
FRIDAY, APRIL 20, 2018 ~ 5:00 PM
RECITAL HALL, ANN E. PITZER CENTER

The Department of Music presents

Claudio Monteverdi's Orfeo

Abridged, semi-staged

Directed by Zoila Muñoz

Featuring Phebe Craig, harpsichord

Jennifer Meller, choreographer

CAST

ORFEO: Lam Nguyen*
EURIDICE: Mira Huang**
MUSICA: Katelan Bowden***
MESSAGERA: Gabriela Pacheco*
SPERANZA: Allison Proffitt*
NINFA: Shelley Foster***
CARONTE: Leland Howard*
PROSERPINA: Anna Ignatenko*
APOLLO: Bailey Cook*
PLUTONE: Leland Howard*
PASTOR 1: William Yiang*
PASTOR 2: James Cota*
PASTOR 3: Maximilian Dureza***

CHORUS NYMPHS, SHEPHERDS, AND SPIRITS

Wenqi Song*
Mira Huang
Shelley Foster
Lisa Bell
Katelan Bowden
Mariaidalena Iniguez*
Allison Proffitt
James Cota
Maximilian Dureza
Jason Mak*
Leland Howard
William Yiang
Lisa Bell
Maximilian Dureza

*Zoila Muñoz students; **Jonathan Nadel student; ***Guests

We want you and your fellow concertgoers to have a positive experience. To facilitate that, please completely turn off your phone and any other electronic devices you may have with you in the concert hall. Concertgoers who cause unnecessary distractions may be asked to leave. Audio or visual recording is prohibited.

SYNOPSIS

An instrumental fanfare precedes the entrance of La Musica, representing the “spirit of music,” who sings a prologue to the power of music, before introducing Orfeo, music’s human embodiment.

ACT 1

Orfeo and Euridice enter together with a chorus of nymphs and shepherds, who comment like a Greek chorus on the situation. A shepherd announces that this is the couple’s wedding day; the chorus responds, first in a stately invocation and then in a joyful dance. Orfeo and Euridice sing of their love for each other, Euridice departs. Those left on stage sing a brief chorus, commenting on how Orfeo used to be one “for whom sighs were food” before love brought him to a state of sublime happiness.

ACT 2

Orfeo and the main chorus sing of the beauties of nature. Orfeo then muses on his former unhappiness, but proclaims: “After grief one is more content, after pain one is happier.” The mood of contentment is abruptly ended when Messagera enters, bringing the news that Euridice has received a fatal snakebite and died. The chorus expresses its anguish: Orfeo declares his intention to descend into the Underworld and persuade its ruler to allow Euridice to return to life.

ACT 3

Orfeo is guided by Speranza to the gates of Hades. Having pointed out the words inscribed on the gate (“Abandon hope, all ye who enter here”), Speranza leaves. Orfeo is now confronted with the ferryman Caronte, who addresses Orfeo harshly and refuses to take him across the river Styx, but after putting him to sleep with his lyre, Orfeo crosses the river, entering the Underworld.

ACT 4

In the Underworld, Proserpina petitions King Plutone, her husband, for Euridice’s release. Moved by her pleas, Plutone agrees but warns that Orfeo must not look back, lest a single glance condemn him to her eternal loss. A chorus of spirits sing “Pity and love triumph in Hell.” Orfeo enters, leading Euridice and singing confidently until a note of doubt creeps in: “Who will assure me that she is following?” Suddenly distracted by a loud noise, Orfeo looks round; immediately he sees Euridice, and she begins to fade singing despairingly: “Losest thou me through too much love?” and disappears. Orfeo attempts to follow her but an unseen force prevents him. He is devastated.

ACT 5

Back in the fields of Thrace, Orfeo laments his loss, praises Euridice’s beauty, and determines never again to be pierced by Cupid’s arrow. Suddenly, Apollo appears from the heavens and chastises him: “Why dost thou give thyself up as prey to rage and grief?” He invites Orfeo to leave the world and join him in the heavens, where he will recognize Euridice’s likeness in the stars. A shepherds chorus concludes that “he who sows in suffering shall reap the fruit of every grace,” before the opera ends with a spirited Moresca.

NOTES

Monteverdi’s *Orfeo* holds a special place in my heart. It brings memories of my youth in Salzburg, being invited by my teacher and mentor Harnoncourt to sing with him in Amsterdam, which launched my career in Europe, and then producing it in San Francisco at the Old North Church by candlelight, which was magical, and now in Davis. This marvelous opera is one of the jewels of the operatic Baroque repertoire, well suited to young singers. Having the voices of Lam and Leland was very crucial, permitting me to go ahead with the production. The rest fell into place. Most importantly, having Phebe Craig’s support to lead the Orchestra Ensemble was pure luck! I could not have done this production without her.

Thanks to Jennifer Meller, a marvelous Baroque choreographer who enhanced the production with the dance and movements, to Marla Volovna for her invaluable help and stage advice, and to Phil Daley, Josh Paterson, and the UC Davis Music Department for their support: “another dream come true.” The enormous efforts, commitment and dedication of the students have been exceptional. They are my joy! I can honestly say that this humble production is a product of love from all participants and for that I am eternally grateful.

—Zoila Muñoz

Composed in 1607 for a court performance at Mantua, Monteverdi’s *Orfeo* is considered the earliest work in the operatic genre that is regularly performed today. With a libretto by Alessandro Striggio, it is based on the Greek legend of Orpheus and tells the story of his descent to Hades and fruitless attempt to bring his dead bride Euridice back to the living world. One can readily see why the opera has retained its place for over 400 years—a plot which brought even its patron to tears, an ingenious blend of Renaissance and Baroque tonalities and textures, a constant variety of instrumental, vocal, and choral scoring, plaintive melodies and vigorous rhythms, and antiphonal interplay between sections of the orchestra which paint a musical tone setting. Around forty-one instruments are listed in the score, with distinct groups of instruments used to depict particular scenes and characters. Thus strings, harpsichords, and recorders represent the pastoral fields of Thrace with their nymphs and shepherds, while the heavy brass illustrates the underworld.

— Ruth Atkins

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

Zoila Muñoz is a Baroque specialist and has sung internationally with many prominent conductors of this genre. Her roles include Messagera-Speranza with Harnoncourt in *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, Poppea and Amastre in *Xerxes*, with Jean Claude Malguar in France, Gluck's *Orfeo*; Erisbe in *L'Ormindo* by Cavalli, and lately Penelope in *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, in 2014 with Daniel Canosa. The last three were directed by Marla Volovna. Muñoz has directed *The Magic Flute* and *Dido and Aeneas* among others and teaches voice at UC Davis.

Originally from Colorado, **Phebe Craig** spent her student years in Berlin, Brussels, and San Francisco. She has earned a reputation as a versatile chamber musician and recitalist and has performed and recorded with many early music ensembles. As a specialist in basso continuo realization, she has accompanied many prominent early music soloists.

Jennifer Meller is a dancer, student, and historian of early dance and gesture from the fourteenth through eighteenth centuries. She has been the Dance Director of San Francisco Renaissance Voices (SFRV) since 2012 and has choreographed and performed in multiple operas and early dance concerts ranging from the medieval to the Baroque eras with SFRV and Marin Baroque. She has taught Baroque and Renaissance dance to students of all ages with the educational department of Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Chorale and at St. Mary's College.

Fioretti Musicali was founded five years ago by Ruth Atkins and is a recorder consort based in the Sierra Foothills. Members have played under Daniel Canosa with Apollo Opera, and in other dramatic and orchestral settings, as well as in their traditional five-part recorder ensemble. We are all amateurs, and delighted by Zoila's invitation to experience the repertoire created for our instruments under the enthusiastic direction of Phebe Craig, in the context of talented instrumentalists, dancers, and singers.

Lam Nguyen is from Atlanta, GA and received a BA from Emory University. He is currently a graduate student studying ethnomusicology.

Mira Huang is a third-year double major in music and psychology with a minor in English at UC Davis. She has many hobbies, including flute and creative writing, but her heart is always with vocal music. This is her second operatic role, having played Belinda from *Dido and Aeneas* in 2016.

Katelan Bowden is a coloratura soprano with degrees in both Vocal Performance and English from UC Davis. Making a name for herself in the professional classical scene, Bowden has made appearances with Opera San Jose, New York Lyric Opera, Phoenix Opera, among others, and has performed roles such as Poppea in Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, Susanna in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, and Papagena in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. Currently, she sings with the SF Symphony Chorus for a third season, Capella SF and Marin Baroque.

Bailey Cook is a third-year baritone studying vocal performance. He directs the Davis Chamber choir here on campus. This is his first official opera production.

ORCHESTRA

VIOLIN

Victor Karadi
Devin Hough

VIOLA DA GAMBA

Melita Denny
Elizabeth Campbell

RECORDER

Fioretti Musicali

SOPRANINO AND

BASS

Ruth Atkins

SOPRANO

Ann Douglass

SOPRANO AND ALTO

Thomas Neuschatz

TENOR

Stephan Black

CHITARRONE

David Nutter

TRUMPET

Michael Meeks
Chetan Gomatam

BASS

Bruce Helft
John Yeh

HARPSICHORD

Phebe Craig

PRODUCTION

Philip Daley, lighting director, Tamara Maximovich, stage assistant, Lydia Luan and Anjuli Kapila, stage helpers