

*Scintillating* baroque..



.. Serious **fun**



Director from the Continuo  
*Andrew Lawrence-King*  
Early Harps & Research

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Early Opera &  
Historical Productions



Action! Action! Action!

The St Petersburg Philharmonia Hall was sold-out and all standing-room taken for the performance on Saturday December 7<sup>th</sup> of Stefano Landi's 1619 opera *La Morte d'Orfeo*, by the Baroque Opera Studio directed (stage and music) by Andrew Lawrence-King.

As far as is known, this was the first staged production of Landi's *tragicomedia pastorale* in modern times. In 1987, Andrew Lawrence-King co-directed the first modern concert-performance and CD recording with ensemble Tragicomedia.

The St Petersburg project was an **Il Corago** production, combining research, education and performance. Andrew's research is part of the 'Text, Rhythm, Action' strand of the Performance Program of the Australian Research Council's Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions. Performers – advanced students and young professionals – received training in Historically Informed Performance (music and acting) as participants in St Petersburg's Fourth Open Academy (administrated by Georgy Blogodatov).

*Il Corago presents Stefano Landi's La Morte d'Orfeo at the St Petersburg Philharmonia*  
Photo Olga Tyuteleva





Katerina Antonenko & Xavier Diaz Latorre  
Photo Anton Varentsov

The teaching/direction team led by Andrew Lawrence-King as Artistic Director brought together international specialists in this repertoire. Xavier Diaz Latorre, Professor of Theorbo & Baroque Guitar at the Escuela Superior de Música de Catalunya, was Co-Director of Music, with special responsibility for coaching basso continuo. Katerina Antonenko was Assistant Producer, co-ordinating the design/movement team with Daniil Vedernikov and Ekaterina Mikhaylova-Smolnyakova.

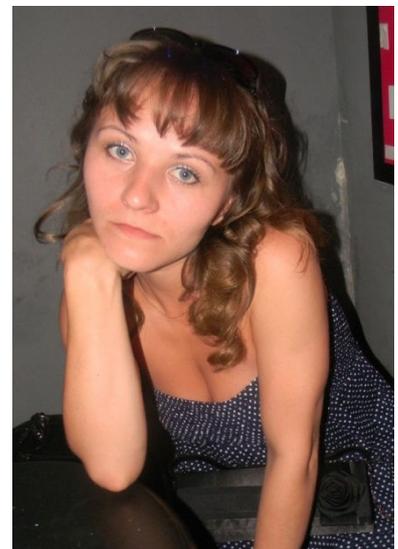


Daniil Vedernikov coached baroque gesture, designed and painted *seicento* backcloths (Arcadia, a Hell-mouth revealing the local skyline, and a Heavenly Palace), created props, and was Stage Manager. He also made a commedia dell'arte appearance at the end of the show.



As director of Renaissance Dance Ensemble Vento del Tempo, Ekaterina Mikhaylova-Smolnyakova choreographed and coached dancing and movement based on circa-1600 Italian sources (Negri & Caroso). Vento del Tempo supplied many costumes, with additional costume work by Diana Misco. Vento del Tempo members appeared on stage as dancers and monsters, worked behind the scenes as expert technical crew, and coached training sessions on historical dance and swordfighting.

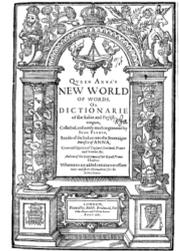
Working within the confines of a concert hall without any lighting equipment, Ekaterina Aronova, lighting expert at the Mikhailovsky Theatre, designed for this production low-angle, reduced intensity lighting, to imitate the effect of historical lighting. This showed the historical sets and costumes quite literally in the best possible light, and also (by not blacking out the auditorium) heightened communication between audience and performers, and amongst audience members.



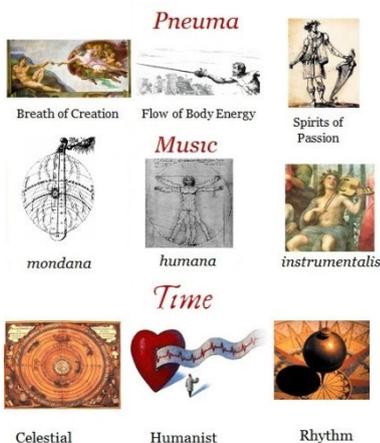
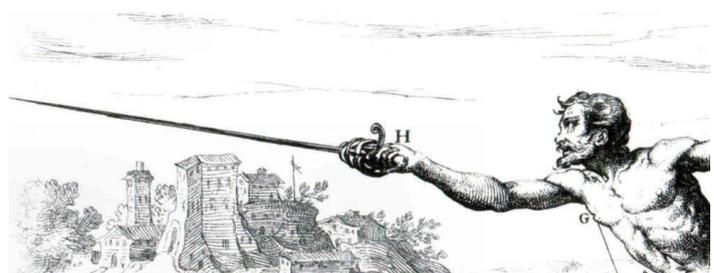


For this project, Andrew Lawrence-King made a new edition from the original print, correcting several errors in previous editions and a few misprints in the original, comparing the sung text with the surviving libretto, and - with help from Florio's 1611 Italian-English dictionary - making a translation for performers.

Katerina Antonenko made a Russian translation for participants and the St Petersburg audience.



The aesthetic of the project was radically historical. There was no hand-waving conductor – the music was co-ordinated by Andrew and Xavier from the two continuo bands on opposite sides of the stage. The rhythm was unified by the slow, steady beat of Tactus. Every individual performer has shared responsibility for this Tactus: a ritual in rehearsal was for Andrew to ask “Who’s the conductor?” and for every performer to reply in unison, “I am!” Recitatives were sung in Landi’s carefully composed, rhetorical, rhythms. The period instrumental ensembles included top Russian specialists and international guests on cornetto, sackbut, baroque strings, theorbo, baroque guitar, triple harp, recorders, dulcian, regal, harpsichord, organ etc.



Every element of the staging too was based on historical sources – prefaces to early operas; period treatises on gesture, dance & sword-fighting; and the anonymous 1630 book *Il Corago*. Also, the aesthetic philosophy, how emotions might be found in the text and music and conveyed to the audience, was modelled on period science and historical medicine. From renaissance theories of Vision, Aenargia, Pneuma and the Four Humours, we found practical means to understand the emotions of the original material, to work with those emotions as performers, and to offer the audience a rapidly-changing emotional experience.



*Monsters in St Petersburg's Hell!*

The modern audience in the Philharmonia Hall responded to the production with delight and enthusiasm, from the very first speech.

This was a Dedication of Thanks to the project's sponsors, in particular CHE in Australia and the Italian Cultural Institute, which (according to historical precedents) was sung in recitative, each group of sponsors separated by a violin ritornello.



*The Party of the Gods during the interval.*

Musicians played fanfares in the foyer, and played period dance-music to lead the audience into the hall. Any remaining barriers between stage and auditorium were broken down during the God's party, which took place on-stage during the interval, with audience members and actors toasting each other with wine and divine ambrosia.



*"Orfeo ancora vive"!  
Landi's Orpheus in Philharmonia Heaven*

At the end of the show, a commedia dell'arte Pantaloon threatened to disrupt the formal bows, but the audience's sustained standing ovation brought forth an encore of the final chorus: "Orfeo is not dead, but still lives".

And this may now justly be said for Stefano Landi's *tragicomedia* too: this 1619 drama with its rich language of emotions can still today inspire and delight performers and audience.

*Andrew Lawrence-King  
"Il Corago"*

*Stefano Landi*

*La Morte d'Orfeo in the St Petersburg Philharmonia*

