

ORPHEUS REMEMBERED: THE REDISCOVERY OF ORPHEUS DURING THE RENAISSANCE

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“The genuine poet is always a priest”

—Novalis

During the period of Western history known as the Renaissance, philosophers, poets, musicians, and intellectuals brought back to life the traditions of ancient Greece. This period of intellectual and artistic rebirth was enriched by the wealth of ancient texts that resurfaced after the collapse of Constantinople in 1453. Greek texts that were lost or fragmentary were rediscovered and translated, being made available to Europe for the first time in nearly a thousand years. The impact of these texts on the West resounds deeply to this day.

The rediscovery of the mythic figure of Orpheus during the Renaissance is a vivid example of how the intellectual and artistic archaeology of this time gave

birth to new forms of expression in the arts, new insights into the teachings of ancient philosophers, and new approaches for integrating ancient wisdom with the religions of the time.

Orpheus Born: Ancient Greece

The ancient Greek sources of the myth focus on Orpheus as a mystic singer and theologian who told of the origins of the universe and the deities through hymns and music. Along with Homer, Hesiod, and Pindar, he was venerated as the greatest of Greek poets. As a theologian, he was said to have been initiated into the mystery schools of ancient Egypt and brought these sacred traditions to Greece. The Pythagorean discoveries of the sacredness of number, the foundation of the musical scale, and practices such as vegetarianism were said to have been brought by Orpheus to Greece, where they were adopted and enriched by Pythagoras and his followers.

According to the Neoplatonist Proclus, Orpheus provided the source for all Greek religion—“All the Greeks’ theology is the offspring of the Orphic mystical doctrine.” In Greek religion and philosophy, music was intimately associated with the creation of the cosmos as well as the essence of the soul. This is best illustrated in the Platonic dialog *Timaeus*, which may have had Pythagorean and Orphic origins. In *Timaeus*, Plato said, “All audible musical sound is given us for the sake of harmony,



Alabaster Orphic Bowl (second-third centuries CE), symbolizing the Orphic Serpent/Egg at the center of all, emanating the cosmos, and the rebirth to that pristine state that an Orphic initiate could obtain.

which has motions akin to the orbits in our soul, and which, as anyone who makes intelligent use of the arts knows, is not to be used... to give irrational pleasure, but as a heaven-sent ally in reducing to order and harmony any disharmony in the revolutions within us.”

Music has the power to harmonize the individual soul with the world soul as the human microcosm contained the same elements as the macrocosm of the world. Playing certain types of music could lead to harmonization with the Divine. Other types of music could incite violence, anguish, or lethargy. Music exercised control over the elements, human beings, and animals. For these reasons, Plato urged great care in the use of music, and specific recommendations were made regarding which musical modes to employ to achieve the highest good. Similar stories are told of how Pythagoras healed people and created social harmony through music.

As the greatest musician and singer of the ancient world, Orpheus commanded incredible powers over nature and the soul. He was renowned for charming wild animals, civilizing wild peoples, and even moving trees and stones through the power of his music. His lyre was given to him by Apollo, the diety of music and harmony, and so contained special powers. As an instrument of harmony, with seven sympathetic strings, the lyre also represents the harmony of the cosmos. The

sympathetic resonance created by plucking the strings of the lyre provided the ancient Greeks with a powerful metaphor for mediating cosmic spirit with human soul. This concept would be expanded greatly by later Renaissance philosophers such as Marsilio Ficino, who played an Orphic lyre for just such a purpose.

Orpheus Lives: Early Myths

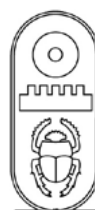
An early telling of the Orpheus myth comes from the *Argonautica*, a fourth-century BCE poem relating the adventures of Jason and the Argonauts in their quest for the Golden Fleece. Orpheus the singer protects the Argonauts from the danger of hearing the siren’s song by playing his lyre and singing. It also contains cosmogonic hymns and mentions his travels to Egypt.

The myth of Orpheus with which we are most familiar was told by the Roman poets, Ovid, Virgil, and Horace. In both Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (8 CE) and Virgil’s *Georgics* (23 BCE), Orpheus, the greatest living player of the lyre, descends into the underworld to retrieve his love, Eurydice, from the

realm of Hades after he loses her to death by a snakebite on their wedding day. He must journey through the gates of Hades, past the three-headed beast Cerberus, and across the river Styx, guarded by Charon the boatman. Hope guides him, and his singing and playing cause the guardians of the underworld to sleep so that he may gain entry where no human is allowed. Orpheus



Statue of Orpheus with the lyre and surrounded by beasts, Museum of Christian Byzantine Art, Athens, ca. fourth century CE.



pleads with Pluto and Persephone, the rulers of the underworld, to allow him to bring Eurydice back to the land of the living. His sweet singing persuades them to grant this request, however, there is a catch: he must not look back at her while ascending from the underworld. Orpheus agrees and leads Eurydice out of the underworld. In a moment of doubt, he hears a noise and turns to see her, bringing about her tragic loss a second time.

Upon returning, Orpheus falls into great despair. He finds solace in music and sings to the wild people of Thrace of the origin of the cosmos and the deities. Orpheus is brutally torn and dismembered by the Maenads—the wild, frenzied worshippers of Dionysus. Some accounts say this is because he did not allow them to be initiated into the Orphic mysteries; other accounts claim this was in response to him wooing away their men. His dismembered head and lyre float down a river to land at the isle of Lesbos, where his head continued to sing and gave oracles. So great was his power that even Apollo became jealous. His lyre, a source of great magical power, was suspended in the temple of Apollo.

In Horace's *Ars Poetica*, Orpheus is also portrayed as the civilizer of humans. He is the first poet to “soften the hearts of the ‘stony and beastly people’ and set them on the path to civilization.” As John Warden pointed out, the effect of Orpheus's song is to lead humans to love. As stated in the “Orphic Hymn to Venus,” “Love is very ancient, perfect in itself, and very wise.”

Orpheus Lost: The Middle Ages

The Roman myths of Ovid and Virgil are powerful and remain with us to this day. Before the Roman retellings of the Orpheus myth, however, there existed a sacred tradition with deep roots in Greek religion. The myth of Orpheus became absorbed into the emerging Christian



During the formative years of Christianity, Orphic and Mithraic symbolism sometimes combined with Christian, as in this bas-relief with all three elements: the Phrygian cap of Mithras, the Lyre of Orpheus, and the Christian Good Shepherd.

tradition as seen in Roman funerary art and theological comparisons of Orpheus with David and Moses. In the early Christian tradition, Orpheus was re-envisioned as a pagan prophet who prefigured the arrival of Christ.

As Augustine later wrote, Orpheus was said to have “predicted or spoken truth of the Son of the Divine or the Father.” What Orpheus began, Christ completed. Later in the Middle Ages, the myth of Orpheus would be retold in the form of moral allegories. During this period, written knowledge of the sacred, mystical, and theological teachings of the Orphic tradition was lost.

During the third to sixth centuries, Orphic motifs blended with depictions of Christ in funerary art as seen in the Roman catacombs. Funerary artists looking for established models to serve the new Christian faith's need for images

of Christ as a leader of souls through the underworld could use the figure of Orpheus. In these early Christian catacomb frescoes, Orpheus, the peaceful tamer of wild animals, is depicted as a symbol of Christ. Over time, the image of Orpheus, the tamer of animals, and Christ, the Good Shepherd, would merge into each other.

John Block Friedman noted similarities between depictions of Christ and Orpheus in early Christian funerary art: “Orpheus, because of his peaceful nature, his power of composing discord through music and eloquence, and his tragic death at the hands of his followers was perhaps the most appropriate and certainly the most long-lived of the pagan figures for Christ to be used in funerary art.” In these tomb images, Christ is represented with a lyre and Phrygian cap surrounded by animals—in these cases the variety of animals is typically simplified to show sheep or other Christian iconic animals such as doves and eagles.

Christian writers who explicitly compare Christ and Orpheus include Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius. Clement compares the power of Christ’s new song which tames the wildest of beasts—humans—with Orpheus’s use of music to charm animals and move oak trees. Writers compared the actions of Orpheus and Christ in the underworld, showing that what Orpheus had begun, Christ had finished, fulfilling prophecies inherent in pagan myth. This interpretation continues today as Umberto Utro, head of the Vatican Museum’s Department of Christian Antiquities, explained: “Many Christian sarcophagi contain pagan elements and references to Greek and Roman deities. ... In the Gospel, Yeshua said ‘I am the Good Shepherd who will lay down my life for the sheep.’ The early Christians easily recognized Christ in (the pagan shepherd) image and invested

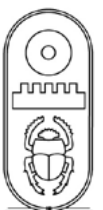
it with new meaning. Artists also saw Christ in Orpheus, the son of the deity of music, Apollo. Just as Orpheus tamed wild beasts with his music, his image became the image of Christ who, with his words, transformed the lives of sinners.”

A fascinating example of the merging of Orpheus and Christ is represented on an amulet that depicts Christ crucified under a moon and seven stars with the text “Orpheus Bacchus.” Amulets such as this one were produced in Alexandria, where Jewish, Christian, and Greek religious beliefs co-existed and blended, and may illustrate a believer’s appeal for protection from multiple divinities. All three figures—Orpheus, Bacchus/Dionysus, and Christ—lead the soul through the underworld and could be appealed to for protection and guidance of the soul in its journey after bodily death.

Orpheus was also compared to figures from the Hebrew Scriptures, such as David



Christians had no difficulty depicting Orpheus in the bas-reliefs on this Pyx (vessel to contain the consecrated bread from the Eucharistic celebration), which by legend was a gift of Pope Gregory the Great to Columba at Bobbio, in the fifth century.





Albrecht Dürer, Death of Orpheus, 1494.

and Moses. Orpheus and David both healed through music and were known as singers of sacred hymns and string players. David healed the madness of King Saul through his playing and singing. Early Greek leaders of the Church such as Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, and Proclus, refer to Orpheus in order to illustrate that the Greek religious tradition was borrowed from Moses in Egypt, showing that its source of divine inspiration was the same as in the Judeo-Christian tradition. To these writers, Orpheus's teachings represent an early form of monotheism borrowed from Judaic sources.

After the fifth century, explicit linkages of Christ and Orpheus begin to recede. In the early Middle Ages, the myth of Orpheus is told as an allegory, and Orpheus himself is seen in negative light in which his paganism, musical ability, and moral pursuits are linked. In works such as the *Ovide Moralisé*, classical myths are recast as moral allegories to reconcile them with Christian doctrine.

In the later Middle Ages, Orpheus was transformed into a handsome knight

or prince who sings songs of romantic love, brings Eurydice back to life, and always earns a happy ending. In the eleventh century, Orpheus is presented as romantic lover in three different poems. The fourteenth century produced two long poems in English with Orpheus as a princely hero: Henryson's *Orpheus and Eurydice*, and the anonymous *Sir Orfeo*. Orpheus is presented as the most loyal of lovers, a minstrel, and possessing the magical and astrological powers of a wizard. These medieval romantic writers tell of Orpheus bringing Eurydice back to life through spells or through the power of love.

For instance, the romantic poem *Sir Orfeo* includes elements of Celtic otherworld mythology, fairies, and jeweled castles. It bears slight resemblance to the Orpheus of Ovid and Virgil and conforms closely to the medieval romantic genre of the time. It contains a blending of classic mythology, secular romance, Christian morals, and Celtic fairy tales. A modern translation of *Sir Orfeo* was completed by J. R. R. Tolkien and published posthumously in the book *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl, Sir Orfeo*.

Orpheus Recovered: The Renaissance

Many of the original ancient Greek spiritual traditions associated with Orpheus were lost during the Middle Ages as pagan religious traditions were suppressed and eliminated by the Christian Church. The Renaissance brought a rediscovery of the original classical myths and earlier sources, leading to a deep appreciation of Orpheus as he appeared before merging with Christian tradition. The rediscovery of classic sources was spearheaded by Cosimo de Medici, a fifteenth-century Florentine ruler who sponsored the translation of a great number of classical works of antiquity from Greek into Latin, thus making a number of original sources

available to the West for the first time in over a thousand years.

Through Cosimo de Medici, the Platonic Academy was re-founded in Florence. He appointed Marsilio Ficino as its leader. Ficino translated the complete known works of Plato, the *Corpus Hermeticum*, and the works of Neoplatonic philosophers such as Porphyry, Plotinus, and Iamblichus. Ficino's goal was to reconcile Platonism with Christianity through his translations, commentaries, and writings such as *Platonica Theologia de immortalitate animorum* (*Platonic Theology on the Immortality of Souls*) and *De vita libri tres* (*Three Books of Life*). Through his revival of Platonic thought, Ficino became one of the leading founders of the spiritual and cultural rebirth of the Renaissance.

We know that Ficino shared a deep affinity with Orpheus and shared many of his attributes: he sang the Orphic Hymns, played an Orphic lyre with an image of Orpheus painted on it, was eloquently compared to Orpheus by those who knew

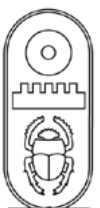
him, and practiced what we would now call music therapy as a method for psychological healing and spiritual integration. Ficino's biographer, Corsi, said, "He set forth the hymns of Orpheus and sang them to the lyre in the ancient manner with incredible sweetness, so people say." Johannes Pannonius said, "You restored to the light the ancient sound of the lyre and the style of singing and the Orphic songs which had previously been consigned to oblivion."

Marsilio Ficino: Orpheus Returned

Lorenzo de Medici, in his poem *Altercazione*, said of Ficino: "I thought that Orpheus had returned to the world." Another writer said of him: "He soothes the unyielding oaks with his lyre and softens once more the hearts of wild beasts." The Florentine scholar Angelo Poliziano compared Ficino's achievements with Orpheus's retrieval of Eurydice from the underworld: "His lyre . . . far more successful than the lyre of Thracian Orpheus, has brought back from the underworld what is, if I am not mistaken,



Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot, *Orpheus Leading Eurydice from the Underworld*, 1861.



the true Eurydice, that is Platonic wisdom with its broad judgment.”

Sources that inspired Ficino include Plato, Hermes Trismegistus, and Neoplatonists such as Proclus and Plotinus, as well as the early Renaissance syncretist, Gemistus Pletho. Like Proclus, Ficino zealously sung and studied the Orphic hymns. He also practiced vegetarianism, which was one of the key spiritual practices of the Orphic and Pythagorean mystery schools. Gemistus Pletho provided inspiration that would help to form the Platonic Academy and may have also played a significant role in inspiring Ficino in the use of hymns. Pletho and Proclus both provided a conception of a perennial philosophic tradition predating Plato, which includes Orpheus, Pythagoras, and the Chaldean oracles. Renaissance philosophers advanced this notion, including divinely inspired theologians such as Abraham, Zoroaster, Hermes, Moses, Orpheus, Pythagoras, and Plato as members of the *prisci theologi*, ancient sages who predated the arrival of Christ. Orpheus is typically the oldest Greek source in this lineage.

His visiting Egypt provides a common source for Pythagoras, Plato, and others. Monotheism and the trinity were two religious truths mentioned as being found in the *prisci theologi*, and Orpheus in particular. Proclus and Plotinus provided Ficino with a basis for interpreting the deities of Greek mythology as metaphysical principles that would help Ficino develop his ideas on natural magic and bridge the seemingly irreconcilable pagan and Christian traditions. Orpheus, with his associations to Greek, Egyptian, and possibly Hebrew religion offers a uniquely powerful symbol of universal sacred tradition that would appeal greatly to Renaissance scholars and philosophers



A Roman mosaic from ca. 250 CE depicting Orpheus surrounded by animals.

intent on reconciling pagan and Christian traditions.

The first work that Ficino chose to translate was the *Orphic Hymns*. The Orphic Hymns are believed by some to have been composed by Neoplatonic writers in the second or third century CE, and they are probably based on older sources. They are divine hymns to the Greek deities such as Apollo, Venus, Hermes, as well as the Muses, Fates, and Furies. They contain instructions on which incense should be offered, along with epithets singing praise of the deity being invoked. Ficino viewed the deities of the hymns as metaphysical, natural, archetypal principles contained within the divinity of the one Deity and cautioned against considering thinking of them in an idolatrous manner.

Although translated in 1462, these works were not made available until much later, perhaps out of concern that they would be interpreted as being too overtly pagan. D. P. Walker hypothesized that the earliest Renaissance-era manuscript of the *Orphic Hymns* was brought from

Constantinople by Giovanni Aurispa in 1424.

Ficino gave great importance to these hymns, listing their revival among the great achievements of fifteenth-century Florence, when he said: “This age, like a golden age, has brought back to the light those liberal disciplines that were practically extinguished: grammar, poetry, oratory, painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and the ancient singing of songs to the Orphic lyre.”

Ficino recommended singing of the hymns as a method for aligning the human soul with the Cosmic soul, thus bringing about good health and relief from melancholy and other afflictions of the spirit:

Our spiritus is in conformity with the rays of the heavenly spiritus, which penetrates everything either secretly or obviously. It shows a far greater kinship... if we make use of song and light and the perfume appropriate to the deity like the hymns that Orpheus consecrated to the cosmic deities... Music was given to us by the Divine

to subdue the body, temper the mind, and render [the Divine] praise.

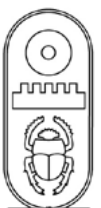
I know that David and Pythagoras taught this above all else and I believe they put it into practice.

In another letter, he explained: “I do it also to banish the vexations of both soul and body, and to raise the mind to the highest considerations and to the Divine as much as I may.” Although we have no record of his music, we know his performances were striking and profoundly inspirational. In an eyewitness account of Ficino’s performance, a bishop said: “. . . then his eyes burn, then he leaps to his feet, and he discovers music which he never learnt by rote.” Ficino saw music, medicine, and theology as intimately linked and worthy of study and practice. In one of his letters, he said:

You ask, Canigiani, why I so often combine the study of medicine with that of music... Orpheus, in his book of hymns, asserts that Apollo, by his vital rays, bestows health and life on all and drives away disease. Furthermore, by the sounding strings, that is, their vibrations and power, he regulates



Orpheus-Christus from the Catacombs of Marcellinus and Peter in Rome. It depicts Orpheus with his lyre in the imperial pose of Christ, with Christian souls as doves, ca. fourth century.





A late seventeenth-century tapestry depicting Orpheus playing lyre to Hades and Persephone, at the Art Institute of Chicago.

everything; by the hypate, the lowest string, winter; by the neate, the highest string, summer; and by the dorians, that is the middle strings, he brings in spring and autumn. So, since the patron of music and discoverer of medicine are one and the same deity, it is hardly surprising that both arts are often practiced by the same man. In addition, the soul and body are in harmony with each other by a natural proportion, as are the parts of the soul and the parts of the body.

Ficino gives another explanation of the power of music to create harmony in the body by working through the imagination and emotion of the artist, citing similar examples of Pythagoras, Empedocles, Plato, Aristotle, Orpheus, and Amphion:

Plato and Aristotle taught, as we have often found from our own experience, that serious music maintains and restores this harmony to the parts of the soul, while medicine restores harmony to the parts of the body. ... And Pythagoras, Empedocles, and the physician Asclepiades proved this in practice. Nor is this any wonder. For sound and song arise from consideration in the mind, the impulse of fantasy and the desire of the heart, and in disturbing the air and lending measure to it they vibrate the airy spirit of the listener, which is the link between body and soul. Thus sound and song easily arouse the fantasy, affect the heart, and reach the innermost recesses of the mind. ... This indeed was shown by... the miracles of Pythagoras and

Empedocles who could quickly quell lust, anger, or madness by serious music. Then again, using different modes, they used to stimulate lazy minds. And there are the stories of Orpheus, Arion, and Amphion.

Music and sound are related to the soul by the nature of air and vibration. This is traced through Orpheus back to the original sources in Egypt: “The body is indeed healed by the remedies of medicine; but spirit which is the airy vapor of our blood and the link between body and soul, is tempered and nourished by airy smells, by sounds, and by song. Finally, the soul as it is divine is purified by the divine mysteries of theology. In nature, a union is made from soul, body, and spirit. To the Egyptian priests, medicine, music, and the mysteries were one and the same. Would that we could master this natural and Egyptian art as successfully as we tenaciously and wholeheartedly apply ourselves to it!”

We know that Ficino saw himself as being afflicted with melancholy, which he attributed to the influence of Saturn in his astrological horoscope. Playing the lyre and the Orphic hymns were used as a method of aligning his spirit to specific celestial and divine metaphysical principles,



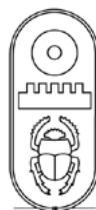
Franz Caucig, detail of The Lament of Orpheus, nineteenth century.

which could be used to restore physical, psychological, and spiritual balance.

In one of his letters to his friend Sebastiano Foresi, Ficino said, “I rose to my feet, and hastened to take up the lyre. I began to sing at length from the hymns of Orpheus.” And “we play the lyre precisely to avoid becoming unstrung. ... May the well-tempered lyre always be our salvation when we apply ourselves to it rightly.” This natural magic is used to heal the body. As Angela Voss states in her article “Marsilio Ficino, the Second Orpheus”: “If one has inner eyes to see them, the natural things of the changeable world perceived by the senses are signs or ‘divine lures’ which provide an unending reminder of enduring reality. In this sense the act of living itself can be seen as a magical rite. ...”

In “Fitting One’s Life to the Heavens,” Ficino gives us rules for composing and improvising celestial music. Music is drawn down through the celestial spheres through seven steps corresponding to the planets and associated with stones, metals, and elements. One should choose tones that correspond to the heavenly spheres that one wishes to emulate. These should then be harmonized and arranged in a way that reflects the harmony of the spheres. The practitioner must pay attention to the energies they are primarily susceptible to and employ tones of celestial bodies that increase or decrease those energies depending on the balance desired.

Ficino also developed the concept of the four *furores*, or frenzies: poetic, religious, prophetic, and amorous. Music was associated with the first poetic furor and inspired harmonization of the discord of the soul caused by its painful incarnation in the material world. Orpheus was interpreted as a “divinely inspired poetic teacher, possessed by Platonic furor who reformed and civilized his barbarous contemporaries.” Orpheus played a special





Orpheus amongst the Thracians, on a red-figure bell-krater in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, dated ca. 440 BCE.

role in Ficino's philosophy, as he was inspired by all four of the divine frenzies. In all four frenzies "it is the power of love which Orpheus brings to the world."

In Orpheus, Ficino found the embodiment of his philosophical mission—he rediscovered the founder of the mysteries who used music and hymns to mediate between the heavens and Earth, bringing civilization, the arts, culture, health, love, and peace to humanity: "You, yourself, will be greater than the heavens as soon as you resolve upon the task. For these celestial bodies are not to be sought by us outside in some other place; for the heavens in their entirety are within us, in whom the light of life and the origin of heaven dwell." To Ficino, Orpheus is more than myth. He is a living presence to be revived through spiritual practice and song.

Orpheus Sings On

After Ficino, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola also rediscovered the magical and theurgic use of the *Orphic Hymns* saying, "Nothing is more effective in natural magic than the hymns of Orpheus, if the correct music, the intent of the soul, and other circumstances known to the wise were to be applied." Ficino's music-spirit theory would be expanded and continued by sixteenth-century scholars such as Robert

Fludd (England), Guillaume Du Bartas (France), Robert Burton (England), and Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa (Germany).

The revival of the classical myth of Orpheus by Ficino and other Renaissance scholars gave inspiration to artists who used Orpheus as a model for new forms of artistic expression in music, sculpture, and painting. In particular, we see Orpheus present at the birth of opera, which began as a conscious imitation of Greek tragedy. Orpheus was the most popular subject among the early operas. Angelo Poliziano, a Florentine poet, humanist, and collaborator with Ficino, created an early precursor of opera based on the Orphic myth entitled *La Favola di Orfeo* in 1474. Ficino's very own Orphic lyre was used during one of the performances in Mantua by the singer Baccio Ugolino. Although the music for this work is lost to us, we know that it was based on Virgil's retelling of the myth and emphasizes Orpheus as the pastoral shepherd in love with Eurydice. The work was performed during Carnival festivities in Mantua and was intended to honor the Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga. Leonardo da Vinci is known to have designed the stage set for this work, and drawings of it exist in his notebooks.

The earliest recorded opera is *Orpheus and Euridice*, composed by Jacopo Peri in 1600. Peri's *Euridice* was first performed for the wedding of Maria de Medici and Henry IV and is considered the first opera. In Peri's version, Euridice and Orpheus are reunited after the underworld journey. Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, composed in 1607, is considered the first popular opera. While its first performances were for small, elite crowds, *L'Orfeo* was soon performed outside of Mantua, making it the first opera to be successfully performed in several cities. It is a popular work still performed to this day. As Professor Ralph Abraham pointed out, "There are at least twenty-six operas in the 1600s concerning Orpheus, and twenty-nine in the 1700s, including classics by Telemann, Gluck, Handel, and Haydn."

Conclusion

The myth of Orpheus resonates throughout time as a powerful archetype because it shows how art, poetry, and music can be used to bridge multiple realms of existence: mundane and celestial, living and dead, conscious and unconscious, chaotic and harmonious, masculine and feminine, and personal and cosmic. The bridge is created by resonances shared between these realms through air, emotion, and imagination. Thanks to the work of Renaissance philosophers, artists, poets, and musicians, this bridge has been recovered and preserved for future generations to rediscover for themselves.

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The original poster for the 1959 film Black Orpheus, which reimagined the tale of Orpheus and Eurydice in a Rio favela, and won several awards, including an Oscar.

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