

Ouphée

A Vache Baroque production, in
partnership with BirdGang Ltd.

BIF

Buxton
International
Festival



With special thanks to **The Continuo Foundation**
who supported this production with a grant.

LA DESCENTE D'ORPHÉE AUX ENFERS

Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1643–1704)

Libretto by an unknown author

**A Vache Baroque production, in partnership
with BirdGang Ltd.**

Based on the myth of Orpheus as told in Book 10
of the *Metamorphoses* by Ovid

Sung in French, with English side-titles

First performed in either Paris or Fontainebleau in
or around 1686

DATES AND TIMES

Monday 14 July	7.15pm–8.40pm
Sunday 20 July	7.15pm–8.40pm
Thursday 24 July	7.15pm–8.40pm



VENUE

Pavilion Arts Centre



DURATION

1 hour 25 minutes, including a 20-minute interval

CREATIVES

Music Director
Director
Choreographer
Designer
Assistant Director
Revival Lighting Designer
French Coach

Jonathan Darbourne
Jeanne Pansard-Besson
Simeon Qsyea
Laura Jane Stanfield
Finn Lacey
Josie Ireland
Hervé Goffings

CAST

Orphée
Pluton
Euridice
Daphné
Enone
Arethuze/Proserpine
Ixion
Tantale
Apollon/Tityé
Dancer
Dancer

Gwilym Bowen
James Geidt
Betty Makharinsky
Naho Koizumi
Katie-Louise Dobson
Frances Gregory
Francis Gush
Lars Fischer
Michael Roche
Fi Silverthorn
Kenji Matsunaga

ORCHESTRA

The Vache Baroque Band
led by violinist Naomi Burrell

Violin
Recorder
Recorder/Oboe
Theorbo
Percussion
Organ

Naomi Burrell
Emily Bloom
Geoff Coates
Kristiina Watt
Sam Milton
Makoto James

SYNOPSIS

Act I

The marriage day of Orphée and Euridice.

A joyous occasion needs celebrations and these are led (perhaps too boisterously) by her companions Daphné, Enone and Arethuze. Things quickly go awry as Euridice reveals she's been poisoned by a snake, with Orphée appearing just in time to witness her death.

Inconsolable without his lover, Orphée wants to take his own life but his father Apollon dissuades him. He suggests Orphée ventures into the underworld to convince its king to release Euridice through the power of his music.

Act II

Arriving in Hades, Orphée sees three souls condemned to eternal punishment – Ixion, bound to a perpetually spinning wheel; Tantalus, forever hungry and thirsty; and Titye, who is constantly devoured by vultures. With the tender accents of his voice he soothes their suffering. Pluton, the god of the underworld is shocked to find a mortal in his realm.

Orphée explains to Pluton that he has come for Euridice and, with the encouragement of Pluton's wife Proserpine, he recounts how Euridice perished and begs Pluton to return his beloved. Although initially refusing, with the charm of Orphée's beautiful song and a gentle reminder of how Pluton himself had abducted his wife, Pluton relents. Orphée may now lead Euridice up to the world of the living, but on one condition: that he doesn't turn around to look at her as they go. The spirits lament Orphée's departure.

Orphée

OPERA TALK

Monday 14 July

6pm–6.30pm



Pavilion Arts Centre



Jonathan Darbourne

Music Director

In 2020, Jonathan co-founded Vache Baroque for which he has led four fully-staged operas and numerous multi-artform programmes from the harpsichord. Alongside his own projects, Jonathan has been music director for HGO's production of Rossini's *La Cenerentola* in April 2025. He has assisted for the

Nederlandse Bachvereniging and been assistant conductor and continuo player for The Grange Festival's production of Handel's *Tamerlano*. An experienced choral conductor, he is chorus master for the NSO and has led projects ranging from the Voces8 Scholars to choir scenes in a number of Netflix productions.

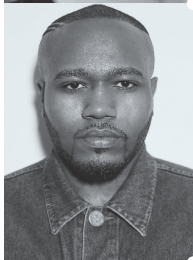


Jeanne Pansard-Besson

Director

Jeanne Pansard-Besson is an opera director, dramaturg and librettist. Past productions include *Don Pasquale* at the Nouvel Opéra Fribourg/Neue Oper Freiburg (NOF), *La Tragédie de Carmen* at the Royal Academy of Music in London, *Hänsel und Gretel* with Hampstead Garden Opera. As a dramaturg, librettist and director she is writing and developing a new opera

project *Penelope's Web* in collaboration with composer Cheryl Frances-Hoad, with the support of the National Opera Studio, APGRD and TORCH at the University of Oxford, as well as King's College London. Upcoming productions include *L'Amico Fritz* at the Festival de Gattières in collaboration with Opéra de Nice, and *Die Fledermaus* with the Berlin Opera Academy.



Simeon Osyea

Choreographer

Simeon Osyea is a London based film director, choreographer & founder of BirdGang Ltd.

Simeon studied Film & Video at Richmond Upon Thames, gained a scholarship at Urdang Academy and graduated from London Contemporary Dance School with a BA Hons degree.

Simeon has an expansive career in many parts of the entertainment industry and is highly respected for his innovative approach to creativity in numerous mediums including Music, Fashion, Theatre, Live Events, Television and Film.



Laura Jane Stanfield

Designer

Laura is a Set and Costume Designer for opera, theatre and television. Set and Costume credits include: *BBC Proms 2024*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (West Green House Opera), *Madame Butterfly* (CBSO), *Orphée*, *Acis & Galatea* (Vache Baroque), *Magic Flute*, *Turn of The Screw* (Barnes Festival), *Così fan Tutte*, *La Finta Giardiniera* (Ryedale Festival Opera), *The Juniper Tree*

(Richmond Festival). Costume Design: *Mille Regretz* (English Touring Opera), *Dubai*, *Rostov*, *New York* (National Opera Studio), *English Eccentrics*, *Riders to the Sea & Savitri* (British Youth Opera), *Landscapes* (English National Opera), *La Bohème* (Nevill Holt Opera), *The Flying Dutchman*, *Noye's Fludde* (NI Opera).



Finn Lacey

Assistant Director

Finn Lacey is an award winning stage director and musician based in East London. Finn has worked with Opera North, National Opera Studio, Hampstead Garden Opera, St Paul's Opera, Green Opera, Royal Academy of Music and National Youth Music Theatre. In 2023, Finn produced and directed Leonard Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti* at the Arcola Theatre which

won an Off West End Award in the Opera Production Category. This year, Finn directed a new production of Gioachino Rossini's *La Cenerentola* for Hampstead Garden Opera and will direct another new Rossini production for Longhope Opera (*L'italiana in Algeri*). Alongside directing, Finn sings professionally as a countertenor.



Josie Ireland

Associate Lighting Designer

Josie Ireland is a Lighting Designer and Production Manager for theatre, opera, and immersive experiences. A recent graduate of Guildhall School of Music & Drama, they have particular passion for accessibility, safe spaces, and queer stories. They

are the chair of the ALPD Student Working Group, after being the Winner of the ALPD's Francis Reid Award for Best Emerging Lighting Designer in 2020.



Hervé Goffings

French coach

Hervé is a charismatic and versatile French actor, singer, and dancer based in London. He trained classically at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester before completing an MA in Musical Theatre (Performance) at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in Glasgow. He has performed at the National Theatre, The Royal Lyceum Theatre, Royal Festival Hall,

Queen Elizabeth Hall, Arcola Theatre, and other prominent venues across the UK. Stage roles include Poncho in Oscar Hammerstein's *Carmen Jones* with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Hlabeni in Kurt Weill's *Lost in the Stars* (broadcast on BBC Radio 3), and Balthazar in Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*.



Gwilym Bowen

Orphée (Tenor)

Gwilym Bowen studied at Trinity College, Cambridge, and the Royal Academy of Music. He has recorded extensively and engagements during 2024/2025 include *First Soldier/Lucano* *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* at The Grange Festival; *Christmas Oratorio* with Music of the Baroque, Chicago; *Easter Oratorio* at

St Endellion Festival; *St John Passion* with Britten Sinfonia and Polyphony; *Bach, the Universe and Everything: Soul Music* with Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment; *Alexander's Feast* at Three Choirs Festival; *Messiah* with Oslo Cathedral Choir; and *Elijah* with Heidelberg Philharmonic Orchestra.

James Geidt

Pluton

James Geidt is a recent graduate of the Opera Course at the Royal Academy of Music, having previously been a Choral Scholar at New College, Oxford. Operatic roles to date include Demetrius in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for Garsington Opera, the Lovelace in Dvořák's *Rusalka* for Garsington Opera at the Edinburgh International Festival, The Sorceress

in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* for Vache Baroque, Papageno in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, Le Comte in Massenet's *Chérubin*, Forester in Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen* all for Royal Academy Opera. James was recently awarded the Simon Sandbach award from Garsington Opera for an outstanding contribution in their 2024 season.



Betty Makharinsky

Euridice (Soprano)

Praised for her 'exquisite performance' (Seen and Heard International), Betty is a versatile classical soprano. Highlights for 2025 include solo concert arias with I Barocchisti in Lugano, her Italian opera debut in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* at Piacenza and Ferrara theatres, and the role of Lieschen in a staged performance of J. S. Bach's *Coffee Cantata* at London's Fidelio

Cafe. In 2024, she joined Kensington Philharmonic Orchestra as soprano soloist for Mahler's *Fourth Symphony* at Chelsea Old Town Hall and Brahms' *Requiem* at St. John's, Smith Square. She was nominated for an Off West End Individual Performance Award for *The Fairy Queen* with Hampstead Garden Opera.



Naho Koizumi

Daphné (Soprano)

Japanese soprano Naho Koizumi completed her postgraduate studies at RCS. She has performed with companies such as Opera Holland Park, Irish National Opera, The Vache Baroque Festival and Blackwater Valley Opera Festival. Also well versed in oratorio, she has been the soprano soloist for various

composer's works. Naho was the semi-finalist of the Concours des Maîtres du Chant in 2022, was awarded second place in the Recital Class at the David Clover Festival of Singing 2022 and received the Roger Higgins Prize at the Hurn Court Opera Competition 2021.



Katie-Louise Dobson

Enone (Soprano)

Katie-Louise Dobson is a graduate of RCS. She is a versatile artist, specialising in baroque and rarely performed works. Katie-Louise frequently performs and records with Scottish Voices, and is an established outreach practitioner, opera and concert artist, working with Into Opera, Vache Baroque, Ensemble Orquesta,

RCS, Birmingham Opera Company and London Philharmonia among others. Operatic roles include Susanna *La Nozze di Figaro*, Zweite Dame *Die Zauberflöte*, Belinda *Dido & Aeneas*, Clito *Xerse*, Nella *Gianni Schicchi* and Adele *Die Fledermaus*. Katie-Louise is also currently training for a master's degree in music therapy.



Frances Gregory

Arethuze/Proserpine (Mezzo-soprano)

Frances Gregory is a member of the OAE's Rising Stars Scheme with whom she has sung Elgar's *Sea Pictures*, also appearing in *Bach, the Universe and Everything*. She created Ellie Gifford in the premiere of *Under the Greenwood Tree* for Dorset Opera Festival and other engagements have included: debuts with

The English Concert and The Grange Festival as Arnalta *L'incoronazione di Poppea*; Marie *L'Enfance du Christ* with NFM Wroclaw Philharmonic; Cherubino *Le Nozze di Figaro* for The Mozartists; Gabrieli Consort in JS Bach's *B Minor Mass* and Second Harlot *Samson*; Alcandro in Pergolesi's *L'Olimpiade* for Vache Baroque.



Francis Gush

Ixion (Countertenor)

English/Dutch countertenor Francis Gush has performed with Glyndebourne Festival Opera, English Touring Opera, Opéra de Lille, and English National Opera. Francis also recently made his international debut, performing the title role in *Titus L'Empereur* at the Händel Festspiele in Halle (Opera Settecento). Francis

is singing both Harold in Dommett's contemporary opera, *Disorderly House* and Ixion in Charpentier's *Orphée* with Vache Baroque at BIF this year. Equally comfortable in concert and oratorio, Francis has performed with Orchestra of the Age of the Enlightenment, at the Wigmore Hall with Steven Isserlis.



Lars Fischer

Tantale (Tenor)

Lars Fischer is a versatile tenor from Switzerland. Most recent roles include: Meisterjünger cover *Wahnfried*, Remendado *Carmen* and Oberon *The Fairy Queen* (Longborough Festival Opera), Perlimpinin *Le Dernier Sorcier* (Gothic Opera), Mr Williams *The Trilobite* (Tête-à-tête Opera Festival), Monostatos *Die Zauberflöte* (Hurn Court Opera and Hampstead Garden

Opera). Lars has joined the chorus at the Grand Théâtre de Genève, Savonlinna Opera Festival and Opera Holland Park. He is currently a PhD researcher at Guildhall School, combining the Feldenkrais Method and singing. Previously he studied at Trinity Laban and at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts.



Michael Roche

Apollon/Tityé (Baritone)

British-Irish Baritone Michael Roche recently completed a Masters in Performance at the Royal College of Music. He has worked with Nicky Spence, Iain Burnside and Bryn Terfel. Previous highlights for Michael include Don Magnifico (*La Cenerentola*, HGO, 2025), Chorus (*La Fille du Régiment*, Aleko,

Grange Park Opera, 2024), Pontius Pilate (*The Pilgrims Progress*, British Youth Opera), Chorus (*Götterdämmerung*, Longborough Festival Opera), Mars (*Orpheus in the Underworld*, RCM Opera Studio), Maître D/Chorus (*The Merry Widow*, RCM Opera Studio).





Fi Silverthorn

Dancer

Fi 'Swift' Silverthorn is a longstanding member of BirdGang Ltd and a multi-Dance Artist and Filmmaker. Moving from an intuitive place, Fi's choreographic work pushes beyond the norms of Street Dance Styles and explores the intersection of humanity, humility, and theatre. She's worked with global brands

such as YSL, Vodafone, and BMW, with her hip-hop theatre work being showcased worldwide, including in Berlin and Mexico. With a visceral approach, Fi's art transforms the space around her, creating a world that inspires self-discovery and defies conventional limits.



Kenji Matsunaga

Dancer

Kenji 'Tengu' Matsunaga is a longstanding member of BirdGang Ltd and a versatile Dance Artist. Kenji has worked with world renowned artists and brands such as Tia Maria, Rita Ora, Coldplay and many more. He has performed at venues including the Royal Opera House, Royal Academy of Dance, Sadler's Wells, ENO, Young Vic, Stratford Circus, Palace of Fine Arts Theatre San Francisco, Luxembourg Grand Theatre, the Harlem Apollo.

