing more for him to wish for.

ATTO SECONDO

[14] Sinfonia

Orfeo

Ecco pur ch' à voi ritorno,
care selve e piagge amate,
da quel Sol fatte beate
per cui sol mie notti han giorno.

Ritornello

Pastore 3

Mira ch' à sè n'alletta
l'ombra ORFEO de que' faggi,
hor che infocati raggi
Febbo da Ciel saetta.

Ritornello

Pastore 2

Sù quel' herbosa sponda
posianci, e in varii modi
ciascun sua voce snodi
al mormorio de l'onde.

Ritornello

Due Pastori 2, 3

In questo prato adorno
ogni selvaggio Nume
sovente hà per costume
di far lieto soggiorno.

Ritornello

Qui Pan Dio de' Pastori
s'udi talhor dolente
rimembrar dolcemente
suoi sventurati amori.

Ritornello

ACT II

Sinfonia

Orfeo

Here I return to you,
Dear forests and beloved meadows,
Blessed by that very Sun
Through whom alone my nights are day.

Ritornello

Shepherd 3

See, how here we are enticed by
The shade, ORFEO, of these beech trees,
Now that Phoebus shoots his burning rays
Down from Heaven.

Ritornello

Shepherd 2

On these grassy banks
Let us sit, and in various modes
Each free his voice
To the murmuring of the waters.

Ritornello

Shepherds 2, 3

In this flowery meadow
Every woodland God
Oftentimes, by custom,
Makes his merry sojourn.

Ritornello

Here Pan, God of Shepherds,
Is heard sometimes sorrowing
Remembering sweetly
His unlucky loves.

Ritornello

Qui le Napee vezzose,
(schiera sempre fiorita)
con le candide dita
fur viste à coglier rose.

Ritornello

Choro

Dunque fa degni, ORFEO,
del suon de la tua lira
questi campi ove spira
aura d'odor Sabeo.

Ritornello

Orfeo

Vi ricorda ò boschi ombrosi
de' miei lunghi aspri tormenti,
quando i sassi ai miei lamenti
rispondean, fatti pietosi?

Ritornello

Dite, allhor non vi sembrai
più d'ogni altro sconsolato?
Hor fortuna ha stil cangiato
et hà volto in festa i guai.

Ritornello

Vissi già mesto e dolente,
Hor gioisco, e quegli affanni
che sofferti hò per tant'anni
fan più caro il ben presente.

Ritornello

Sol per tè, bella EURIDICE,
benedico il mio tormento,
dopo il duol viè più contento,
dopo il mal viè più felice.

Here charming wood Nymphs
(Always adorned with flowers)
With white fingers
Were seen picking roses.

Ritornello

Chorus

Then, ORFEO, honour
With the sound of your lyre
These fields where breathes
The perfume of Sheba.

Ritornello

Orfeo

Do you remember, O shady groves,
My long and harsh torments,
When, at my laments, the rocks
Were moved to pity?

Ritornello

Say, did I not seem to you
More wretched than any other?
Now fortune has changed her course
And has turned woes into joy.

Ritornello

I lived then in sadness and sorrow,
Now I rejoice, and those torments
That I suffered for so long
Make my present happiness much dearer.

Ritornello

Only for you, fair EURIDICE,
I bless my torment;
After sorrow one is even more content,
After woe, one is even happier.

Pastore 2

Mira, deh mira, ORFEO, che d'ogni intorno
ride il bosco e ride il prato,
segui pur co'l plettro aurato
d'addolcir l'aria in sì beato giorno.

[15] Messaggiera

Ahi caso acerbo, ahi fato empio e crudele,
ahi stelle ingiuriose, ahi Cielo avaro.

Pastore 2

Qual suon dolente il lieto di perturba?

Messaggiera

Lassa, dunque debb'io
mentre ORFEO con sue note il Ciel consola
con le parole mie passargli il core?

Pastore 1

Questa è Silvia gentile,
dolcissima compagna
de la bella EURIDICE; ò quanto è in vista
dolorosa: hor che fia? deh sommi Dei
non torcete da noi benigno il guardo.

Messaggiera

Pastor, lasciate il canto,
ch'ogni nostra allegrezza in doglia è volta.

Orfeo

Donde vieni? ove vai?
Ninfa che porti?

Messaggiera

A te ne vengo ORFEO,
messaggiera infelice
di caso più infelice e più funesto.
La tua bella EURIDICE...

Orfeo

Ohimè che odo?

Shepherd 2

See, ah see, ORFEO, how at every turn
The woods laugh and the meadow laughs;
Continue with your plectrum of gold
To sweeten the air of such a blessed day.

Messenger

Ah bitter fate, ah wicked and cruel destiny,
Ah hurtful stars, ah avaricious Heaven.

Shepherd 2

What mournful sound disturbs the happy day?

Messenger

Alas, then must I,
While ORFEO with his music comforts heaven,
With my words pierce his heart?

Shepherd 1

This one is gentle Silvia,
Sweetest companion
Of fair EURIDICE: oh, how sad she looks:
What has happened? Ah, Gods above,
Do not turn your kind eye away from us.

Messenger

Shepherds, leave your singing,
For all our good cheer is turned to pain.

Orfeo

Where do you come from? Where are you going?
Nymph, what do you bring?

Messenger

To you I come, ORFEO,
Unhappy messenger
With tidings more unhappy and more baleful.
Your fair EURIDICE...

Orfeo

Alas, what do I hear?

Messaggiera

La tua diletta sposa è morta.

Orfeo

Ohimè.

[16] Messaggiera

In un fiorito prato
con l'altre sue compagne
giva cogliendo fiori
per farne una ghirlanda à le sue chiome,
quando angue insidioso
ch'era fra l'erbe ascoso
le punse un piè con velenoso dente.
Ed ecco immantinente
scolorirsi il bel viso e ne' suoi lumi
sparir que' lampi, ond'ella al Sol fea scorno.
Allhor, noi tutte sbigottite e meste
le fummo intorno, richiamar tentando
gli spirti in lei smarriti
con l'onda fresca e co' possenti carmi;
ma nulla valse, ah! lassa,
ch'ella i languidi lumi alquanto aprendo
e te chiamando ORFEO,
dopò un grave sospiro
spirò fra queste braccia, ed io rimasi
piena il cor di pietade e di spavento.

Pastore 2

Ahi caso acerbo, ah! fato empio e crudele,
ahi stelle ingiuriose, ah! Cielo avaro.

Pastore 3

A l'amara novella
rassembra l'infelice un muto sasso,
che per troppo dolor non può dolersi.

Messenger

Your beloved spouse is dead.

Orfeo

Alas.

Messenger

In a flowery meadow
With her other companions
She went picking flowers
To make a garland for her hair,
When a deceitful snake
That was hidden in the grass,
Bit her foot with poisoned fangs.
And immediately
Her fair face grew pale and in her eyes
That light that outshone the Sun faded.
Then we all, appalled and sorrowed,
Gathered around her, trying to call back
The spirits that grew faint in her,
With fresh water and with powerful charms,
But to no avail, ah alas,
For she opened her failing eyes a little,
And calling you, ORFEO,
After a deep sigh,
She died in these arms; and I was left,
My heart filled with pity and horror.

Shepherd 2

Ah bitter fate, ah wicked and cruel destiny,
Ah hurtful stars, ah avaricious Heaven.

Shepherd 3

At the bitter news
The unhappy man seems like a speechless statue
Who with too much grief cannot grieve.

Pastore 2

Ahi, ben havrebbe un cor di tigre o d'orsa
chi non sentisse del tuo mal pietate,
privo d'ogni tuo ben, misero Amante.

17 Orfeo

Tu se' morta, mia vita, ed io respiro?
Tu se' da me partita
per mai più non tornare, ed io rimango?
No, no, che se i versi alcuna cosa ponno
n'andrò sicuro a' più profondi abissi,
e, intenerito il cor del Ré de l'ombre
meco trarrotti a riveder le stelle.
O se ciò negherammi empio destino
rimarrò teco in compagnia di morte.
A dio terra, à dio Cielo, e Sole à dio.

18 Choro

Ahi caso acerbo, ahi fato empio e crudele,
ahi stelle ingiuriose, ahi Cielo avaro.
Non si fidi huom mortale
di ben caduco e frale
che tosto fugge, e spesso
a gran salita il precipizio è presso.

19 Messaggiera

Ma io ch'in questa lingua
hò portato il coltello
c'hà svenata ad ORFEO l'anima amante,
odiosa à i Pastori e à le Ninfe,
odiosa à me stessa, ove m'ascondo?
Nottola infausta, il Sole
fuggirò sempre, e in solitario speco
menerò vita al mio dolor conforme.

Sinfonia

Shepherd 2

Ah, he would have the heart of a Tiger or a Bear
Who did not feel pity at your misfortune,
Deprived of your beloved, wretched lover.

Orfeo

You are dead, my life, and I still breathe?
You are gone from me
Never to return, and I should remain?
No, for if verses can do anything,
I will go in safety to the deepest abysses,
And having softened the heart of the King of shades,
I will bring you back with me to see the stars again:
Oh, if wicked destiny refuses me this,
I will stay with you, in the company of death.
Farewell earth, farewell Heaven and Sun, farewell.

Chorus

Ah bitter fate, ah wicked and cruel destiny,
Ah hurtful stars, ah avaricious Heaven.
Let no mortal man trust
Fleeting and frail happiness,
That soon vanishes, and often
After a great ascent a precipice is near.

Messenger

But I who with these words
Have brought the knife
That has slain the loving soul of ORFEO,
Hateful to the Shepherds and to the Nymphs,
Hateful to myself, where may I hide?
Like an ill-omened bat,
I will forever flee the Sun, and in a lonely cavern
Will lead a life that matches my grief.

Sinfonia

20 Choro

Due Pastori 2, 3

Chi ne consola ahi lassi?
O pur chi ne concede
ne gli occhi un vivo fonte
da poter lagrimar come conviensi
in questo mesto giorno,
quanto più lieto già tant'hor più mesto?
Oggi turbo crudele
i due lumi maggiori
di queste nostre selve,
EURIDICE e ORFEO,
l'una punta da l'angue,
l'altro dal duol trafitto, ahi lassi hà spenti.

Choro: Ninfa e Pastori

Ahi caso acerbo, ahi fato empio e crudele,
ahi stelle ingiuriose, ahi Cielo avaro.

Due Pastori 2, 3

Ma dove, ah dove hor sono
de la misera Ninfa
le belle e fredde membra,
dove suo degno albergo
quella bell'alma elesse
ch'oggi è partita in su'l fiorir de' giorni?
Andiam Pastori andiamo
pietosi a ritrovarle,
e di lagrime amare
il dovuto tributo
per noi si paghi almeno al corpo esangue.

Choro: Ninfa e Pastori

Ahi caso acerbo, ahi fato empio e crudele,
ahi stelle ingiuriose, ahi Cielo avaro.

Ritornello

Chorus

Shepherds 2, 3

Who will console us, ah, alas?
Or rather, who will grant
In our eyes a living fountain
That we may cry as we should
On this most mournful day,
All the more mournful because once so happy?
Today a cruel darkness
The two greater lights
Of these our woods –
EURIDICE and ORFEO,
One bitten by a snake,
The other pierced by grief – ah, alas, has quenched.

Chorus: Nymph and Shepherds

Ah bitter fate, ah wicked and cruel destiny,
Ah hurtful stars, ah avaricious Heaven.

Shepherds 2, 3

But where, ah, where now are
The wretched Nymph's
Lovely, cold limbs,
Where is the worthy dwelling
That her fair soul chose,
Who today has departed in the flower of her days?
Let us go, Shepherds, let us go
With compassion to find her
And with bitter tears
The rightful tribute
Shall at least be paid to her lifeless body

Chorus: Nymph and Shepherds

Ah bitter fate, ah wicked and cruel destiny,
Ah hurtful stars, ah avaricious Heaven.

Ritornello

ATTO TERZO

1 Sinfonia

2 Orfeo

Scorto da te, mio Nume
Speranza unico bene
de gli afflitti mortali, homai son giunto
a questi mesti e tenebrosi regni
ove raggio di Sol giammai non giunse.
Tu, mia compagna e duce
in così strane e sconosciute vie
reggesti il passo debole e tremante,
ond'oggi ancora spero
di riveder quelle beate luci
che sole à gli occhi miei portano il giorno.

3 Speranza

Ecco l'atra palude, ecco il nocchiero
che trahe l'ignudi spirti a l'altra riva,
dove hà Pluton de l'ombre il vasto impero.
Oltre quel nero stagno, oltre quel fiume,
in quei campi di pianto e di dolori,
destin crudele ogni tuo ben t'asconde.
Hor d'uopo è d'un gran core e d'un bel canto.
Io fin qui t'hò condotto, hor più non lice
teco venir, ch'amara legge il vieta,
legge scritta co'l ferro in duro sasso
de l'ima reggia in su l'orribil soglia
che in queste note il fiero senso esprime:
LASCiate OGNI SPERANZA Ò VOI CH'ENTRATE.

ACT III

Sinfonia

Orfeo

Escorted by you, my Deity,
Hope, only solace
Given the afflicted mortals, now I have arrived
At these mournful and dark realms
Where a Sun's ray can find no entrance.
You, my companion and guide
On paths so unwonted and unknown
Have directed my feeble, trembling steps,
Where today I still hope
To see once more those blessed eyes
That alone can bring light to mine.

Hope

Here is the dark marsh, here the boatman
Who ferries naked souls to the other bank,
Where Plutone rules his vast empire of shades.
Beyond that black swamp, beyond that river,
In those fields of tears and sorrow,
Cruel destiny hides your beloved.
You now need to have a brave heart and a fair song.
I have brought you here, but further I may not
Come with you, for harsh law forbids it,
A law written with iron on hard stone
At the dreaded entrance to the kingdom below,
That in these words expresses its terrible meaning:
ABANDON ALL HOPE, YOU WHO ENTER.

Dunque se stabilito hai pur nel core
di porre il piè ne la Città dolente,
da te me'n fuggo e torno
a l'usato soggiorno.

4 Orfeo

Dove, ah dove te'n vai,
unico del mio cor dolce conforto?
Poichè non lunge homai
del mio lungo cammin si scopre il porto,
perchè ti parti e m'abbandoni, ah! lasso,
sul periglioso passo?
Qual bene hor più m'avanza
se fuggi tu dolcissima Speranza?

5 Caronte

O tu ch'innanzi morte a queste rive
temerario te'n vieni, arresta i passi;
solcar quest' onde ad huom mortal non dassi,
nè può co' morti albergo haver chi vive.
Che? Voi forse, nemico al mio Signore,
Cerberò trar da le Tartaree porte?
O rapir brami sua cara consorte,
d'impudico desire acceso il core?
Pon freno al folle ardir, ch'entr' al mio legno
non accorrò più mai corporea salma,
sì de gli antichi oltraggi ancora ne l'alma
serbo acerba memoria e giusto sdegno.

6 Sinfonia

Orfeo

Possente Spirto e formidabil Nume,
senza cui far passaggio a l'altra riva
alma da corpo sciolta in van presume:

Ritornello

Therefore, if your heart is determined
To set foot in the City of grief,
I must flee from you and return
To my accustomed abode.

Orfeo

Where, ah, where are you going,
Only sweet comfort of my heart?
Now that, at last,
The destination of my long journey appears nearby,
Why do you leave and abandon me, ah, alas,
On this perilous path?
What good now remains for me
If you flee, sweetest Hope?

Caronte

O you who, before death, rashly come
To these shores, halt your steps:
To cross these waves is not granted to mortal man,
Nor can he who lives dwell with the dead.
What? Perhaps you, as enemy to my Lord,
Want to drag Cerberus from the Tartarean gates?
Or wish to ravish his dear consort,
Your heart on fire with lewd desire?
Restrain your foolish audacity, for into my boat
Shall a living body never again enter:
Of the ancient outrages still in my soul
I keep bitter memory and just anger.

Sinfonia

Orfeo

Powerful Spirit and fear-inspiring God,
Without whom to make passage to the other bank
A soul, freed from the body, presumes in vain:

Ritornello

non viv'io nò, che poi di vita è priva
mia cara sposa, il cor non è più meco,
e senza cor com'esser può ch'io viva?

Ritornello

A lei volt'ho il cammin per l'aer cieco,
a l'Inferno non già, ch'ovunque stassi
tanta bellezza il Paradiso ha seco.

Ritornello

ORFEO son io, che d'EURIDICE i passi
seguo per queste tenebrose arene
ove giammai per huom mortal non vassi.

O de le luci mie luci serene;
s'un vostro sguardo può tornarmi in vita,
ahi chi nega il conforto à le mie pene?

[7] Orfeo

Sol tu, nobile Dio, puoi darmi aita,
nè temer dei, che sopra un'aurea Cetra
sol di corde soavi armo le dita,
contra cui rigid' alma in van s'impetra.

[8] Caronte

Ben mi lusinga alquanto
dilettandomi il core,
sconsolato Cantore,
il tuo pianto e 'l tuo canto.
Ma lunge, ah lunge sia da questo petto
Pietà, di mio valor non degno affetto.

Orfeo

Ahi sventurato amante,
sperar dunque non lice
ch'odan miei prieghi i Cittadin d'Averno?

I do not live, no; since my dear bride
Was deprived of life, my heart is no longer with me,
And without a heart how can it be that I live?

Ritornello

For her I have made my way through the blind air,
Not yet to Hades, for wherever there is
Such beauty there is Paradise in her company.

Ritornello

ORFEO am I, who follows EURIDICE's steps
On these dark sands,
Where never mortal man has gone.

O serene light of my eyes,
If one look of yours can return me to life,
Ah, who denies comfort to my afflictions?

Orfeo

You alone, noble God, can help me,
Nor should you fear, since on a golden Lyre
My fingers are only armed with sweet strings,
Against which the merciless soul tries in vain to resist.

Caronte

Indeed you charm me,
Appeasing my heart,
Disconsolate Singer,
With your plaints and your song.
But far, ah, far from this breast
Lies pity, an effect unworthy of my valour.

Orfeo

Alas, unhappy lover,
Then may I not hope
That the Citizens of Avernus may hear my prayers?

Onde qual ombra errante
d' insepolto cadavero e infelice,
privo sarò del Cielo e de l' Inferno?
Così vuol empia sorte
ch' in quest' orror di morte
da te cor mio lontano
chiami tuo nome in vano,
e pregando e piangendo io mi consumi?
Rendetemi il mio ben, Tartarei Numi.

Sinfonia

[9] Orfeo

Ei dorme, e la mia cetra
se pietà non impetra
ne l' indurato core, almen il sonno
fuggir al mio cantar gli occhi non ponno.
Sù dunque, à che più tardo?
Tempo è ben d' approdar su l' altra sponda,
s' alcun non è ch' il nieghi.
Vaglia l' ardir se foran vani i prieghi.
È vago fior del Tempo
l' occasione, ch' esser dèe colta à tempo.

Qui entra nella barca, e passa cantando.

Mentre versan questi occhi amari fiumi
rendetemi il mio ben, Tartarei Numi.

[10] Sinfonia

Choro di Spiriti infernali

Nulla impresa per huom si tenta in vano
nè contro a lui più sa natura armarse;
ei de l' instabil piano
arò gli ondosi campi, e 'l seme sparse
di sue fatiche, ond' aurea messe accolse.

Then must I, like an errant shade
Of an unhappy, unburied body,
Bereft of Heaven and of Hell?
So does wicked fate desire
That in this horror of death,
My heart, I should from afar
Call your name in vain,
And praying and weeping wear myself away?
Give me back what is mine, Gods of Tartarus.

Sinfonia

Orfeo

He sleeps and my lyre,
If it cannot engrave pity
In that hardened heart, at least
His eyes cannot escape slumber from my singing.
So, then, why wait any longer?
It is time to approach the other bank,
If there is no one to forbid it.
Let courage prevail as my prayers were in vain.
A fleeting flower of Time is
The opportunity that must be picked on time.

Here he enters the boat and crosses over, singing

So long as these eyes pour out bitter streams of tears,
Give me back what is mine, Gods of Tartarus.

Sinfonia

Chorus of Infernal Spirits

No undertaking by man is attempted in vain,
Nor against him can Nature further arm herself.
And of the unstable plains
He has ploughed the wavy fields, and scattered the seeds
Of his labours, whence he has gathered golden harvests.

Quinci, perchè memoria
vivesse di sua gloria,
la Fama a dir di lui sua lingua sciolse,
ch'ei pose freno al Mar con fragil legno,
che sprezzò d'Austro e d'Aquilon lo sdegno.

Sinfonia

ATTO QUARTO

[11] Proserpina

Signor, quell'infelice
che per queste di morte ampie campagne
va chiamando EURIDICE,
ch'udito hai tù pur dianzi
così soavemente lamentarsi,
moss'ha tanta pietà dentro al mio core
ch'un'altra volta io torno a porger prieghi,
perchè il tuo Nume al suo pregar si pieghi.
Deh, se da queste luci
amorosa dolcezza unqua trahesti,
se ti piacque il seren di questa fronte
che tu chiami tuo Cielo, onde mi giuri
di non invidiar sua sorte a Giove,
pregoti per quel foco
con cui già la grand'alma Amor t'accese:
fa ch'EURIDICE torni
a goder di quei giorni
che trar solea vivendo in feste e in canto,
e del misero ORFEO consola il pianto.

[12] Plutone

Benchè severo e immutabil fato
contrasti amata sposa i tuoi desiri,
pur nulla homai si nieghi
a tal beltà, congiunta a tanti prieghi.

Thus, as memory
Might live of his glory,
Fame, to speak of him, has loosened her tongue,
He who restrained the sea while in a fragile barque,
Who disdained the wrath of the South and North Winds.

Sinfonia

ACT IV

Proserpina

Lord, that unfortunate man,
Who through these vast fields of death
Goes calling for EURIDICE,
Whom you have just heard
So sweetly lamenting,
Has moved my heart to such pity
That once more I turn to pray
That your spirit will yield to his pleading.
Ah, if from these eyes
You have ever taken loving sweetness,
If the fairness of this brow has pleased you
That you call your Heaven, on which you swear to me
Not to envy Jove his lot,
I beg you, by that fire
With which Love kindled your great soul.
Let EURIDICE return
To enjoy those days
Which she used to pass, living in festivities and in song,
And console the weeping of wretched ORFEO.

Plutone

Although severe and immutable fate
Is against your desires, beloved wife,
Nothing ever can be refused
Such beauty, together with such prayers.

La sua cara EURIDICE
contra l'ordin fatale ORFEO ricovri.
Ma pria che tragga il piè da questi abissi
non mai volga ver lei gli avidi lumi,
che di perdita eterna
gli sia certa cagion un solo sguardo.
Io così stabilisco. Hor nel mio Regno
fate, o Ministri il mio voler palese,
sì che l'intenda ORFEO
e l'intenda EURIDICE,
ne di cangiar l'altrui sperar più lice.

[13] Spirito infernale 1

O degli habitator de l'ombre eterne,
possente Rè, legge ne fia tuo cenno,
che ricercar altre cagioni interne
di tuo voler nostri pensier non denno.

Spirito infernale 2

Trarrà da queste orribili caverne
sua sposa ORFEO, s'adopererà suo ingegno
sì che no'l vinca giovenil desio,
nè i gravi imperi tuoi sparga d'oblio.

[14] Proserpina

Quali grazie ti rendo
hor che sì nobil dono
conced' a preghi miei Signor cortese?
Sia benedetto il dì che pria ti piacqui,
benedetta la preda e' l' dolce inganno,
poi ch'è per mia ventura
feci acquisto di te perdendo il Sole.

Plutone

Tue soavi parole
d'Amor l'antica piaga
rinfrescan nel mio core;

His dear EURIDICE,
Against the command of fate, ORFEO may recover.
But before he draws away from these abysses
He must never turn his desirous eyes to see her,
Since her eternal loss
Will be caused by a single glance.
So I do command. Now in my Kingdom,
Officers, make known my will,
So that ORFEO may understand it
And EURIDICE understand it,
Nor may anyone hope to change the decree.

Infernal Spirit 1

For those dwellers in eternal shadows,
Powerful King, let your order be law,
Our thoughts must not seek
Other inmost reasons for your will.

Infernal Spirit 2

While through these terrible caverns
ORFEO will lead his bride, he will use his talent
If he is not overcome by youthful desire,
Nor forgets your solemn imperial orders.

Proserpina

What thanks may I give you,
Now that so noble a boon
You grant to my prayers, courteous lord?
Blessed be the day that first I pleased you,
Blessed my abduction and the sweet trickery,
Since, to my good fortune,
I won you, losing the Sun.

Plutone

Your sweet words
Love's ancient wound
Revives in my heart.

così l'anima tua non sia più vaga
di celeste diletto,
sì ch'abbandoni il marital tuo letto.

[15] Choro di Spiriti
Pietade oggi et Amore
trionfan ne l'Inferno.

Spirito infernale 1
Ecco il gentil cantore
che sua sposa conduce al Ciel superno.

[16] Ritornello

Orfeo
Qual honor di te fia degno
mia cetra onnipotente,
s'hai nel Tartareo Regno
piegar potuto ogni indurata mente?

Ritornello

Luogo havrai fra le più belle
Immagini celesti,
ond'al tuo suon le stelle
danzeranno co' giri hor tardi hor presti.

Ritornello

Io per te felice à pieno
vedrò l'amato volto,
e nel candido seno
de la mia Donna oggi sarò raccolto.

Ma mentre io canto (ohimè), chi m'assicura
ch'ella mi segua? Ohimè chi mi nasconde
de l'amate pupille il dolce lume?

Forse d'invidia punte
le Deità d'Averno,
perch'io non sia qua giù felice à pieno,

Let your soul no more long
For heavenly delight,
Thus to abandon your marriage bed.

Chorus of Spirits
Pity today, and Love,
Both triumph in Hades.

Infernal Spirit 1
Here is the gentle singer,
Who leads his bride to the Heaven above.

Ritornello

Orfeo
What honour is worthy of you,
My all-powerful lyre,
For you have, in the Kingdom of Tartarus,
Been able to make yield every hardened heart?

Ritornello

A place shall you have among the fairest
Images of heaven,
Where at your sound the stars
Shall dance and twirl, now slowly, now quickly.

Ritornello

I, through you, happy at last,
Shall see the beloved face,
And in the white bosom
Of my Lady today I will rest.

But while I sing, alas, who can assure me
That she follows me? Alas, who hides from me
The sweet light of her beloved eyes?

Perhaps, spurred on by envy,
The Gods of Avernus,
So that I should not be happy here below,

mi tolgono il mirarvi
luci beate e liete
che sol col sguardo altrui bear potete?

Ma che temi mio core?
Ciò che vieta Pluton comanda Amore.
A Nume più possente
che vince huomini e Dei
ben ubbidir dovrei.

Ma che odo ohimè lasso?
S'arman forse à miei danni
con tal furor le Furie innamorate,
per rapirmi il mio ben, ed io 'l consento?

Qui si volta Orfeo.

O dolcissimi lumi io pur vi veggio,
io pur ... ma qual Eclissi ohimè v'oscura?

Spirito infernale 3

Rott' hai la legge, e se' di grazia indegno.

[17] Euridice

Ahi vista troppo dolce e troppo amara;
così per troppo amor dunque mi perdi?
Et io misera perdo
il poter più godere
e di luce e di vita, e perdo insieme
te d'ogni ben più caro, ò mio Consorte.

Spirito infernale 1

Torna a l'ombre di morte
infelice EURIDICE,
nè più sperar di riveder le stelle,
ch'omai fia sordo a' preghi tuoi l'Inferno.

Prevent me looking at you,
Blessed and joyful eyes,
That only with a look can bless others?

But what do you fear, my heart?
What Plutone forbids, Love commands.
A mighty God
Who conquers men and Gods
I must obey.

But what do I hear, oh alas?
Perhaps arming themselves with fury, to my loss,
Are the enamored furies,
To take from me what is mine, and I allow it?

Here he turns

O sweetest eyes, I see you now,
I see: But what Eclipse, alas, obscures you?

Infernal Spirit 3

You have broken the law, and are unworthy of grace.

Euridice

Ah, too sweet and too bitter a vision:
So, through too much love, then, do you lose me?
And I, wretched, lose
The power to enjoy more
Light and life, and with them lose
You, dearer than all, O my Consort.

Infernal Spirit 1

Return to the shades of death,
Unfortunate EURIDICE,
Nor can you hope to see again the Stars,
For from this moment Hades is deaf to your prayers.

Orfeo

Dove te n' vai mia vita? Ecco io ti seguo.
Ma chi me 'l niega ohimè; sogno o vaneggio?
Qual occulto poter di questi orrori,
da questi amati orrori
mal mio grado mi tragge e mi conduce
a l'odiosa luce?

18 Sinfonia

Choro di Spiriti

È la virtùe un raggio
di celeste bellezza,
pregio de l'alma ond'ella sol s'apprezza;
questa di Tempo oltraggio
non teme, anzi maggiore
Ne l'huom rendono gli anni il suo splendore.
ORFEO vinse l'Inferno, e vinto poi
fù da gli affetti suoi.
Degno d'eterna gloria
fia sol colui ch'avrà di sè vittoria.

Sinfonia

Qui di nuovo si volge la scena.

ATTO QUINTO

19 Ritornello

20 Orfeo

Questi i campi di Tracia, e questo è il loco
dove passommi il core
per l'amara novella il mio dolore.

Orfeo

Where are you going, my life? Lo, I follow you –
But, who stops me, alas: do I dream or rave?
What hidden power of these horrors,
Draws me from these beloved horrors
Against my will, and conducts me
To the hateful light?

Sinfonia

Chorus of Spirits

Virtue is a ray
Of celestial beauty,
Prize of the soul, where alone it is valued:
The ravages of Time
It does not fear, rather
In man do the years restore its greater splendour.
ORFEO conquered Hades and then was conquered
By his emotions.
Worthy of eternal glory
Is the one who will have victory over himself.

Sinfonia

Here the set changes again.

ACT V

Ritornello

Orfeo

These are the fields of Thrace, and this is the place
where my heart was pierced
By grief at the bitter tidings.

Poiche non ho più speme
di ricovrar pregando,
piangendo e sospirando
il perduto mio bene,
che posso io più, se non volgermi a voi
selve soavi, un tempo
conforto ai miei martir, mentre al Ciel piacque,
per farvi per pietà meco languire
al mio languire?
Voi vi doleste, ò Monti, e lagrimaste
voi sassi, al dipartir del nostro Sole,
et io con voi lagrimerò mai sempre,
e mai sempre dorròmmi, ahi doglia, ahi pianto.

Eco

Hai pianto.

Orfeo

Cortese Eco amorosa
che sconsolata sei
e consolarmi vuoi ne' dolor miei,
benchè queste mie luci
sien già per lagrimar fatte due fonti,
in così grave mia fera sventura
non ho pianto però tanto che basti.

Eco

Basti.

Orfeo

Se gli occhi d'Argo havessi
e spandessero tutti un Mar di pianto,
non fora il duol conforme a tanti guai.

Eco

Ahi.

Since I have no further hope
To recover through pleading,
Weeping and sighing,
My lost beloved,
What more can I do, if I turn not to you,
Sweet woods, once
Comfort to my suffering, while it pleased heaven
To make you languish with me in your compassion
At my languishing?
You grieved, O Mountains, and you cried,
Rocks, at the leaving of our Sun,
And I will always weep with you
And always will yield myself to grief,
like you have weeped!

Echo

You have weeped.

Orfeo

Gentle, loving Echo,
You who are disconsolate
And would console me in my grief,
Although these my eyes
Through tears become two fountains,
So grievous is my misfortune
I still have not tears enough.

Echo

Enough.

Orfeo

If I had the eyes of Argus,
And all poured out a Sea of weeping.
Their grief would not match such woe.

Echo

Oh.

Orfeo

S'hai del mio mal pietade, io ti ringrazio
di tua benignitade.

Ma mentre io mi querelo,
deh perchè mi rispondi
sol con gli ultimi accenti?

Rendimi tutti integri i miei lamenti.

Ma tu anima mia se mai ritorna

la tua fredd'ombra a queste amiche piaggie,
prendi da me queste tue lodi estreme,
c'hor à te sacro la mia cetra e 'l canto,
come à te già sopra l'altar del core
lo spirito acceso in sacrificio offersi.

Tu bella fusti e saggia, e in te ripose
tutte le grazie sue cortese il Cielo,
mentre ad ogni altra de' suoi don fù scarso;
d'ogni lingua ogni lode a te conviensi
ch'albergasti in bel corpo alma più bella,
fastosa men quanto d'honor più degna.
Hor l'altre Donne son superbe e perfide,
ver chi le adora, dispietate instabili,
prive di senno e d'ogni pensier nobile,
ond'à ragione opra di lor non lodansi;
quinci non fia giammai che per vil femina
Amor con aureo strale il cor trafiggami.

21 Sinfonia

Apollo

descende in una nuvola cantando.

Perch' a lo sdegno e al dolor in preda
così ti doni ò figlio?

Non è, non è consiglio
di generoso petto
servir al proprio affetto.

Orfeo

If you have compassion for my misfortune,
I thank you for your benevolence.

But while I lament,

Why do you answer me

Only with my last words?

Give me back all of my laments.

But you, my soul, if ever there should return

Your cold shade to these friendly meadows,

Take from me these last praises,

Since now my lyre and song are sacred to you only,

As on the altar of my heart

I offered you my ardent spirit in sacrifice.

You were beautiful and wise, and in you

Kind Heaven rested all its graces,

While it was sparing in its gifts to every other woman.

In every tongue every praise is due to you,

For in your fair body you sheltered a fairer soul,

Lesser in pride, thus the more worthy of honour.

Now other Women are haughty and fickle,

Pitiless and changeable to their adorers,

Without judgment and noble thoughts,

Whence rightly their behaviour is not praised.

Therefore may it never be that, for a worthless woman,

Love with his golden arrow pierces my heart.

Sinfonia

Apollo

descending on a cloud, singing

Why, a prey to anger and grief,

Do you so freely give yourself, O son?

It is not, it is not the wisdom

Of a generous heart

To serve its own affliction.

Quinci biasmo e periglio
già sovrastar ti veggio,
onde movo dal Ciel per darti aita;
Hor tu m'ascolta e n'havrai lode e vita.

22 Orfeo

Padre cortese al maggior uopo arrivi,
ch'a disperato fine
con estremo dolore
m'havcan condotto già sdegno e Amore.
Eccomi dunque attento a tue ragioni
celeste padre; hor ciò che vuoi m'imponi.

Apollo

Troppo, troppo gioisti
di tua lieta ventura,
hor troppo piagni
tua sorte acerba e dura.
Ancor non sai
come nulla qua giù diletta e dura?
Dunque se goder brami immortal vita,
vientene meco al Ciel ch'a se t'invita.

Orfeo

Si non vedrò più mai
de l'amata EURIDICE i dolci rai?

Apollo

Nel Sole e nelle stelle
vagheggerai le sue sembianze belle.

Orfeo

Ben di cotanto Padre sarei non degno figlio
se non seguissi il tuo fedel consiglio.

Apollo & Orfeo

ascende al Cielo cantando.

Since with blame and danger
Already I see you overcome,
I come from heaven to give you aid.
Now listen to me and you shall have glory and life.

Orfeo

Kind father, you come when I am in need,
When to a desperate end
With extreme grief
Anger and Love has already brought me.
Here I am then, attentive to your counsels,
Heavenly father, now command me as you want.

Apollo

Too much, too much did you rejoice
In your happy fate,
Now too much do you weep
At your bitter, hard fortune.
Do you still not know
How nothing that delights down here will last?
Therefore, if you want to enjoy immortal life,
Come with me to Heaven, which invites you.

Orfeo

Shall I never again see
The sweet eyes of my beloved EURIDICE?

Apollo

In the sun and in the stars
You shall gaze at her fair image.

Orfeo

Of such a good Father I would not be a worthy son
If I did not follow your trustworthy advice.

Apollo and Orfeo

ascending to Heaven, singing

23 Apollo & Orfeo

Salam cantando al Cielo,
dove ha virtù verace
degno premio di sè: diletto e pace.

24 Ritornello

Choro

Vanne ORFEO felice a pieno
a goder celeste honore
l'ave ben non mai vien meno,
l'ave mai non fu dolore,
mentre altari, incensi e voti
noi t'offriam lieti e devoti.

Ritornello

Così va chi non s'arresta
al chiamar di Nume eterno,
così grazia in Ciel impetra
chi qua giù provò l'Inferno,
e chi semina fra doglie
d'ogni grazia il frutto coglie.

25 Moresca

Apollo and Orfeo

Let us rise, singing, to Heaven,
Where true virtue
Has the due reward of delight and peace.

Ritornello

Chorus

Go, ORFEO, happy at last,
To enjoy celestial honour
Where good never lessens,
Where there was never grief,
While altars, incenses and prayers
We offer to you, happy and devoted.

Ritornello

So goes one who does not retreat
At the call of the eternal light,
So he obtains grace in heaven
Who down here has braved Hell
And he who sows in sorrow
Reaps the fruit of all grace.

Moresca

English translation: © Gilbert Blin

Denna inspelning har fått stöd från / This recording has received support from:

Sten K Johnsons Stiftelse



Thora Ohlssons Stiftelse



Region Skåne



Statens Kulturråd

KULTURRÅDET

Lunds Kommun



Musik i Syd

MUSIK I SYD

The Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation

The music on BIS's Hybrid SACDs can be played back in Stereo (CD and SACD) as well as in 5.0 Surround sound (SACD). Our surround sound recordings aim to reproduce the natural sound in a concert venue as faithfully as possible, using the newest technology. In order to do so, all channels are recorded using the full frequency range, with no separate bass channel added. If your sub-woofer is switched on, however, most systems will also automatically feed the bass signal coming from the other channels into it. In the case of systems with limited bass reproduction, this may be of benefit to your listening experience.

Recording Data

Recording:	July/August 2019 at Eslövs Kyrka, Sweden Producer: Thore Brinkmann (Take5 Music Production) Sound engineers: Ingo Petry & Thore Brinkmann (Take5 Music Production) Production assistant: Sigrid Abrahamsson
Equipment:	Microphones from Neumann, DPA and Schoeps, audio electronics from RME, Lake People and DirectOut, MADI optical cabling technology, monitoring equipment from B&W, STAX and Sennheiser, and Sequoia and Pyramix digital audio workstations. Original format: 24-bit/96 kHz
Post-production:	Editing and mixing: Thore Brinkmann
Executive producers:	Robert Suff (BIS) / Lundabarock

Booklet and Graphic Design

Cover text: © Ole-Kristian Andersen 2020
Translations: Horst A. Scholz (German); Arlette Lemieux-Chené (French)
Cover art: Maria Gyllenhoff
Session photos: © Staffan Larsson
Typesetting, lay-out: Andrew Barnett (Compact Design)

BIS Records is not responsible for the content or reliability of any external websites whose addresses are published in this booklet.

BIS recordings can be ordered from our distributors worldwide.
If we have no representation in your country, please contact:
BIS Records AB, Stationsvägen 20, SE-184 50 Åkersberga, Sweden
Tel.: +46 8 544 102 30 info@bis.se www.bis.se

BIS-2519 © & © 2021, BIS Records AB, Sweden.