Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment

Luigi Rossi's *Orfeo* makes it a hat trick for Pygmalion at the Adelaide Festival

Par Sandra Bowdler, 06 mars 2026

According to François Couperin writing in 1725, the perfection of music arose from the union of the French and Italian styles. It might be suggested that this perfection was set in train by Luigi Rossi's *Orfeo*. The Italian composer was summoned to Paris in 1646 by Cardinal Mazarin, and the following year *Orfeo* was premiered at the Théâtre du Palais-Royal, one of the first operas to be seen in France, some 40 years after Monteverdi's *Orfeo* was performed in Mantua, Italy.

VOIR LE LISTING COMPLET

"Australian mezzo-soprano Xenia Puskarz Thomas... inhabiting the role"

Critique faite à Adelaide Town Hall, Adelaide, le 4 mars 2026

PROGRAMME

Rossi, Orfeo (Australian premiere)

ARTISTES

Raphaël Pichon, *Direction*

Ensemble Pygmalion

Chœur de Pygmalion

Xenia Puskarz Thomas, *Orfeo/La Vittoria*

Julie Roset, *Euridice*

Blandine de Sansal, *Aristeo*

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Raphaël Pichon conducts Pygmalion in Rossi's *Orfeo*

© Claudio Raschella

Far from being just an historical record, *Orfeo* was most enjoyably brought to life by the French ensemble Pygmalion, who now own the 17th century as far as Adelaide goes, with their previous concerts at this year's festival. Done without scenery or props – for which there is little room at the Adelaide Town Hall – the opera was nonetheless suitably dramatic, helped by an excellent cast. Most people would have some idea of the story, although the presence of several deities involved in by-play may have been somewhat obscure.

The narrative was considerably streamlined here. The original version runs for some 3.5 hours, whereas this performance came in at 2 hours 20. The political prologue was jettisoned altogether, as was the final scene after Orfeo's peroration. A number of deities got the chop, and some of those remaining had their roles abbreviated. Even so, there were 15 named solo parts to be filled, not to mention Graces and Fates, with some doubling of roles. Countertenor William Shelton, for instance, played both Euridice's nurse, wearing a black lace headscarf

Alex Rosen, *Pluto, Augure*

Camille Chopin, *Venere, Proserpina*

William Shelton, *Nutrice, Amore*

Dominique Visse, *Una vecchia*

Tomáš Král, *Endimione, Caronte*

Samuel Boden, *Momo*

Laurence Kilsby, *Apollo*

☆ VOIR PLUS DE CRITIQUES

OPÉRA

La reprise enchantée de la *Flûte* de Simon McBurney à Bâle

Romain Daroles, 20th February

Après son succès au Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, la mise en scène du chef-d'œuvre de Mozart par Simon McBurney s'exporte avec une même réussite dans la cité rhénane.

★★★★☆

Casting de rêve pour une *Lucia* incandescente à Toulouse

Emmanuel Gaillard, 20th February

Un trio de superstars du bel canto est à l'affiche de la reprise de la belle production maison signée Nicolas Joël : Jessica Pratt, Pene Pati et Michele Pertusi.

★★★★★

Les *Dialogues* des immortelles *Carmélites* d'Olivier Py à Lausanne

Romain Daroles, 1st February

La mise en scène référence d'Olivier Py fait escale à Lausanne et ses tableaux plus symbolistes que réalistes impressionnent toujours autant le spectateur, avec une distribution très convaincante.

★★★★☆

Le miracle du *Miracle d'Héliane* à l'Opéra national du Rhin

Stéphane Lelièvre, 1st February

Mise en scène sobre et efficace, interprétation musicale superlative : *Le Miracle d'Héliane* fait salle comble

along with a white shirt and pink trousers, and Amore, where he swapped his scarf for a matching pink jacket.

The orchestra under Raphaël Pichon was pretty much as for the Monteverdi Vespers, albeit with fewer sackbuts. They played with grace and finesse, never overwhelming the singers. The choir played a dynamic role, deployed in different sized groups and sometimes singing from the gallery, but always with pinpoint precision.



Blandine de Sansal and Pygmalion

© Claudio Raschella

It was a delightful surprise to find young Australian mezzo-soprano Xenia Puskarz Thomas in the title role. She more than carried the part, inhabiting the role and producing powerful smooth and burnished tone. Her final lament, “Lasciate Averno”, was beautifully delivered and very moving, and after the last note faded, an extended silence prevailed. She was well partnered by soprano Julie Roset as Euridice, singing with crystalline purity and traversing the range of emotions from joyful young bride through beleaguered faithful wife to dying not just once but twice. As Aristeo, Orfeo’s rival for Euridice, mezzo-soprano Blandine de Sansal also turned in a riveting performance, both dramatically and vocally, with fine ringing tone.

pour la dernière représentation proposée par l’Opéra du Rhin. Pari gagné pour Alain Perroux !

★★★★★

La Clémence de Titus, une campagne électorale sous tension à Nice

Stéphane Lelièvre, 30th January

Si la lecture proposée par Clarac et Deloeuil est plausible, sa réalisation scénique ne tient pas toutes ses promesses. Mais l’exécution musicale du chef-d’œuvre de Mozart offre de belles satisfactions.

★★★☆☆

L'*Eugène Onéguine* classique de Ralph Fiennes au Palais Garnier

Jean-Pierre Rousseau, 26th January

Très attendue, cette nouvelle production – première incursion de l'acteur britannique dans l'opéra – brille surtout par sa beauté et son respect du texte de Tchaïkovski, moins par sa direction d'acteur et sa distribution inégale.

★★★☆☆

PLUS DE CRITIQUES...

In the non-mortal roles, Camille Chopin, a soprano with a charming sparkly voice, doubled as Venere (Venus) and Pluto's consort, Proserpina. One of the more fun aspects of this version of the Orpheus legend is the latter urging Pluto to restore Euridice to the world of the living so he won't be tempted by her. The king of the underworld, and the Augur were impressively sung by Alex Rosen with confident authority and some wonderfully sustained low notes. Dominique Visse has made a career as a comic countertenor and did not disappoint as Vecchia – Venus disguised as an old lady. Tenor Laurence Kilby had less to do as Apollo but sang extremely well, also Tomáš Král as Endimione/Caronte and tenor Samuel Boden as an entertaining Momo, god of mockery (and criticism!).

★★★★☆

☆ ARTICLES CONNEXES

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10 jeunes artistes à suivre cette saison (et au-delà)

Ben Glassberg, sa dépression et son retour à la musique

De la Monnaie à Colmar : Alain Altinoglu, bon prophète en ses pays

L'envol du phénix : Samy Rachid, du Quatuor Arod au Boston Symphony



Sandra Bowdler

Sandra Bowdler was born and educated in Sydney, and has pursued a career as an archaeologist since graduating from the University of Sydney in 1970. She is now Emeritus Professor of Archaeology and a Senior Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Western Australia in the School of Social Sciences and the School of Music. Since attending a production of Handel's opera Alcina at the Sydney Opera House in 1982, she has become a devotee of the works of GF Handel, and Baroque music generally. In 1996 she began writing opera reviews for online outlets, graduating to more professional sources by 2000. In 2007, she inaugurated Festival Baroque Australia in Perth, Western Australia, Australia's first Baroque music festival. Under that banner, she curated two festivals and several concerts in Perth.

0 COMMENTAIRES

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