

Rick Lombardo
Producing Artistic Director

Harriet Sheets
Managing Director

2008-2009 SEASON

MAINSTAGE SHOWS IN
 THE MOESIAN THEATER

Eurydice

by Sarah Ruhl
directed by Rick Lombardo
 SEP 14 – OCT 5, 2008

The Lieutenant of Inishmore

by Martin McDonagh
directed by David R. Gammons
 OCT 26 – NOV 16, 2008

Cabaret

BOOK BY Joe Masteroff
BASED ON THE PLAY BY John Van Druten
AND STORIES BY Christopher Isherwood
MUSIC BY John Kander
LYRICS BY Fred Ebb
directed by Rick Lombardo
musical direction by Todd C. Gordon
 JAN 11 – FEB 1, 2009

Exits and Entrances

by Athol Fugard
directed by Chris Jorie
 FEB 22 – MARCH 15, 2009

Three Sisters

by Anton Chekhov
translation by Curt Columbus
directed by Rick Lombardo
 APRIL 19 – MAY 10, 2008

DOWNSTAGE @ NEW REP
 SHOWS IN THE BLACK
 BOX THEATER

Gutenberg! The Musical

a musical by Scott Brown and
 Anthony King
directed and choreographed by
 Stephen Nachamie
 OCT 4 – OCT 26, 2008

Fool For Love

by Sam Shepard
directed by Bridget Kathleen O'Leary
 MARCH 14 – APRIL 5, 2009

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Eurydice Program Notes

The Original Myth

Publius Ovidius Naso, Ovid, was a Roman poet born in 43 BC. The classic story of Orpheus and Eurydice is just one of the many myths found in his epic poem *Metamorphoses*, published in 8 AD.

Orpheus, the son of Apollo and the Muse Calliope, was a great musician. He played the Lyre, and when he played no one could resist his charms. Even Nature could be swayed by the beauty of his playing. Orpheus fell in love with Eurydice, and on their wedding day, he sent for Hymen, the God of marriage, to bless their nuptials. However, Hymen's presence brought no blessing. Eurydice, along with her nymphs, went wandering after the wedding. She was seen by Aristaeus while she was out, and he was so struck by her beauty that he made an advance towards her. Startled, Eurydice fled. While she ran, she was bitten by a snake and died.

Orpheus, so distraught by the loss of his wife, resolved to cross the gate of Taenarus to the river Styx and on to the Underworld. When he arrived, he found Hades and Persephone and began to sing to them for his wife's release. The Furies (also known as the Shadows) were so struck by his voice that they wept, and Hades and Persephone agreed to allow Eurydice to return to earth with Orpheus. The only condition was that he must walk ahead of her all the way and was not to look back until they reached the Upper world.

So, Orpheus and Eurydice began their journey back in silence. Just as Orpheus passed over, he turned to make sure she was still behind him. At once, she was sent back to the underworld, and the two never saw each other again. Orpheus, having lost his love a second time, vowed to never love another woman.

Adaptations of the Myth

The Orpheus myth has been told and retold in many plays, operas, and films. As lovers, Orpheus and Eurydice are powerful icons. Orpheus is a man that loved his wife so much that he would brave the gates of hell to get her back. Tragic love, music, and Hell are the three elements of the myth that tend to be incorporated into all of the adaptations.

In Tennessee Williams' play *Orpheus Descending*, the modern day Orpheus is Val Xavier, a tortured musician who comes to the South to seek refuge from his life. Like Orpheus, after the death of Eurydice, Val is completely unable to commit himself to a woman. Neither Lady Torrance, Carol Cutrere, nor any other woman in the town can win his heart. The men of the town grow jealous of Val, and in the end he is killed by a lynch mob. Though Williams only uses the myth as a jumping off place to tell his own story, it is clear that the iconic musician Orpheus is a strong presence in the play.

In Opera, there are close to a hundred pieces written about Orpheus and Eurydice (sometimes spelled Euridice). The most recent was Lincoln Center's production of Ricky Ian Gordon's *Orpheus and Euridice* in 2005. Perhaps the most famous opera involving the myth was Claudio Monteverdi's 1607 *L'Orfeo*, one of the earliest works recognized as an opera. Monteverdi's libretto follows the myth relatively closely. The show opens with La Musica, a "spirit of music," telling us of the power of Orpheus' music. Unlike Williams, Monteverdi chose not to end the story as Ovid did. Instead of Orpheus being torn apart by the Bacchantes, or a mob, his father Apollo, seeing that his son is in pain, lifts Orpheus up to the heavens where he can forever see his love, Euridice, in the stars.

In the 1959 Brazilian film *Orfeu Negro* (*Black Orpheus*), Marcel Camus uses the Carnival in Rio De Janeiro as his "Underworld." Camus stays close to the myth by maintaining the lovers' names, Orfeu and Eurydice. However, unlike Ovid's Orpheus, Orfeu is not a musician, but a trolley driver. Much like the original myth, Camus' characters fall instantly and passionately in love. However, it is Orfeu, not a snake, that accidentally kills Eurydice. Camus continues to follow the myth when Orfeu, determined to be reunited with Eurydice, searches the morgue for her body only to find a Voodoo gathering where he contacts the spirit of his love. When he turns to look at her, she vanishes.

In Sarah Ruhl's adaptation, *Eurydice*, she takes the Orpheus myth and turns it around to see the world from Eurydice's point of view. What was it like for her in the Underworld? Was she waiting for Orpheus? Could she even remember him? And who would she meet in the Underworld? In a 2003 article in *American Theatre Magazine*, Ruhl says "When I imagined Eurydice going into the Underworld, it made sense to me that she would meet her family there...I was interested in the triangulation between Orpheus, whom she's about to marry, and the father-in what women go through to choose their husband over their father." (Jeremy Harrell "Blood Ties in the Underworld," *American Theatre*. September 2003.) Ruhl has admitted that this play is a personal one for her. Her own father died of cancer in 1994, when she was only 20 years old. In her version of the myth, Ruhl explores the complexity of love and the bond between a father and daughter.

The Symbolism of Water

Water is one of the basic components of life. Early philosophers believed that it was one of the four elements that made up all things, along with air, fire, and earth. It covers over two-thirds of the earth's surface. It is the only substance that occurs naturally on our planet in all three forms of matter: as a solid (ice), as a liquid, and as a gas (water vapor).

Water is a symbol of life in many of the world's religions. Many Christian denominations require their adherents to be baptized or bathed in water as a way of cleansing and absolving them of sin – a sort of spiritual rebirth. However, Christianity is not the only religion to regard immersion in water in this way. Judaism, for instance, has a ceremony called a mikveh in which a person is submerged in water for ritual purification. The Islamic faith engages in a type of ritual washing similar to baptism called Ghusul, a cleansing of the whole body, either through complete immersion or a proscribed washing pattern. This ceremony is also required to purify dead bodies before burial.

In these religious rituals, emerging from the water marks a new beginning for the believer -- a clean slate. What is perhaps the ultimate clean slate can be found in the book of Genesis. There, God becomes so disgusted by man's behavior and wickedness that he brings a world-wide flood. The only human survivors of this deluge, Noah and his family, must then start over again and repopulate the world once the flood has subsided.

In Ruhl's *The Clean House* and *Eurydice*, water is a powerful and present image. She uses both full immersion and bathing in these plays. In *The Clean House*, after her husband's mistress Anna dies, Lane slowly washes her body. It is a ritual of love and respect. The Underworld in *Eurydice* is a place filled with water. The moment you arrive you are bathed in a river to forget everything you ever knew about being human. Both of these rituals embrace the cleansing quality of water and the religious experience of absolution.

The River Styx

The five rivers of Hell were Acheron (the river of woe), Cocytus (the river of lamentation), Phlegethon (the river of fire), Lethe (the river of forgetfulness), and finally, Styx. The River Styx (from the Greek word stugein, which means hate) was thought to be the only river that went directly to the Underworld and served as a crossroads between the living and the dead. Some say the river was so disgusting that to drink from it would bring a violent death. It was also the river in which Achilles was said to have been bathed in order to wash away his mortality. Styx was guarded by Cerberus, a three-headed dog who would allow the shadows to enter but nobody to exit the Underworld. In some tellings of the myth, when Orpheus arrived at the River Styx, he sang to Cerberus. Cerberus was so moved by Orpheus' music that he lay down and let him pass.

Water in various religions/civilizations	
Egyptian Heliopolitan story of creation	Sun God reposed in the primordial ocean
Assyro-Babylonian mythology	Gods and all beings arose from fusion of salt water and sweet water
Hindu holy books	All inhabitants of the earth emerged from the primordial sea
Judeo-Christian story of creation	God is "stirring above the waters" and later "Creates a firmament in the midst of the waters to divide the waters" (Genesis 1: 1-6)
Ancient Greece	souls of the dead were ferried to rest across the dark waters of the River Styx
	Aphrodite born of the Sea
Koran	"We have created every living thing from water."
Christian baptism	links concept of water of life with water of purification
Ancient Mesopotamians	water regarded as a symbol of the unfathomable, absolute wisdom
Ishtar (Babylonian moon goddess)	associated with sacred springs
India	water of life for Hindus embodied by the River Ganges. Legend that Ganges flows to Moska, the realm of Nirvana

Source: <http://witcombe.sbc.edu/water/waterfacts.html>