

2025/26 SEASON LIVE AT THE ROYAL THEATRE

GLUCK'S

# Orpheus & Eurydice

APRIL 22-28

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# Welcome to the Opera

Gluck's *Orpheus & Eurydice* (*Orphée et Eurydice*) is a deeply poetic yet powerful work of the "Reform Opera" movement, which sought to strip away the long, ornamented arias of the Baroque era in favour of a simpler melodic style, and to replace dry secco recitatives with full orchestral accompaniment to focus on dramatic storytelling. Gluck's emphasis on the dramatic integrity of the text also made his palette of orchestral colours extremely wide—ranging from the serene, graceful music of the Dance of the Blessed Spirits (*Danse des Ombres Heureuses*) to the powerful sounds of the Underworld in the Dance of the Furies (*Danse des Furies*). I am looking forward to bringing these colours to life with the musicians and carefully pacing the score so that the story unfolds as a truly integrated drama.

## NICOLE PAIEMENT, CONDUCTOR

While preparing for *Orpheus & Eurydice*, I came across a beautiful piece of prose by the late poet Andrea Gibson titled "Love Letter from the Afterlife." The narrator writes from beyond death and describes being reincarnated in those they love while they are still alive—in their loved ones' memories, in their grief, in their healing. That idea stuck with me as I sat with Gluck's opera, which centres around a person questing to bring their love back from the dead. What if the dead never really leave us? To me, the beauty of Gluck's piece isn't in the miracle of resurrection, but in fighting for love, and showing how grief reveals the depth of that love. It feels untrue that the only happy ending is one where no one dies. We are mortal; loss is inevitable. And yet, love persists—reshaping, echoing, and enduring beyond the limits of a single life.

## AMANDA TESTINI, STAGE DIRECTOR

Ballet Victoria's ballerinas are essential "Psychopomps" in this production, as they guide all souls to the next life by representing the Furies. The dancers support the narrative by bringing a certain ethereal quality to the piece. You might recognize homages to ballet through the "White Scene" from *Giselle* (the Wilis), or inspirations from *La Bayadere* (Kingdom of the Shades) with some movement quality and costume design. However, it has a contemporary flair and a neo-classical quality. The dancers are presences that support the themes of the opera and are visual allegories of Eurydice and Orpheus's thoughts and emotions.

I look forward to you seeing the choreography that we set to the music of the Furies. It is a very dynamic section of the score, especially compared to the traditional Baroque music of the rest of the work.

## PAUL DESTROOPER, BALLET VICTORIA ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



Scan to read  
Andrea Gibson's  
poem "Love Letter  
from the Afterlife."

# Orpheus & Eurydice

**Music by** Christoph Willibald Gluck

**Libretto by** Ranieri de' Calzabigi (adapted in 1774 by Pierre-Louis Moline), based on the myth of Orpheus

First Performance on October 5, 1762 at Burgtheater, Vienna

**Dates** April 22, 24, 28 at 7:30 pm

April 26 at 2:30 pm | The Royal Theatre

**Sung in** French with English surtitles

*This performance is approximately 2 hours (including one 20-minute intermission)*

## CAST

Orpheus ..... Christian Sanders  
Eurydice ..... Andriana Chuchman  
Amore ..... Suzanne Rigden

## ENSEMBLES

Dancers from Ballet Victoria  
Pacific Opera Chorus & Supernumeraries  
Victoria Symphony

## CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor ..... Nicole Paiement  
Stage Director ..... Amanda Testini  
Set Designer ..... James Rotondo  
Costume Designer ..... Sylvain Genois  
Lighting Designer ..... Chris Malkowski  
Chorus Director ..... Giuseppe Pietraroia  
Principal Coach ..... Kimberley-Ann Bartczak  
Ballet Victoria Artistic Director ... Paul Destrooper  
Stage Manager ..... Kelly Luft  
Assistant Stage Manager ..... Kelsey Cain  
Assistant Stage Manager ..... Katerina Sokyrko  
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*Cast and programme are subject to change*

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**House Programme Design** Trapeze Communications | **Synopsis** Amanda Testini

**Production & Editor** Rhonda Ganz



# Synopsis

## **PROLOGUE**

We find Orpheus and Eurydice in a hospital room. Eurydice's illness has taken a turn for the worse. Surrounded by loved ones, she is cared for by Amore, her doctor, while Orpheus remains steadfastly at her side. As her pain intensifies, Amore encourages her to accept medication that will ease her suffering. Eurydice resists, longing to remain fully present for the final moments of her life—but the pain becomes unbearable. Amore administers a morphine drip, and Eurydice begins a journey into her subconscious.

## **ACT ONE**

Eurydice witnesses her own funeral. Orpheus, consumed by grief, can do little but call out her name. As she observes his anguish, a group of Psychopomps—spirits who guide souls to the afterlife—appear and beckon her to follow. Unwilling to leave, she remains close to Orpheus as he descends further into despair.

Amore appears and reveals that the gods have taken pity on him. Orpheus is granted permission to journey into the Underworld and bring Eurydice back to the world of the living, with one, strict prescription: he must not look at her, nor explain his silence, as he leads her back. Resolute, Orpheus accepts and sets out. Eurydice, unseen, follows and silently urges him onward, longing to return to life.

## **ACT TWO**

As Eurydice descends deeper into her subconscious, the world begins to fracture. The Psychopomps return, once again inviting her to cross over, but she refuses, choosing instead to remain with Orpheus.

In the Underworld, Orpheus confronts the Furies, who warn of the consequences awaiting any mortal who dares enter. Moved by the beauty and sincerity of his song, they are softened and grant him passage.

## *Intermission*

After defeating the Furies, Orpheus enters the Elysian Fields, where Eurydice appears renewed—free from illness and suffering. Taking her hand, Orpheus begins the journey back toward the living world.



*Scan for extended  
notes and more  
Orpheus &  
Eurydice  
content online.*

### **ACT THREE**

As they ascend, Eurydice grows increasingly confused and distressed by Orpheus's behaviour. He refuses to look at her, to touch her, or to answer her questions. Convinced that she is no longer loved, she falls into despair and questions the value of life itself.

Unable to endure her suffering, Orpheus breaks the gods' command and turns to face her. While this is happening, the morphine fades—the world reassembles, and we return to the hospital room.

In a final moment of clarity, Orpheus and Eurydice share a tender goodbye. Eurydice dies peacefully. Orpheus is left to grieve. As the Psychopomps return, we see Eurydice gently guided to the other side—where she comes to understand that dying is not leaving.

AMANDA TESTINI, STAGE DIRECTOR



# Artist Profiles



## **CHRISTIAN SANDERS | Orpheus**

Christian Sanders returns to Pacific Opera Victoria after appearing as the Snake/Vain Man in *The Little Prince*. Recent engagements include Stuart Ullman/Delbert Grady in *The Shining* and Tobias Ragg in *Sweeney Todd* with Utah Opera, Little Bat in *Susannah* with Opera Omaha, Philip Hirschkop in *Loving vs. Virginia* with Virginia Opera, Flute in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Opera Theatre of St. Louis, and Sellem in *The Rake's Progress* at Des Moines Metro Opera.



## **ANDRIANA CHUCHMAN | Eurydice**

Acclaimed Ukrainian-Canadian soprano Andriana Chuchman makes her Pacific Opera Victoria début as Eurydice, returning to the role after celebrated performances at Lyric Opera of Chicago and Hamburg State Opera. Recent highlights include Gilda in *Rigoletto* (Canadian Opera Company), Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* (Houston Grand Opera), and Violetta in *La traviata* (Opera San Diego). Next season, she debuts with Calgary Opera in the title role of Massenet's *Cinderella* and returns to Vancouver Opera for *La traviata*.



## **SUZANNE RIGDEN | Amore**

Suzanne Rigden returns to Pacific Opera Victoria as Amore in *Orpheus & Eurydice*, following her appearance as Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro*. She also covered Die Nachtigall in *The Birds* and performed in the "Friends of Timothy" concert. Recent engagements include Léa in *L'hiver attend beaucoup de moi* in Berlin by Canadian composer Laurence Jobidon, Despina in *Così fan tutte*, and Violetta in *La traviata*. Suzanne is also a co-founder of the new company OperAtlantic.

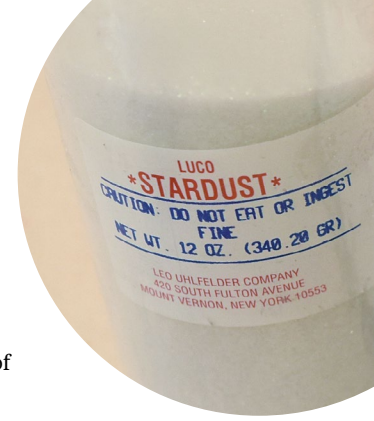
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# Creative Team



## **CHRISTOPH WILLIBALD GLUCK | Composer**

Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714–1787) was a German composer who reshaped opera in the 18th century by placing drama and emotional truth at the centre of the music. His landmark opera *Orpheus & Eurydice* (1762) became the defining work of his reform movement, stripping away excessive ornamentation to create a clear, powerful union of music, text, and storytelling. With its luminous melodies and expressive simplicity, the opera remains one of Gluck’s most beloved and enduring masterpieces.



## **RANIERI DE' CALZABIGI | Librettist**

Ranieri de' Calzabigi (1714–1795) was an Italian poet and librettist best known for his collaboration with composer Christoph Willibald Gluck. Together they helped reform 18th-century opera by simplifying plots and focusing on emotional truth and dramatic clarity. Calzabigi wrote the libretto for *Orpheus & Eurydice* (1762), shaping the ancient Greek myth into a direct and moving drama. His work helped redefine opera by placing storytelling, character, and expressive music at the heart of the art form.



## **PIERRE-LOUIS MOLINE | Librettist**

Pierre-Louis Moline (1740–1820) was a French playwright and librettist who adapted Christoph Willibald Gluck and Ranieri de' Calzabigi's *Orpheus & Eurydice* for its Paris première in 1774. Writing in French and expanding the drama to suit Parisian tastes, Moline helped shape *Orpheus & Eurydice* into the version most often performed today. His adaptation enriched the opera's theatrical scope, blending Gluck's expressive music with the elegance of French operatic tradition and dance.



## **NICOLE PAIEMENT | Conductor**

Making her début at Pacific Opera Victoria, Nicole Paiement is an internationally acclaimed conductor and the Founder and Artistic Director of Opera Parallèle. Some of her highlights include Tod Machover's *Death and the Powers* with The Dallas Opera, Jake Heggie's *It's a Wonderful Life* with English National Opera, Joby Talbot's *Everest* with the BBC Symphony, John Adams' *The Gospel According to the Other Mary* with Volksoper Vienna, and Leoš Janáček's *Jenůfa* with L'Opéra de Montréal.



**AMANDA TESTINI | Stage Director**

Amanda Testini (she/her) is an Italian-Canadian director and choreographer based on the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations. She's delighted to be returning to Pacific Opera Victoria after choreographing and assistant directing *Clemenza di Tito* in the 2024/25 season. Amanda has worked with companies such as Detroit Opera, Vancouver Opera, the Glimmerglass Festival, and Edmonton Opera. She is a graduate of Studio 58 and a Jessie Award nominee.



**JAMES ROTONDO | Set Designer**

James Rotondo (he/him) is excited to return to Pacific Opera Victoria after designing the sets for *The Little Prince* and *Rigoletto*. Based in Boston, James has designed sets for opera and theatre from coast to coast across North America. Recent productions include *Pagliacci* (Glimmerglass Festival), *Songbird* (Washington National Opera), and *L'elisir d'amore* (Manhattan School of Music). Upcoming productions include *Così* and *Robin Hood* (Glimmerglass Festival).

[www.jamesrotondo.design](http://www.jamesrotondo.design)



**SYLVAIN GENOIS | Costume Designer**

Sylvain Genois made his opera début designing costumes for *Carmen* at Pacific Opera Victoria in 2022 and returns for *Orpheus & Eurydice*. A prominent figure in Quebec's cultural scene, he has designed for musicals including *Chicago*, *Waitress*, and *Pub Royal*. Recent projects include *Bernadette the Musical*, with upcoming productions of *Cyrano de Bergerac* and *Les Misérables*. For *Orpheus & Eurydice*, he brings a sensitive vision that honours its emotional depth and timeless beauty.



**CHRIS MALKOWSKI | Lighting Designer**

Chris Malkowski makes his Pacific Opera Victoria début as lighting designer for *Orpheus & Eurydice*. A Toronto-based designer, he has created lighting for more than 100 productions across opera, theatre, dance, and live performance. His work has appeared at the Stratford Festival, Shaw Festival, Vancouver Opera, Soulpepper Theatre, and Canadian Stage, as well as at international festivals across Europe and North Africa. Recent credits include *Maanomaa*, *My Brother* (Belfry Theatre) and *HMS Pinafore* (Vancouver Opera).



**GIUSEPPE PIETRAROIA | Chorus Director**

Canadian conductor Giuseppe Pietraroia has earned a national reputation for his versatility, musicality, and leadership across both orchestral and operatic stages. Based in British Columbia, he is the Principal Conductor of Pacific Opera Victoria, where he has held leadership roles since 2003. He previously served as Associate Conductor with both Pacific Opera and the Victoria Symphony, and was Music Director of the Victoria Choral Society from 2005 to 2012.



**KIMBERLEY-ANN BARTCZAK | Principal Coach**

A native of Montreal, Kimberley-Ann Bartczak is a conductor, pianist, and vocal coach. Currently Principal Coach and Music Administrator of Pacific Opera Victoria, conductor at the Victoria Children's Choir, musician with the Victoria Symphony, and music staff at The Glimmerglass Festival. A very active performer, she has performed and conducted across Canada, United States, Mexico and Europe. Always with a smile, she has a passion for sharing music with the younger generation.



**PAUL DESTROOPER | Ballet Victoria Artistic Director**

Paul Destrooper, recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal and the Paul Harris Fellowship, is delighted to collaborate again with Pacific Opera Victoria after choreographing *Capriccio* in 2010. Montreal-born, he has served as Artistic and Executive Director of Ballet Victoria since 2007, building the company into an internationally touring Canadian cultural asset. Over a four-decade career, he has danced, choreographed, taught, and coached worldwide, creating 13 full-length ballets and more than 50 works, including choreography featured in Hallmark's Movie of the Week.



**KELLY LUFT | Stage Manager**

Previous Pacific Opera Victoria appearance: *Countess Maritza* (2019). Kelly is thrilled to be back in Victoria. She has been stage managing across Canada and the US for many years. Favourites include seasons with Opera Hamilton, Opera Ontario, Opera Lyra Ottawa, Hawaii Opera Theatre, Grand Theatre, Stratford Festival, Canadian Opera Company, Opera Atelier, Edmonton Opera, Citadel Theatre, and Arts Club. Much love to her boys Jesse and Maclean!



*Read extended bios and meet our artists online.*





**KELSEY CAIN | Assistant Stage Manager**

Kelsey is thrilled to be back at Pacific Opera Victoria as Assistant Stage Manager for *Orpheus & Eurydice*. A Victoria local, she is a graduate of the University of Victoria with a BFA in Theatre with a focus in Production and Management. Select credits include: *Odyssey* (SM), *Tosca*, *The Turn of the Screw*, *La clemenza di Tito*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Die Walküre* (ASM). All respect to the opera (and ballet) people out there.



**KATERINA SOKYRKO | Assistant Stage Manager**

Katerina is thrilled to be returning to Pacific Opera Victoria where she has worked on 16 productions, most recently *Tosca*, *The Turn of the Screw*, *Rigoletto*, and *The Little Prince*. Elsewhere, recent shows include *A Wonderheads Christmas Carol* (Wonderheads); *1979* (Belfry Theatre); *Million Dollar Quartet*, *Jersey Boys*, *Anne of Green Gables* (Charlottetown Festival); *Hurry Hard* (Chemainus Theatre Festival); *Hamlet-911* (Stratford Festival); and five seasons at the Blyth Festival.

## Ballet Victoria Dancers

Paul Destrooper **Ballet Victoria Artistic Director**

Kaylie Conner

Eibhlin Minatsis

Itsuki Oyabu

Elena Fuerbringer

Anna Ohi

Yui Watanabe



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Samantha Fullerton  
Chelsea Kutyn  
Nadia Lurie  
Cheryl Pocklington

## **Alto**

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Heather Byford  
Rebekah Janzen  
Carol Pudwell  
Talietha Sangha

## **Tenor**

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Graeme Linton  
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## **Baritone/Bass**

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Pacific Opera Chorus and Supernumeraries

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David Michaux

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Riccardo Nazario del Castello

## **Bass Trombone**

Robert Fraser

## **Timpani**

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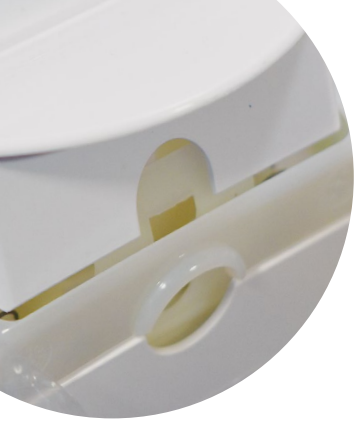
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Pacific Opera Victoria works and creates on the traditional lands of the ɫəkwəŋən speaking people, now known as the Songhees and Xwsepsum Nations.