



JOSEPH HAYDN

# ORFEO:

THE SOUL OF THE PHILOSOPHER

## SYNOPSIS

**ACT I:** The princess Euridice, running from home, hides in the forest. Her father – in an attempt to quell an emerging insurrection – has promised her in marriage to a rival dignitary, Arideo, against her will, though Euridice’s heart is committed to a musician. Guards chase after her, warning her not to go deeper into the forest where wild beasts roam. But she enters anyway and is cornered by the beasts. The guards fetch the musician Orfeo, whose powerful, passionate song moves the beasts. The guards rejoice, and report the event to her father, Creonte, who allows the couple to be wed. In a private moment, the lovers commit their vows to one another.

**ACT II:** The gods amongst the stars sing in praise of the young couple’s love, yet warn that age will sour it. The couple ignores them, insisting that their love will last forever. Suddenly, a loud noise in the distance interrupts their reverie, and Orfeo goes to investigate. But this was a trap to lure him away so that Arideo’s henchmen could capture Euridice. She narrowly escapes, but is immediately bitten by a serpent; the venom slowly spreads through her body, and she dies. Orfeo returns, finds her lifeless body, and mourns, his pain building into a tempest of rage. News of Euridice’s death reaches her father, who seeks revenge by declaring war on his enemies.

*Intermission: 15 minutes*

**ACT III:** At the princess’s funeral, Orfeo is inconsolable. Meanwhile, soldiers are dispatched from the funeral to fight. As the first explosions of war sound in the distance, Orfeo turns to prayer, calling for help to find his love. A spirit appears who instructs Orfeo to move past his emotion and follow her into the darkness of the underworld. They depart together.

**ACT IV:** Orfeo and the spirit arrive in the underworld, surrounded by the souls of the dead wandering aimlessly. As Orfeo attempts to proceed, the souls fly into a frenzy and torment him with shrieks and roars. Orfeo calls out to the god of the underworld. Pluto arrives and, impressed, grants Orfeo permission to meet Euridice’s soul, as long as he does not look at her behind the veil of darkness. Unable to do so, Orfeo removes the veil and sees Euridice’s shining eyes once again. Her life drains from her, and all abandon Orfeo.

**ACT V:** Orfeo returns to the overworld holding the princess’s corpse. He raves against the cruel stars above him. The graveyard has become overrun by an ongoing battle. Amidst the war scene, Orfeo hears voices inviting him to join them, committing his life to love and passion. He moves into the battle, and dies. A storm gathers in the distance, growing quickly until wind, lightning, and floods destroy everyone on the battlefield, washing them and Orfeo away.

# Joseph Haydn

## ORFEO

### *L'anima del filosofo / The Soul of the Philosopher*

Composed in London 1791; premiered in Florence 1951

May 26 & 27, 2023

7:30 p.m.

MacMillan Theatre, Faculty of Music, University of Toronto

DIRECTOR Nico Krell

SET & COSTUME DESIGNERS Abby Esteireiro & Astrid Janson

STAGE MANAGER Kate Chubbs

McGILL BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

CONDUCTOR

Dorian Komanoff Bandy

CHORUS DIRECTOR

Ivars Taurins

PRODUCER

Caryl Clark

*Featuring*

Asitha Tennekoon\*, Lindsay McIntyre,

Parker Clements, and Maeve Palmer

*\*The participation of this Artist is arranged by permission of  
Canadian Actors' Equity Association under the provisions of the  
Dance Opera Theatre Policy (DOT).*

This performance includes a 15-minute intermission.

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*We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years, it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.*

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Euridice

Orfeo

Creonte, *the ruler, and Euridice's father*

Genio, *a genie, or guiding spirit*

Pluto, *the God of the Underworld, or Death itself*

Arideo, *a rival dignitary to Creonte (unseen)*

Guards & Advisors to Creonte

Henchmen of Arideo

Soldiers and Their Families

Beasts in the Forest

Spirits in the Stars

Souls of the Dead

Voices in the Wind

## PROGRAM NOTE

Composing an Orpheus opera in the late eighteenth century was no innocent undertaking. Because of the myth's association with the birth of opera (c.1600) and later operatic reforms pioneered by Gluck in his well-known setting for Vienna in 1762, Haydn knew how significant this choice was for his operatic debut in London in 1791. The managers of the newly rebuilt King's Theatre in the Haymarket were eager to reclaim the licence they had lost to the rival Pantheon opera house and were banking on Haydn's fame to attract an audience. The Haymarket librettist, Carlo Francesco Badini, penned *L'anima del filosofo / The soul of the philosopher*, an unusual retelling of the Orpheus myth featuring a dramatic, cataclysmic ending. Fearing that the opera's plot resonated too closely with liberal Enlightenment ideals advancing in revolutionary France and threatening to cross the Channel, authorities shut down the production during rehearsals in May 1791, leaving a mystified Haydn to wonder why his *Orfeo* had been "declared contraband."

Excerpts of Haydn's *Orfeo* published in 1806 promoted small-scale concert performances. Meanwhile, the autograph score and another manuscript lay dormant in dusty East German and Austro-Hungarian archives and were finally uncovered during the early days of the Cold War. When the opera eventually premiered at the Teatro della Pergola in Florence in 1951, a young Maria Callas performed Euridice. Although this was the only role she ever

originated, no recordings survive. Other legendary performers later championed the opera, including Joan Sutherland in the 1960s and Cecilia Bartoli in the 1990s. Bartoli recorded it with Christopher Hogwood and the Academy of Ancient Music in 1997 and selected the opera for her ROH Covent Garden debut in 2001. She is reprising the role of Euridice in a concert performance of the opera in Salzburg on May 27, 2023. — *Caryl Clark*

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## CAST

ORFEO Asitha Tennekoon  
EURIDICE Lindsay McIntyre  
CREONTE Parker Clements  
GENIO Maeve Palmer

## McGILL BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

Dorian Komanoff Bandy & Elizaveta Miller, *artistic directors*  
Dorian Komanoff Bandy, *conductor*

### *Violin*

Sallynee Amawat\*  
(concertmaster)  
Sonia Hellenbrand  
Wilton Huang  
Alex Miron-Perreault  
Camille Piorier-Lachon

### *Viola*

Namgon Lee

### *Cello*

Jessica Korotkin, Tor Ellergodt

### *Bass*

Shanti Nachtergaele

### *Fortepiano*

Dorian Komanoff Bandy

*\*Guest performer*

### *Flute*

Vincent Canciello, Ian Plansker

### *Oboe*

Amanda Kitik\*, Tate Cohan

### *Clarinet*

Maryse Legault

### *Bassoon*

C. Ellis Reyes

### *Horn*

Jonah Stemen, Alex Belser

### *Serpent*

Alex Belser

### *Trumpet*

Andras Molnar\*

### *Timpani*

Richard Moore\*

To read biographies of the performers and members of the creative team, scan the QR code at right or visit [www.music.utoronto.ca/docs/orfeo\\_biographies\\_2023.pdf](http://www.music.utoronto.ca/docs/orfeo_biographies_2023.pdf)



## CHORUS

Ivars Taurins, *chorus director*

### *Soprano*

Leandra Dahm, Charlotte Goss, Hermione Tankard, Chihiro Yasufuku

### *Alto*

James Dyck, Ryan MacDonald, Eva Stone-Barney

### *Tenor*

Joshua Tolulope David, Benjamin Done, Nathan Gritter

### *Bass*

Owen Phillipson, Alekzander Rosolowski, George Theodorakopoulos

## PRODUCTION TEAM

Nico Krell, *director & translator*

Kate Chubbs, *stage manager*

Atule David, *assistant stage manager*

Astrid Janson, *scenic designer & design mentor*

Abby Esteireiro, *costume designer*

Nico Krell, *lighting & sound designer*

Cara Nicol, *production assistant*

Aidan Taylor, *technical assistant*

Elijah Goldstein & Cara Nicol, *wardrobe assistants*

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and James Conquer | Electronic Music Studio: Zakriya Bashir-Hill,  
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## SYMPOSIUM

“The Labours of Love: Resurrecting Haydn’s *Orfeo*”

May 27 • 10:00 am to 1:00 pm • Free

Walter Hall, Faculty of Music, U of T

Register: [orfeosymposium.eventbrite.com](https://orfeosymposium.eventbrite.com) (simulcast available)