

Pacific Opera Victoria Presents *Orpheus & Eurydice*

Victoria, BC – Opening on April 22 at Victoria’s Royal Theatre, Pacific Opera Victoria, in partnership with Ballet Victoria, presents Christoph Willibald Gluck’s *Orpheus & Eurydice*, a timeless retelling of one of mythology’s most haunting romances for four performances April 22, 24, and 28, at 7:30 pm, and April 26 at 2:30 pm. Based on the famous Greek myth of the musician Orpheus who conquers the spirits of hell using the power of music to bring his love back from the underworld, this production will take Victoria opera lovers into the world of French baroque music and dance.

With music that is both ethereal and emotionally charged, *Orpheus & Eurydice* reimagines the ancient tale of Orpheus, the gifted musician whose songs could move the heavens, as he dares to defy death itself for the woman he loves. This modern reimagining of the story takes us into the dying mind of Eurydice as she grapples with death. When Eurydice is torn from life, Orpheus is granted a single chance to retrieve her, on one heartbreaking condition: he must not look back. Gluck’s revolutionary score strips opera to its emotional core, trading excess for elegance and clarity. From the aching simplicity of “*J’ai Peru mon Euridice*” to the transcendent “Dance of the Blessed Spirits,” the music pulses with purity and pathos, creating a world where grief and beauty combine through music to pave the way to peace.

“This story of love, loss, death and hope. It is a Greek myth, written for the baroque court, with a new updated conceptual production,” says Artistic Director Brenna Corner. “It is the combination of so many of elements of both story and human journey coming together and highlighting the universal human condition.”

The two act, two-hour production is directed by Italian-Canadian director and choreographer, Amanda Testini, in her Pacific Opera directorial debut, and conducted by the internationally acclaimed conductor, Nicole Paiement. The production features tenor Christian Sanders as Orpheus, soprano Andriana Chuchman as Eurydice and, soprano Suzanna Rigden as Amore, with dancers from Ballet Victoria.

“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 favor of a simpler melodic style, and to replace dry secco recitatives with full orchestral accompaniment to focus on dramatic storytelling,” says Paiement. “Gluck’s emphasis on the dramatic integrity of the text also made his palette of orchestral colors 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 colors to life with the musicians and carefully pacing the score so that the story unfolds as a truly integrated drama.”

Christian Sanders has been hailed as a “...voice whose color belies his age. Someone to watch!” (Bill Eadie, SanDiego.com). His operatic repertoire encompasses Tom Rakewell in *The Rake’s Progress*, the title character in *Albert Herring*, Fenton in *Falstaff*, Laurie in *Little Women*, Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte*, Rinuccio in *Gianni Schicchi*, and Prince Charmant in *Cendrillon*, as well as a broad range of modern opera and work by living composers. Pacific Opera audiences will remember him as Vain Man/Snake in *The Little Prince* during the 2024/25 season.

Acclaimed Ukrainian-Canadian soprano Andriana Chuchman makes her Pacific Opera debut as Eurydice, returning to the role after celebrated performances at Lyric Opera of Chicago and Hamburg State Opera. Highlights of recent seasons include Gilda in *Rigoletto* (Canadian Opera Company), Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* (Houston Grand Opera), Violetta in *La traviata* (Opera San Diego), Adina in *Elixir of Love* (Manitoba Opera), and Tina in *Flight* (Vancouver Opera). Next season, she looks forward to making her debut at Calgary Opera in the titular role of *Cendrillon* and a return to Vancouver Opera for *La traviata*.

Pacific Opera favourite, Canadian soprano Suzanne Rigden, in the role of Amore, returns to Pacific Opera; remembered for her role as Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro* in 2024, her performance at the “Friends of Timothy” concert with the Victoria Symphony, and

in the role of Lisa in *Countess Maritza*, in 2019. Victoria's Times Colonist wrote of her performance in *Countess Maritza*, "Suzanne Rigden, as Lisa, has a light, clear, sweet tone, beautifully appropriate to the genre."

Set designer James Rotondo returns to Pacific Opera after designing 2025's *The Little Prince* and *Rigoletto*. Also returning is Montreal-based Sylvain Genois as costume designer. Toronto-based Chris Malkowski is lighting designer for the production.

Tickets for single performances to the Royal Theatre shows start at \$35. To keep Pacific Opera accessible, Community Preview tickets are available to students and community organizations for \$15. For more information about the 2025/26 season including tickets, visit: pacificopera.ca.

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