

The Metropolitan Opera

January 2009



Angela Gheorghiu
as Magda in
Puccini's *La Rondine*

Angela Gheorghiu
Stars in *La Rondine*

Creating the 125th
Anniversary Gala

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The Return of
Anna Netrebko

PLAYBILL

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Who's Who in *Orfeo*



Mark Morris's hit production of Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, which premiered in 2007, returns to the Met this month, once again conducted by Music Director James Levine, at left. With only three individual characters to tell the story, played by Stephanie Blythe, Danielle de Niese, and Heidi Grant Murphy,

the chorus is assigned a major role in Gluck's score—and on the Met stage. Fashion designer Isaac Mizrahi's costumes transform every one of the nearly 100 chorus members into a historic personality—from Moses to Maria Callas to Jimi Hendrix. Standing on a three-level tier facing the audience, they serve as a mirror to Orfeo's story. "Surrounded both visually and musically by the chorus," Met Chorus Master Donald Palumbo explains, "Orfeo's struggle becomes more clearly focused. And with the individual costumes, representing figures from all centuries and professions, the chorus illustrates the universality and timeless allure of the Orfeo myth."



Here's a close-up of some of the characters (left to right): Moses, Queen Elizabeth I, Mahatma Gandhi, and Henry VIII. To view a full identification key, visit metopera.org.

Orfeo ed Euridice opens January 9.

Orchestra

James Levine
Music Director

Robert Sirinek
Orchestra Manager
Desirée Elsevier
Scott Stevens
Assistant Orchestra Managers

VIOLINS

Nick Eanet
Concertmaster
David Chan
Concertmaster
Laura Hamilton
Principal Associate
Concertmaster
Nancy Wu
Associate Concertmaster
Bruno Eicher
Assistant Concertmaster
Wen Qian
Amy Kauffman
Ming-Feng Hsin
Ivey Bernhardt
Sandor Balint
Samuel Cohen
Kathryn Caswell
Caterina Szepes
Yurika Mok
Catherine Sim
Yoon K. Kwon
Daniel Khalikov*
Yang Xu*

Shirien Taylor-Donahue
Principal
Sylvia Danburg Volpe
Associate Principal
Karen Marx
Assistant Principal
Catherine Ro
Katherine T. Fong
Elena Barere
Laura McGinnis
Ann Lehmann
Toni Glickman
Sarah Crocker*
Jehae Lee*
Raphael Feinstein

VIOLAS

Michael Ouzounian
Principal
Craig Mumm
Associate Principal
Milan Milisavljević
Assistant Principal
Marilyn Stroh
Desirée Elsevier
Vincent Lioni
Ira Weller
Mary Hammann
Katherine Anderson
Garrett Fischbach

CELLOS

Jerry Grossman
Principal
Rafael Figueroa
Principal

Dorothea Noack
Associate Principal
Jeremy Turner
Assistant Principal
Marian Heller
Kari Jane Docter
Joel Noyes
James Greger
Sam Magill

DOUBLE BASSES

Timothy Cobb
Principal
Leigh Mesh
Associate Principal
Jeremy McCoy
Assistant Principal
Marvin Topolsky
Louis Kosma
Kingsley J. Wood
Daniel Krekeler

FLUTES

Stefán Ragnar Höskuldsson
Acting Principal
*The Lila Acheson Wallace
Chair*
Stephanie C. Mortimore
Acting Principal
*The Beth W. and
Gary A. Glynn Chair,
in honor of Michael Parloff*

PICCOLO

Stephanie C. Mortimore

OBOES

Elaine Douvas
Principal
Nathan Hughes
Principal
Susan Spector
Pedro R. Diaz

ENGLISH HORN

Pedro R. Diaz

CLARINETS

Stephen Williamson
Principal
Anthony McGill
Principal
Jessica Phillips
James Ognibene

BASS CLARINET

James Ognibene

BASSOONS

Patricia Rogers
Principal
Whitney Crockett
Principal
Daniel Shelly
Mark Timmerman

HORNS

Julie Landsman
Principal

Joseph Anderer
Principal
E. Scott Brubaker
Anne Marie Scharer
Michelle Baker
Javier Gándara
Barbara Jöstlein
Brad Gemeinhardt
Stewart Rose

TRUMPETS

David Krauss
Principal
*The Beth W. and
Gary A. Glynn Chair*
Billy R. Hunter, Jr.
Principal
James Ross
Raymond Riccomini
Peter Bond

TROMBONES

David Langlitz
Principal
Demian Austin
Principal
Weston Sprott
Steve Norrell
Denson Paul Pollard

BASS TROMBONES

Steve Norrell
Denson Paul Pollard

TUBA

Christopher John Hall

TIMPANI

Richard Horowitz
Principal
Duncan Patton
Principal
Scott Stevens

PERCUSSION

Gregory Zuber
Principal
Scott Stevens
Michael Werner

HARPS

Deborah Hoffman
Principal
Mariko Anraku
Associate Principal

ASSOCIATE MUSICIANS

Violins
Leszek Barnat
Browning Cramer
Shem Guibory
Lesley Heller
Ira Lieberman
Narciso Figueroa
Annamae Goldstein
Jin-Kyung Koo
Patmore Lewis
Abraham Appleman
Barry Finclair
Christoph Franzgrote

Joanna Maurer
Michael Levin
Margaret Magill

Violas
Deborah Holtz
Ronald E. Carbone
David Cerutti
Nardo Poy
Dov Scheindlin

Cellos
Judith Currier
David Heiss
Jacqueline Mullen
Stephen Ballou
Ellen Westermann

Double Basses
Jacqui Danilow
Charles Urbont

Flutes
Diva Goodfriend-Koven
Patricia Zuber

Oboe
Sharon Meekins

Clarinet
Dean LeBlanc

Bassoons
Richard Vrotney
Bernadette Zirkuli

Trumpet
Frank Hosticka

Trombones
David A. Titcomb
Larry Witmer

Tuba
Stephen M. Johns

Percussion
Charles F. Barbour
Lynn R. Bernhardt
Rafael Guzman
Benjamin Harms

Celeste/Armonica
Cecilia Brauer

Harp
Susan Jolles

Organ
Bruce Norris

Guitar/Lute
Fred Hand

Chorus & Ballet

CHORUS

Donald Palumbo
Chorus Master

Joseph Lawson
Assistant Chorus Master

Kurt Phinney
Chorus Manager

Stephen Paynter
Assistant Chorus
Manager

Elena Doria
Children's Chorus
Director
*The William D. Rollnick
Chair, in honor of Fred
Rollnick*

SOPRANOS
Jean Braham
Linore Brumley
Deborah Cole
Angela DeVerger
Karen Dixon
Suzanne Falletti
Laura Fries
Constance Green
April Haines
Ellen Lang
Seunghye Lee
Linda Mays
Marvis Martin*

Juli McSorley
Mary Meyers
Anne Nonnemacher
Belinda Oswald
Charlotte Philly
Deborah Saverance
Lynn Taylor
Sara Wiedt
Beverly Ann Withers
Elaine Young

ALTOS
Christina Thomson
Anderson*
Sandra Bush
Rebecca Carvin
Maria Donaldi
Lee Hamilton
Mary Hughes
Melissa Lentz
Rosemary Nencheck
Alexandra Newland
Joyce Olson
Jean Rawn
Annette Spann-Lewis
Patricia Steiner
Teresa Yu-Ping Teng
Gloria Watson
Carole Wright

TENORS
Glenn Alpert
Raymond Aparentado
Gregory Cross
Roger Crouthamel
David Frye

Michael Gray
Christian Jeong
Juhwan Lee
Jeremy Little*
Gregory Lorenz
David Lowe
Craig Montgomery
Jeffrey Mosher
Stephen Paynter
Marc Persing
Kurt Phinney
Irwin Reese
Salvatore Rosselli
Marty Singleton
Daniel Clark Smith
John Smith
Bernard Waters
Dennis Williams

BASSES
Roger Andrews
David Asch
Jay Bahny
Garth Dawson
Kenneth Floyd
Jason Hendrix
Sven Leaf
Robert Maher
Seth Malkin
Brandon Mayberry*
Timothy Brees Miller
Joseph Pariso
Richard Pearson
Randolph Riscoll
John Russell
Mitchell Sendrowitz

John Shelhart
Joseph Turi
Danrell Williams

EXTRA CHORISTERS

Juliana Anderson
Melissa Attebury*
Samia Bahu
Erika Buchholz*
Laurel Cameron*
Carrisa Castaldo
Aixa Cruz-Falu
Maria D'Amato*
Christina Girvin
Elizabeth Kennedy*
Jessica Kimple*
Enjoo Lee
Sang-Eun Lee*
Celeste Mann*
Kathleen Myrick*
Mary Petro
Bonny Rinas
Lauren Skuce*
Garla Spanja-Hoffert
Jane Thorngren
Abigail Wright
Sun A Yeo*
Meredith Ziegler*
Edward Albert
Jeremy Aye
Nathan Bahny
Donald Barnum
John Bernard
Nathan Carlisle*
Scott Carlton
Sungryung Cho*

Won Cho*
William Tyler Clark*
Kevin Courtemanche*
Clyde Crewey
Scott Dispensa
Robert Garner
Alexander Gounko
Thomas Hall*
Neil Harrelson
Daniel Hoy
Robert Hughes
Jin Ho Hwang
Christopher Jackson
Branden James*
James Kleya*
Kwang Kya Lee*
Neil Netherly
Gary Pate
James Price*
Douglas Purcell
Michael Reeder*
Dominic Sacco
Sam Savage
Yoonsoo Shin
Vladimir Shvets
Byron Singleton
Samuel Smith
Scott Tomlinson*
John Trybus*
Gavriel Yakubov

BALLET

Joseph Fritz
Dance Director

Andrew Robinson
Deputy Dance Director

Whit Kellogg
Staff Pianist

Liora Maurer
Steven V. Mitchell
Ballet Pianists

Linda Gelinias
Amir Levy
Dance Captains

CHOREOGRAPHERS

Maria Benitez
Serge Bennathan
Carolyn Choa
Andrew Dawson*
Carmen De Lavallade
Mark Dendy
Alain S. Gauthier*
Sergei Gritasi
Leah Hausman*
Blanca Li
Johanna Madore*
John Meehan
Mark Morris
Daniel Pelzig
Daniela Schiavone
Sara Jo Slate*

Doug Varone
Christopher Wheeldon

DANCERS

Christine Freeman*
Linda Gelinias
Rebecca Hermos
Annemarie Lucania
Christine McMillan
Rachel Schuette
Michelle Vargo
Sarah Weber-Gallo
Griff Braun
Mark DeChiazza
Roger Jeffrey
Amir Levy
Sam Meredith
Eric Otto
Ilija Pankratov
Davis Robertson

EXTRA DANCERS

Emily SoReille Adams
Mona Liza Afable
Natalia Alonzo-Brillante
Sara Antkowiak-Maier*
Jenny Lynn Bascos
Gina Bashour*
Nya Bowman*
Nora Brown*
Hsin-Ping Chang
Cara Chapman*
Selena Chau
Holly Curran*
Katie Diamond*
Elyssa Dole

Sharon Du Maine
Sara Erde
Julie Fiorenza*
Jonette Ford
Lesley Garrison*
Chelsea Glassman*
Alexandra Gonzalez
Zahra Hashemian*
Joy Havens*
Nikki Hefko*
Jamy Hsu
I-Fang Huang
Evelyn Hubbell*
Vanessa Hylande
Oriada Islami
Roche Janken*
Michelle Joy*
Jacquelyn Kilgore*
Kumi Kimura-Moretton
Anna Kirker
Sol Koeraus*
Megan Krauser
Anna Laghezza
Heather Lang*
Rosalynde LeBlanc
Emery Lecrone*
Ya-Ju Lin
Claudia MacPherson*
Johari Mayfield*
Sira Melikian*
Marie Michael*
Amanda Miller*
Mei-Yin Ng
Karen Niceley*
Janice Niggeling*
Mayumi Omagari

Kristin Leigh Osler*
Wendy Reinert*
Anne-Sophie Rodriguez*
Melissa Sadler
Alexandra Sawyier
Caitlin Scranton*
Jennifer Marie Sydor
Jennifer Tortorello*
Amelia Uzategui-Bonilla*
Cassandra Vincent
Yana Volkova
Matthew Acheson*
Aliaksandr Anatska
Chad Austin*
Ken Berkeley*
Charlton Boyd*
Alexander Brady
Winston Brown*
Stephen Choiniere*
David Cho
Durell Comedy*
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Ryan Corriston
Robert Colby Damon*
Kfir Danieli
Seth Davis
Gregory DeSilva
Eric Dunlap
Ruben Flores*
James Graber
Tony Guerrero*
Hasi*
Frank Johnson
Adam Klatz
Audun Vrom*
Kyle Lang

Jonathan Luby*
Travis Magee
Karl Maier
Marcelo Medici
Mark Mindek
Loic Noisette*
Benjamin Oyzon*
Manuel Palazzo*
Justin Peck
Joseph Putignano*
Andrew Robinson
Kanji Segawa
Aleksandr Semin*
Justin Sherwood*
Edwin Silfa
Matthew Steffens*
Ian Thatcher
Samuel Turner*
Dario Vaccaro
Oscar Valero
Adam Weinert*
Phillip Willingham*
Eric Wright

STAFF PERFORMERS

Brian J. Baldwin
Frank Colardo
Fiorenzo Cora
Anne Dyas
Mike Gomborone
Scott Graham
Richard Guido
Ed Harrison

* new artist

Christoph Willibald Gluck

Orfeo ed Euridice

CONDUCTOR
James Levine

PRODUCTION
Mark Morris

SET DESIGNER
Allen Moyer

COSTUME DESIGNER
Isaac Mizrahi

LIGHTING DESIGNER
James F. Ingalls

CHOREOGRAPHER
Mark Morris

GENERAL MANAGER
Peter Gelb

MUSIC DIRECTOR
James Levine

Opera in three acts

Libretto by Ranieri de'Calzabigi

Friday, January 9, 2009, 8:00–9:35pm

First time this season

The production of *Orfeo ed Euridice* is made possible by a generous gift from
Mr. and Mrs. Wilmer J. Thomas, Jr.

The revival of this production was made possible by a gift from the Charles and Mildred Schnurmacher Foundation, Inc.

The Metropolitan Opera
2008–09 Season

The 87th Metropolitan Opera performance of

Christoph Willibald Gluck's

Orfeo ed Euridice

Conductor
James Levine

IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Orfeo
Stephanie Blythe *

Amor
Heidi Grant Murphy *

Euridice
Danielle de Niese *

HARPSICHORD
Joshua Greene

This performance
is being broadcast
live on Metropolitan
Opera Radio on
SIRIUS channel 78
and XM channel 79,
and streamed at
metopera.org.

Orfeo ed Euridice is performed without intermission.

Friday, January 9, 2009, 8:00–9:35pm

This performance is dedicated to Mr. and Mrs. Wilmer J. Thomas, Jr.
in grateful recognition of their generosity to the Metropolitan Opera
as members of the Council for Artistic Excellence.



A scene from
Gluck's *Orfeo ed
Euridice*.

Chorus Master **Donald Palumbo**
Musical Preparation **Dennis Giauque, Bradley Moore,
Joshua Greene, Kazem Abdullah, and Leonardo Vordoni**
Assistant Stage Directors **Eric Einhorn, David Kneuss, and
Gina Lapinski**

Stage Band Conductor **Gregory Buchalter**
Met Titles **Francis Rizzo**

Assistants to Mark Morris **Matthew Rose and Joe Bowie**
Associate Costume Designer **Courtney Logan**

Scenery, properties, and electrical props constructed and
painted in **Metropolitan Opera Shops**

Costumes executed by **Metropolitan Opera Costume
Department**

Wigs executed by **Metropolitan Opera Wig Department**

Performed in the Vienna version, 1762, edited by
Ann Amalie Albert and Ludwig Finscher, by arrangement
with Bärenreiter, publisher and copyright owner.

This performance is made possible in part by public funds
from the New York State Council on the Arts.

Additional funding for this production was received from
the National Endowment for the Arts.

Before the performance begins, please switch off cell
phones and other electronic devices.

Yamaha is the official piano
of the Metropolitan Opera.

Latecomers will not be
admitted during the
performance.

* Graduate of the
Lindemann Young Artist
Development Program

Met Titles

Met Titles are available for this performance in English, German, and Spanish. To activate, press the red button to the right of the screen in front of your seat and follow the instructions provided. To turn off the display, press the red button once again. If you have questions please ask an usher.

Visit metopera.org

On Stage at the Met

Puccini

LA RONDINE

The sensational Angela Gheorghiu stars in this ravishing romance from the world's most popular opera composer. Tenor Roberto Alagna plays the man who steals her heart.

JAN 3, 7, 10 mat, 13 FEB 11, 14 eve, 19, 23, 26

Gluck

ORFEO ED EURIDICE

Mark Morris's acclaimed production returns! James Levine conducts Gluck's opera of undying love. Starring Stephanie Blythe as Orfeo and Danielle de Niese as Euridice. With costumes by Isaac Mizrahi.

JAN 14, 17 mat, 20, 24 mat, 28, 31

Verdi

RIGOLETTO

Željko Lučić tackles a pinnacle of the Italian baritone repertory in his first Met Rigoletto. The electrifying Diana Damrau sings the role of Gilda, Rigoletto's daughter. Giuseppe Filianoti, Joseph Calleja, and Piotr Beczala alternate as the lustful Duke, famous for timeless arias like "La donna è mobile."

JAN 24, 27, 31 mat FEB 4, 7 eve, 12
APR 1, 4, 9, 14, 17

Tchaikovsky

EUGENE ONEGIN

Karita Mattila calls on her extraordinary acting powers to portray Tatiana, who develops from young girl to experienced woman over the course of this lush romantic masterpiece. The challenges of the title role will be met by Thomas Hampson as the nobleman whose aristocratic façade is pierced by love too late.

JAN 30 FEB 2, 5, 9, 14 mat, 18, 21 eve

Visit metopera.org for full casting information and ticket availability.

Synopsis

Act I

SCENE 1 A lonely grove—Euridice's grave

Nymphs and shepherds lament the death of Euridice, who was bitten by a snake ("Ah, se intorno a quest' urna funesta"). Left alone, Orfeo, Euridice's husband, adds his voice to the rites ("Chiamo il mio ben così"). Only Echo replies. Orfeo vows to rescue Euridice from the underworld ("Numi! barbari numi").

SCENE 2

Amor, god of love, appears with word that Jove, pitying Orfeo, will allow him to descend into the land of the dead to retrieve Euridice. To make this trial more difficult, Orfeo must neither look at Euridice, nor explain why looking is forbidden. Otherwise he will lose her forever ("Gli sguardi trattieni"). Orfeo agrees and begins his voyage.

Act II

SCENE 1 The Gate of Hades

Furies and ghosts try to deny Orfeo's passage to the underworld ("Chi mai dell'Erebo"). His lament softens and placates them. He is eventually allowed to pass through to the Elysian Fields.

SCENE 2 Elysium

Orfeo is moved by the beauty of the landscape ("Che puro ciel, che chiaro sol"). Heroes and heroines bring Euridice to him ("Torna, o bella, al tuo consorte"). Without looking at her, he takes her away.

Act III

SCENE 1 A dark labyrinth

Orfeo leads Euridice toward the upper world, forbidden to look at her ("Vieni, segui i miei passi"). Orfeo can't explain ("Vieni, appaga il tuo consorte!"). Euridice panics at the thought of a life without the love of Orfeo ("Che fiero momento"). In desperation he turns to her. She dies, again. Grief-stricken, Orfeo wonders how he can live without her ("Che farò senza Euridice?"). He decides to kill himself.

SCENE 2

Amor reappears and stays Orfeo's hand. In response to Orfeo's deep love and devotion, Amor revives Euridice, again. The three return to Earth.

SCENE 3 The Temple of Love

Orfeo, Euridice, Amor, the nymphs, and the shepherds all celebrate the power of love with song and dance ("Trionfi Amore!").

Christoph Willibald Gluck

Orfeo ed Euridice

Premiere: Court Theatre (Burgtheater), Vienna, 1762

The myth of the musician Orpheus—who travels to the underworld to retrieve his dead wife, Eurydice—probes the deepest questions of desire, grief, and the power (and limits) of art. The story is the subject of opera's oldest surviving score (Jacopo Peri's *Euridice*, 1600) and of the oldest opera still being performed (Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, 1607). Gluck and his librettist, Calzabigi, turned to this legend as the basis for a work as they were developing their ideas for a new kind of opera. Disillusioned with the inflexible forms of the genre as they existed at the time, Gluck sought to reform the operatic stage with a visionary and seamless union of music, poetry, and dance. Specifically, he wanted the singers to serve the drama, and not the reverse. The recent popularity of Handel's operas has shown that many operas written prior to Gluck's reforms have a power that still resonates. But there is no denying that *Orfeo ed Euridice*, with its score of transcendent and irresistible beauty, helped expand the public's idea of opera's theatrical potential. Mozart and Wagner were among the successors to Gluck who openly acknowledged their debt to his vision.

The Creators

Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714–1787) was born in Bavaria and studied music in Milan. He joined an orchestra and learned about the art of opera production in that city, where his first operas were produced. Gluck traveled extensively throughout Europe, attracting students and disciples to his philosophy of an all-encompassing operatic-theatrical experience. After notable successes in London, Prague, Dresden, and especially Paris, Gluck had his greatest achievements in Vienna, where he died in 1787. His librettist for *Orfeo ed Euridice* was the remarkable Italian poet Ranieri de'Calzabigi (1714–1795). Thanks to many years spent in Paris, he had been influenced by French drama and shared Gluck's zeal for an ideal musical theater. Calzabigi's preface to the libretto of their subsequent collaboration, *Alceste*, spelled out the pair's ideas for operatic reform.

The Setting

The opera is set in an idealized Greek countryside and in the mythological underworld. These settings are more conceptual than geographic, and notions of how they should appear can (and rightly do) change in every era.

The Music

Gluck consciously avoided the sheer vocal fireworks that he felt had compromised the drama of opera during the era of the castrati—male singers who had been surgically altered before puberty to preserve their high voices. Castrati dominated opera to such an extent that composers, Gluck felt, were compelled to compromise their own talents in order to display these singers' technical brilliance. He did not originally dispense with castrati, but the castrato role of Orfeo was given an opportunity to impress through musical and dramatic refinement (a "noble simplicity," in Calzabigi's words), rather than vocal pyrotechnics. This is immediately apparent in his two most notable solos, "Che puro ciel" and "Che farò senza Euridice?," heartrending arias without a single over-the-top moment. Even the dance music manages to be thoroughly convincing and subversively disturbing while retaining this notable simplicity.

Orfeo ed Euridice at the Met

Orfeo ed Euridice was presented early in the Met's history: on a single night on tour in Boston in 1885, sung in German, and for eight performances in the 1891–92 season. It appeared as the curtain-raiser for the Met premiere of *Pagliacci* on December 11, 1893. Arturo Toscanini was a great admirer of the opera and showcased it on its own, featuring the great American contralto Louise Homer, from 1909–1914. George Balanchine created a dance-intensive production in 1936 that was quickly replaced by another in 1938. Risë Stevens starred in a production in 1955 that also featured Hilde Güden and Roberta Peters, and Richard Bonyngé conducted a notable production in 1970 with Grace Bumbry as Orfeo; when it was revived two seasons later, Marilyn Horne sang the role. *Orfeo ed Euridice* is a masterpiece that has attracted top artists across time. In addition to Toscanini and Bonyngé, its conductors include Arthur Bodanzky, Walter Damrosch, Eric Leinsdorf, Charles Mackerras, Pierre Monteux, and Bruno Walter. The Met's current production had its premiere on May 2, 2007, with James Levine conducting, Maija Kovalevska as Euridice, Heidi Grant Murphy as Amor, and David Daniels as Orfeo—the first (and only) man to sing the role at the Met.

Program Note

"I agree with you that of all my compositions *Orphée* is the only acceptable one. I ask forgiveness of the god of taste for having deafened my audience with my other operas."

—Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714–1787),
writing to Jean François de la Harpe in 1777

History often disagrees with a composer's assessment of his own output. And it's quite possible that Gluck, who was writing to a public enemy of his work, was deliberately being at least a bit facetious in denigrating his operas such as *Alceste* and *Iphigénie en Aulide*. But what is interesting about his statement is the revelation that even someone who was firmly in an opposing artistic camp could not help but admire Gluck's opera on the myth of Orpheus.

It's probably not going too far to say that Orpheus (or Orfeo, or Orphée) was the godfather of opera itself. According to Greek and Roman writers, he was the son of one of the muses and a Thracian prince, which makes him more than mortal, but less than a god. From his muse mother he received the gift of music. When his bride, Eurydice, died of a snake bite immediately after their wedding, Orpheus dared something no man had ever done before. He descended into the underworld and played for the gods, asking for Eurydice's return.

It was inevitable that a story combining the power of love with the power of music would appeal to composers. Though historians disagree about what, exactly, was the very first opera, Claudio Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, first given in Mantua in February 1607, intertwined music and poetry in a way that brought the familiar Orpheus myth to life with a dramatic impact quite new to its audience.

But the most famous of all Orpheus operas is Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*. It was first given in the Burgtheater in Vienna on October 5, 1762. By then Gluck, who was born in Germany and had studied and worked in Italy and then London, had lived in Vienna (his wife's home) for about 10 years. The director of the court theaters, Count Durazzo, admired Gluck's work and introduced him to two men who were determined to reform their own art forms: the poet Ranieri de'Calzabigi and the ballet master Gasparo Angiolini. The year before *Orfeo*, the three men had collaborated on a dance-drama entitled *Don Juan ou Le Festin de Pierre* that had surprised the Viennese public with its serious retelling of the Don Juan story. Their Orpheus opera was no less a surprise (though Gluck lamented the inevitable—at the time—happy ending by writing, "To adapt the fable to the usage of our theaters, I was forced to alter the climax").

Italian opera of the day had certain conventions that seemed carved in stone. Most operas were set to libretti by Pietro Metastasio or at least rigidly followed his formula: no chorus, six characters (including a first and second pair of lovers), and often extremely elaborate arias.

Gluck's *Orfeo* broke all those rules. The chorus is an integral part of the opera, which has only three characters: Orfeo, Euridice, and Amor. Orfeo does not first appear with a heavily embellished aria to show off his voice, but with three simple yet heartrending repetitions of "Euridice!" sung over a moving choral lament. The story of the opera is told with a directness that was revolutionary. Events unfold almost in real time, with a cumulative impact that even today can be overwhelming, which is why the Met's production is performed without an intermission.

In addition to forsaking elaborately decorated da-capo arias in favor of simple, poignant vocal music that goes directly to the listener's heart, Gluck did away with *secco* recitative accompanied by a harpsichord. Instead, the orchestra plays throughout, which also helps to unify the opera into a true musical drama.

Orfeo is often cited as an example of Gluck's intention to reform opera. But his famous letter to Grand-Duke Leopold, in which he declared, "I sought to restrict music to its true function, namely to serve the poetry by means of the expression without interrupting the action or diminishing its interest by useless and superfluous ornament," was written in 1769, as the preface to his opera *Alceste*. That was seven years after *Orfeo*'s premiere. But there is no doubt that in *Orfeo* Gluck, the composer, had truly anticipated Gluck the philosopher-reformer. At first, the Viennese public was cool to the new opera. But the work's undeniable power won them over, and it was soon thrilling audiences throughout Germany and Scandinavia as well as in London.

Twelve years later Gluck composed a new version of *Orfeo* for the Paris Opéra, *Orphée et Eurydice*, which was a huge success. Among other changes, the title role was rewritten for a high tenor (in Vienna it was sung by the contralto castrato Guadagni). The composer Hector Berlioz used this 1774 French version as the basis for his own 1859 reworking of the opera for the great mezzo Pauline Viardot-Garcia, who wanted to sing the title role.

Many performances of *Orfeo* (or *Orphée*) are a combination of Gluck's two versions—depending on what the conductor and/or the singer portraying Orfeo feel is appropriate. The premiere of the current production in 2007 was the first time the Met had given Gluck's original 1762 *Orfeo*.

The Met first did the opera in Boston, in 1885, in German. The first time it was done at the Metropolitan Opera House was in 1891, when it ended after Orfeo's famous Act III aria, "Che farò." The opening of a new production on December 23, 1909, with Toscanini conducting Louise Homer in the title role, Johanna Gadski as Euridice, and Alma Gluck as the Happy Shade, was one of the great evenings in Met history. Toscanini omitted the overture, and Homer added "Divinités du Styx" from Gluck's *Alceste* at the end of Act I. But even so, writing over half a century later Francis Robinson, an assistant manager of the Met, said, "It must have been as perfect a production as exists in the annals of opera."

Toscanini went on to conduct *Orfeo* 24 times at the Met; Homer sang the title role 21 times. Both remain a company record. In Anne Homer's biography of her mother, *Louise Homer and the Golden Age of Opera*, she sums up the reason *Orfeo* has remained such a powerful work for almost 250 years:

One of the miracles of this opera lay in the stark range of emotions. Gluck had found a way of encompassing the heights and depths of human experience. Side by side he had arrayed the ugly and the sublime—the terrors of the underworld, the 'pure light' of ineffable bliss. With the genius of poetry and economy, he had pitted the most deadly and fearsome horrors against the radiant power of love, and then transfixed his listeners with music so inspired that they were caught up irresistibly in the eternal conflict.

—Paul Thomason

Dance in *Orfeo*

In 1761 Gluck was busy composing both comic operas and ballet music for the Viennese theaters. One of his projects that year was a ballet based on *Don Juan*, which became the composer's first collaboration with the revolutionary choreographer Gasparo Angiolini and the librettist and poet Ranieri de'Calzabigi. It was an inspired partnership. The trio wanted to overhaul artistic forms that had come to be seen as theatrically inert—in ballet it was the high



Marry Sohil/Metropolitan Opera

French dance style and in opera the often stilted conventions of Baroque opera seria. The first of their "reform operas," *Orfeo ed Euridice*, in 1762, is considered to be the starting point of an artistic movement.

For the Met's production of *Orfeo ed Euridice*, director and choreographer Mark Morris and Music Director James Levine returned to Gluck's 1762 version from Vienna, written in Italian for an alto castrato and later revised for Paris productions. Their intent was to stay true to the composer and librettist's original ideas by stripping away additions from later revisions, including The Dance of the Furies, which Morris feels breaks the flow of the

opera. The Dance of the Blessed Spirits, which was part of the original 1762 version, will be heard but without accompanying choreography.

"We're using as much of the original reading of this piece as possible," Morris says. "None of the later music from Paris is being used, so there might be some familiar scenes missing—in particular, a huge fury dance that occurs between the two sides of the underworld." He feels that scene was meant to diminish and disappear; a big dance number would ruin the end of the scene dramatically.

Twenty-two dancers appear as characters throughout the opera. Morris explains that the chorus is installed in

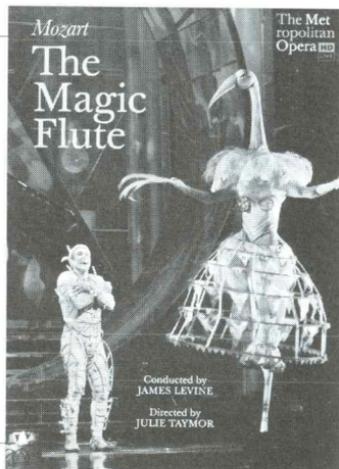


Marty Solt/Metropolitan Opera

Witnesses from history: The Metropolitan Opera Chorus in *Orfeo ed Euridice*.

the set as witnesses from history. "They're involved personally and there's a gesture language that they perform, but the real action of the chorus is done by dancers. They aren't just dancing to the dance music, of which there is plenty, but also to the choruses. I want it to be a little ambiguous, a little bit confusing who's doing what, so that the union of chorus and dancers feels inevitable and inseparable." —Charles Sheek

Own the Met's *The Magic Flute* on DVD! The 2006 *Live in HD* transmission of Julie Taymor's production of Mozart's timeless operatic fairy tale has just been released. The Met's first self-produced DVD is initially available exclusively at the Met Opera Shop for \$25. Conducted by Music Director James Levine, this abridged, English-language version stars Ying Huang as Pamina, Erika Miklósa as Queen of the Night, Matthew Polenzani as Tamino, Nathan Gunn as Papageno, and René Pape as Sarastro.



The Cast



James Levine

MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR (CINCINNATI, OHIO)

MET HISTORY Since his 1971 company debut leading *Tosca*, he has conducted nearly 2,500 operatic performances at the Met—more than any other conductor in the company's history. Of the 83 operas he has led here, 13 were company premieres (including *Porgy and Bess*, *Oedipus Rex*, *Moses und Aron*, *Lulu*, *Benvenuto Cellini*, *La Cenerentola*, and *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*). He also conducted the world premieres of Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles* and Harbison's *The Great Gatsby*.

THIS SEASON 29 performances at the Met, including the Opening Night and 125th Anniversary Galas, the new production of *La Damnation de Faust*, and revivals of *Orfeo ed Euridice* and Wagner's *Ring* cycle. He appears at Carnegie Hall with the MET Orchestra and Boston Symphony Orchestra, and at Carnegie's Weill and Zankel Halls with the MET Chamber Ensemble. Maestro Levine also returns to the Boston Symphony Orchestra for his fifth season as music director, including concert performances this winter of *Simon Boccanegra*; he also led two performances in November of Charles Wuorinen's *Ashberyana* at the Guggenheim Museum for the composer's 70th birthday and gives a vocal master class in January for the Marilyn Horne Foundation at Zankel Hall.



Stephanie Blythe

MEZZO-SOPRANO (MONGAUP VALLEY, NEW YORK)

THIS SEASON Orfeo in *Orfeo ed Euridice* and Ježibaba in *Rusalka* at the Met, Dalila in *Samson et Dalila* with the Pittsburgh Opera, Katisha in *The Mikado* with Arizona Opera, and concert engagements with the Washington Concert Opera and the Collegiate Chorale.

MET APPEARANCES More than 125 performances of 22 roles, including Ulrica in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, Fricka in *Die Walküre*, Cornelia in *Giulio Cesare*, Mother Marie in *Dialogues des Carmélites*, Jocasta in *Oedipus Rex*, Eduige in *Rodelinda*, Zita in *Gianni Schicchi*, Frugola in *Il Tabarro*, La Principessa in *Suor Angelica*, Mistress Quickly in *Falstaff*, Baba the Turk in *The Rake's Progress*, and the Alto Solo in *Parsifal* (Met debut, 1995).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus* at Arizona Opera, Amneris in *Aida* at the Pittsburgh Opera, Isabella in *L'Italiana in Algeri* and Carmen in Seattle, Azucena in *Il Trovatore* and Mistress Quickly at Covent Garden, Isabella in Philadelphia and Santa Fe, and Cornelia and Mistress Quickly at the Paris Opera. She is a graduate of the Met's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program.



Danielle de Niese

SOPRANO (MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA)

THIS SEASON Euridice in *Orfeo ed Euridice* at the Met, Galatea in *Acis and Galatea* for her debut at Covent Garden, her Austrian debut at the Theater an der Wien as Ginerra in *Ariodante*, and Cleopatra in *Giulio Cesare* at Glyndebourne.

MET APPEARANCES Cleopatra, Papagena in *Die Zauberflöte*, a Flower Maiden in *Parsifal*, the Child in *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*, Poussette in *Manon*, and Barbarina in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (debut, 1998).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Cleopatra at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Netherlands Opera, and in Brussels; the title role of Handel's *Rodelinda* with the Canadian Opera Company; Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro* in Amsterdam and at Paris's Théâtre des Champs-Élysées; Poppea in *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* and Tytania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Chicago Opera Theater; Poppea in Zurich; and Despina in *Così fan tutte* in Lyon. She is a graduate of the Met's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program.



Heidi Grant Murphy

SOPRANO (DALLAS, TEXAS)

THIS SEASON Amor in *Orfeo ed Euridice* at the Met and the Angel in Messiaen's *St. Francois d'Assise* with the Netherlands Opera at the BBC Proms and with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France. She is also heard with the symphony orchestras of Milwaukee, Dallas, Houston, and St. Louis, among others.

MET APPEARANCES Sister Genovieffa in *Suor Angelica*, Nannetta in *Falstaff*, Servilia in *La Clemenza di Tito*, Sister Constance in *Dialogues des Carmélites*, Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Oscar in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*, and a Servant in *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (debut, 1989).

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS Recent engagements include Susanna, Adina in *L'Elisir d'Amore*, and Sophie in *Der Rosenkavalier* with the Paris Opera; Tytania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Madrid; and Susanna at the Munich Festival. She has also appeared in concert with the Cleveland Orchestra, Madrid's Orchestra of the Teatro Real, and Washington's National Symphony Orchestra. She is a graduate of the Met's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program.