



[Thea Derks](#), January 26, 2020

The new production of *L'Orfeo* by De Nederlandse Reisopera and Opera2Day is a form of total theater where Wagner would have licked his fingers. In her direction, Monique Wagemakers forges song, dance, music, costumes and scenery together into an inseparable whole. The performance is compelling, poetic and enchanting and fits seamlessly with the stylized language with which Monteverdi introduced the opera genre in 1607. At the premiere in Theater Wilmink we were glued to our seats for over an hour and a half. Also four hundred years later, the key question in Alessandro Striggio's libretto is still palpable: how do we deal with loss? Do we sit and simmer endlessly or sit over it and become a 'sadder, wiser person' to paraphrase Coleridge? Orfeo is unable to do this. When his new wife Euridice dies of a snake bite, he moves - literally - heaven and earth to get her back from the realm of the dead.

Resent in resentment

But once he has strangled the gods, he does not know how to restrain his emotions at the moment. With one glance behind him, he loses his beloved again, this time forever. And then he drowns in self-pity. His father Apollo calls him to order: "Why do you get stuck in resentment and sorrow, do you still not know that earthly happiness never lasts forever?" Whereupon they rise to heaven together, where Orfeo can see Euridice shining among the stars forever.

The stage is empty. The only attribute is the installation 'Ego' by Lonneke Gordijn from Studio Drift, a transparent three-dimensional cloth, hand-woven from 16 kilometers of fine fluorocarbon threads. With the help of software directed by the conductor, this quickly takes on other forms that are directly related to the feelings of Orfeo. In this way the art object represents its inner world and becomes an acting character.

Art object as acting character

The fabric often has a cubic shape, sometimes as a prison in which Orfeo is locked up, sometimes as a coffin in which Euridice is carried away. When her death was announced, the

canvas 'scared' and quickly took on a diagonal shape that seemed to hide in fear in the ridge of the stage.

The dynamic choreography by Nanine Linning, the costumes by Marlou Breuls and the **lighting design by Thomas C. Hase are also wonderful.** At the opening we see a scarce white-lit, jumble of people in flesh-colored, ribbed body stockings. From this La Musica rises like a Venus de Milo to announce the story of Orfeo. This is a starring role for mezzo-soprano Luciana Mancini, who also shapes the messenger and Proserpina with her warm, full voice.



'Square' worldview

Orfeo is the only one to wear a - also flesh - colored - elegant dress. He holds on to the entire performance, while the other characters in the underworld exchange their costumes for dark blue long robes. This nicely symbolizes his inability to adapt to the circumstances: he is trapped in his own 'square' worldview. The tenor Samuel Boden has a well-kept dictation and effortlessly sings the sometimes difficult twists that Monteverdi puts into his mouth. - Even when the choir lifts it up and carries it across the stage. Unfortunately, his voice is a little too small for the big room.

The enchanting unity of the direction concept is further emphasized because there is no noticeable distinction between dancers and singers. The flowing movements with many graceful jumps, outstretched arms and bent bodies go hand in hand with flawlessly sung choral passages. You hardly believe your eyes and ears, this has clearly been worked on intensively for a long time. The only downside is the conclusion of the second act, when singers and dancers throw themselves into each other's arms with a noisy roar, as if we are witnessing a therapeutic session to deal with heartbreak.

Subtle chitarrones

The coordination between stage and orchestra is exemplary. Conductor Hernán Schvartsman performs the baroque ensemble La Sfera Armoniosa with a lot of feeling through the finely hammered language of Monteverdi. Passages with subtle strumming of chitarrones (long-neck closing) and warm-blooded organ sounds are interspersed with lively sinfonias. In this, strings and wind instruments take the lead and a pleasantly full orchestral sound is created, which blends in with brilliant choral parts.

The snarling 'regale', sounding like a hurdy-gurdy, is particularly attractive, which accompanies the inexorable Caronte when he denies Orfeo the crossing to Hades. With his sonorous bass, Alex Rosen is the ideal ferryman of the underworld and also convinces as a spirit. The soprano Kristen Witmer is also beautiful, with her pure, clear voice playing the roles of Euridice, Hoop and Echo. The bass baritone Yannis François is a somewhat modest Pluto, but impresses as a shepherd and spirit.

In short, this wonderful performance deserves to go on tour internationally. Is going to see that, is going to hear!