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Fine Art - Sculpture

An Understanding of Orfeo

by

Chara Nagle

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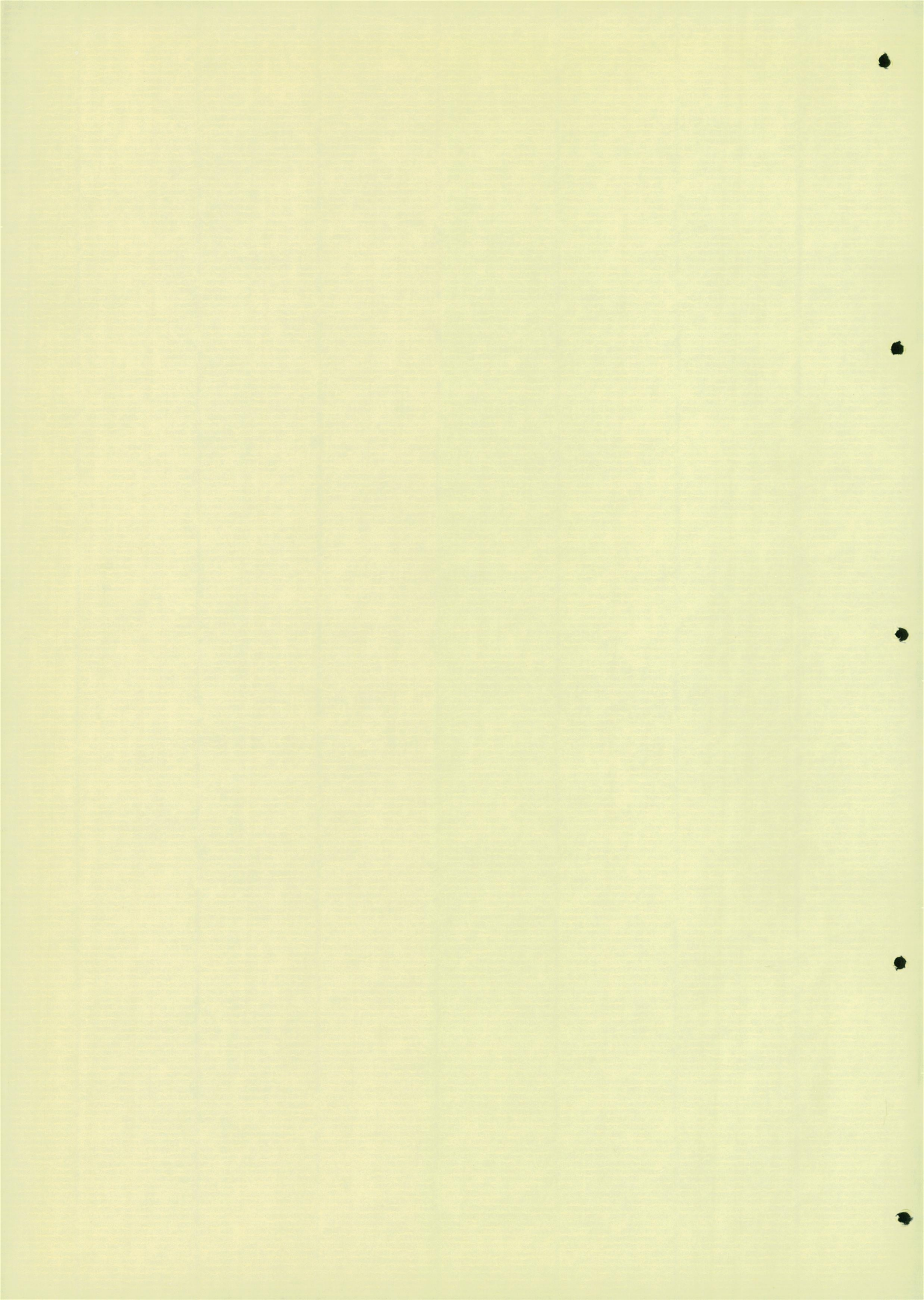
I would like to thank Jo Taylor, who helped me out tremendously at the early stages of my research, and the Opera Theatre Company, who were always obliging.

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Introduction

Digaetani asserts that there are many barriers to appreciating opera, but that one can reap its rewards if one attempts to understand its form (Digaetani, 1986, p. 247). In general, operas are long, in a foreign language, and involve a whirlpool of complexities. Beneath all this, however, "lives one of the greatest artistic wonders of the world" (Digaetani, 1986, p. 247).

Today much is changing and new productions have become increasingly intelligent and engrossing. A revived concern for artistry, informed production values and the obvious popular success of some contemporary opera have conspired to make the theatrical component as interesting as the musical. This is where designers and directors have made an important difference. So, whether based on the traditional approaches of Zeffirelli, Rennert or Ponelle, or the more radical visions and techniques of Appia, Wieland Wagner or contemporary designer, Hockney, opera now manages to do far more to fascinate. It is a stage spectacle and a theatrical event, as well as a musical piece.

The drama is important, but it is not more important than the people who perform it or those who watch it. It is actually a tool through which they can communicate about issues with which the normal run of conversation, body language and social ritual cannot cope. The transience inherent in any work of art is even more marked in a particular production of a work performed in the vernacular.

Monteverdi's great pastoral version of Orfeo was first performed under the auspices of Prince Francesco Gonzaga and the Accademia degli Invaghiti, in a relatively small room at the ducal palace in Mantua on the 24th of February, 1607, with a second performance held in the same place, one week later. The cast was: Orfeo, Eurydice, Hope, Sylvia, Charon, Pluto, Proserpina and a chorus of nymphs, shepherds and infernal spirits. The same version was performed more recently in the Samuel Beckett Theatre, Dublin last November (1995), by the Opera Theatre Company. The cast was composed of seven singers. Six of these singers made up the large chorus commentary (shepherds and spirits) when needed, and played smaller dramatic roles the rest of the time, while the seventh role, which was the largest and most dramatic, was reserved for Orpheus.

this was less an expedient than a way to find dramatic urgency at the same time as the truth of the myth and the essential truth of the renaissance pastoral - that social and personal survival can be achieved in the tension between hot passion and cold logic, between imagination and necessity. (OTC, 1995, p. 6)

In order to contextualise Monteverdi's opera Orfeo, which is the primary focus of this thesis, I have conducted a brief review of the history of the opera, from the ancient Greeks to Peri's Dafne, in 1597. This is shown in chapter one. In chapter two, I tell the story of Orfeo, its source and the other more christianised endings also written for Orfeo. Chapter three looks at the earliest references to Orpheus' journey through the Underworld, why Monteverdi's Orfeo is considered the first, fully-fledged opera and, briefly, other performances of Orfeo. The next three chapters - four five and six - are about the staging, lighting and costuming of Orfeo in the Samuel Beckett Theatre. The roles of the stage, lighting and costume designers and issues, such as whether their designs supported every mood of the performance, and whether the production was truly a team effort, will also be examined.

1. The History of Opera

Opera is an old art form. Its history goes back to ancient Greek culture, that wellspring of Western civilisation that also mastered philosophy, sculpture, literature, democracy, architecture and, most of all, drama in the form of tragedy.

Although the music for the Greek tragedies has not survived, Aristotle reassures us in his writings that music, especially chanting, accompanied by flute or lyre, was a crucial element of the performance. Aristotle, in his famous definition of tragedy backs this up:

Tragedy, then, is the imitation of some action that is important, entire, and of a proper importance - by language, ornamented and rendered pleasurable, but by different ways and in different parts ... By pleasurable language I mean language that has the ornaments of rhythm, melody and metre. And I add, by different ways in different parts, because in some parts metre alone is employed, in others, melody. (Digaetani, 1986, p. 14)

There were two possible reasons for including music in Greek tragedy. Firstly, music may have been acoustically necessary. The amphitheatres, where the tragedies were performed, were often very large, consequently audibility and echo sometimes caused problems. Sometimes when actors communicated through speech, reverberation caused hearing difficulties. However, this element of the amphitheatre sometimes added to the effect of music. Secondly, according to Aristotle, the inclusion of music, being one of the more abstract arts, enhanced the effect created by the play, thereby emphasising the moral lesson (Digaetani, 1986, p. 14). Morality was always at the core of Greek tragedy.

Other elements of Greek tragedy appeared in Opera as the form matured. Most Greek tragedies were conventionally based around five dialogue confrontations, usually involving two characters. This element became, and arguably still is, the basis of successful Opera and great Theatre. This five part form was also fundamental to the Greek tragedy Orfeo.

Greek tragedy presented the myths of Greek culture and history, its heroes who were intense, fascinating characters fuelled and motivated much of the action within the dramas. Orpheus in Orfeo, a man of the ancient world, one of the Argonauts in search of the Golden Fleece, a high-priest, mathematician, sage and endowed with a God-given ability to sing beautifully, is an example of this.

Further features of Greek musical tragedies include mournful lamenting, elegance and, in particular, presentation. Murders and bloody deeds, for example, were kept out of the audience's sight and not performed on stage. Opera continued this tradition.

Roman drama also had a musical element. Actors and actresses occasionally sang their lines, as did the choruses. The tragedies of Seneca - plays such as The Trojans, and Hercules on Oeta, closely followed the pattern of Greek tragedy.

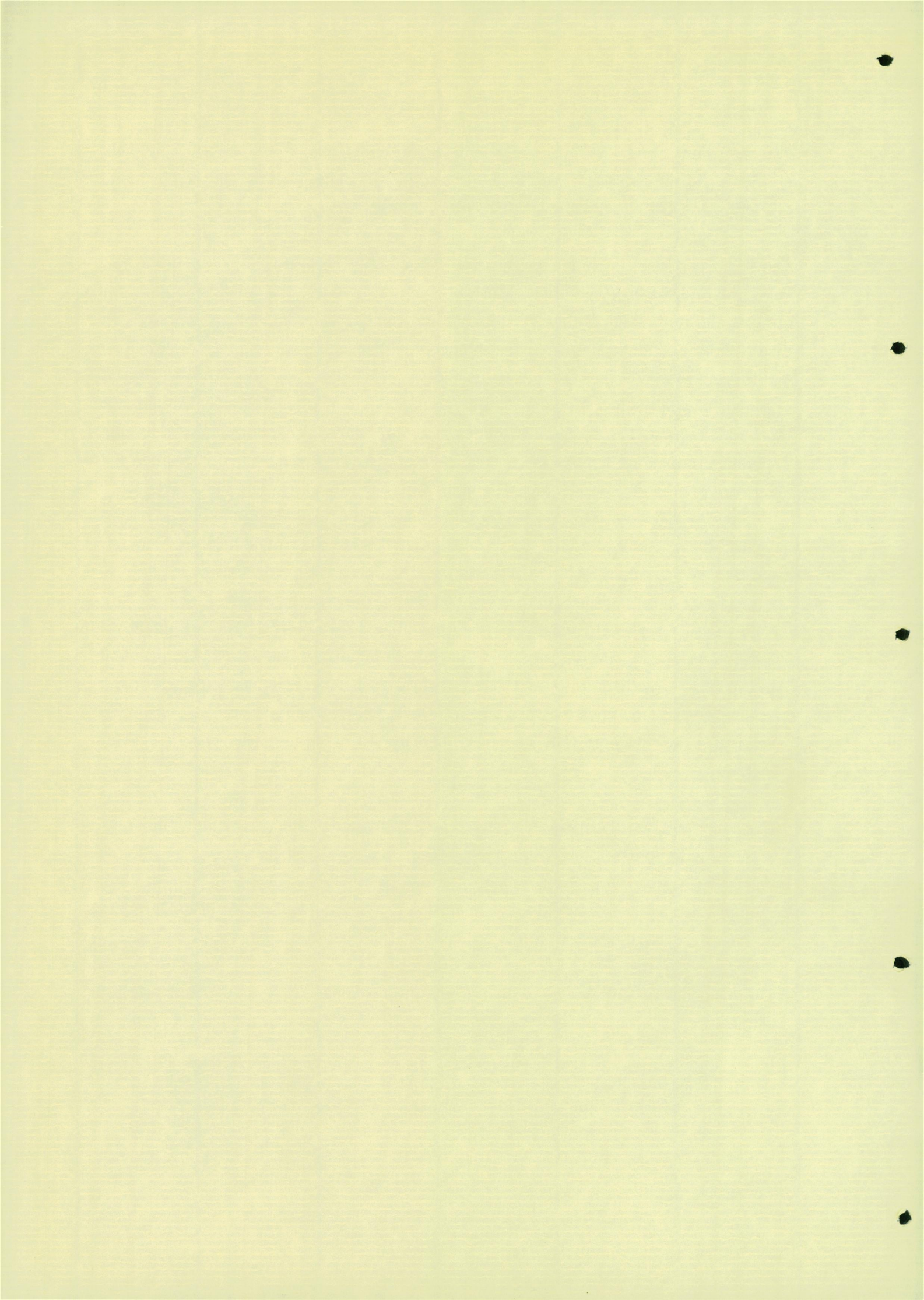
The next period of operatic concentration occurred in the Middle Ages, between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries. Much of this drama revolved around religion, with priests and nuns staging plays in churches and cathedrals in large cities. These plays were about public worship, showing the people the meanings of religious celebrations and trying to attract them to engage in traditional religious services. These liturgical dramatics were often operatic in nature. Some Gregorian chants survive and are still performed today. Easter, the most joyous season, produced some of the most elaborate operatic productions. One of the most ancient of these is played every ten years in the German town of Oberammergau. The oldest surviving is "Quem Quertis" ("Whom do you seek?") As these dramas developed, they became distinctly less religious and more theatrical, as a result of which the bishops ordered these pageants out of the churches and into the marketplaces.

Following the medieval era, between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Royal Courts developed their own pageants. These performances, characterised by movement and poetry, usually addressed a King, princess or other dignitary. These royal celebrations became known as *mascerada* in Italy, *mascerade* in France and *masque* in England. They were so called because often the actors wore masks as part of their costumes.

These operatic, courtly masques, reserved for royalty and aristocrats, were a mammoth expense, with up to a thousand people working on one. Thus began a long tradition of financial support from Kings, private patrons and the state. Raoul Gunsbourg, for example, had a casino attached to the opera company in Monte Carlo from 1890 to 1954, in order to support the opera.

The inclusion of 'entremets' with the 'masques' happened about the mid fifteenth century,

...the purpose of which - as for example at the Burgundian court on the occasion of the Feast of the Pheasant in 1454 - was to provide respite from the gourmandising with entertainments of song, dance, music and recitation. (Kimbell, 1991, p. 19)



Towards the end of the fifteenth century the popularity of the 'entremets' grew. These were similar to the choruses of the Greek classical drama, and were commonly used to frame and articulate the play, appearing at the ends of acts - 'intermedi a li acti',

A relationship was sometimes claimed between these allegorical intermedi and the naturalistic world of the play they framed. The intermedi were understood to give a metaphysical explanation of the action. (Kimbell, 1991, p. 19)

An example was the intermedi which accompanied Francesco d'Ambra's La Cofanaria (1565). The intermedi were taken from the story of Psyche and Cupid. These were treated as to make it appear that those things which the Gods performed in the plot of the intermedi were also done, as if under some constraint of some higher power, by the mortals in the Greek comedy.

The favourite source of themes for the intermedi was the great classical mythology, the Metamorphoses of Ovid - especially the myths with musical connotations. The Metamorphoses are a series of Latin tales, dealing with mythological, legendary and historical figures, they are written in hexameters in fifteen books, beginning with the creation of the world and ending with the deification of Caesar and the reign of Augustus.

In the 1500s, stagecraft was still almost entirely medieval but by the late fifteenth century practices had been developed that survived into the nineteenth century. The reasoning behind this was provided firstly by the renewed interest in Greek drama, but also by the desire to improve further and surpass the stage practices of the Ancient World - the rediscovery of Vitruvius' De architectura in the mid-fifteenth century and the publication of Alberti's De re aedificatoria in 1485- and secondly, the discovery of perspective and the ability of applying it to stage design.

Medieval stage design had used 'mansions' - small practical structures representing the various scenes of the drama - and open acting areas. These 'mansions' varied in number and character, usually with the inclusion of a Heaven, and Hell 'mansion'. The drama would migrate from one 'mansion' to the other, hoisting and lowering the actors back and forth with mechanical contrivances. Before the end of the fifteenth century the first move was made towards a more unified type of stage. The Pomponius Laertus Academy in Rome came up with the idea of framing the 'mansions' together in a single structure with a series of decorative columns, called a 'street'. This conformed the 'mansions' in a single structure or 'street'. Perspective, as a backcloth for this 'street', arrived in 1508 at the première of Aristo's Cassaria at Ferrara. The scenery comprised of

a street and the perspective of a landscape, churches, houses, gardens and bell towers. People were soon taking delight in these stage sets.

Four decades later, sceneography established itself on the sets, by the hand of Serlio. He cast aside the three sets idea of Virtruvius and Alberti - the tragic, represented by a palace built in stone; the comic, represented by a house built in wood; and the pastoral, represented by a forest created of embroidery - instead depicting these scenes on flats laid out in depth to the back of the stage. This idea of a handful of standard stylised sets remained in the Italian opera into the nineteenth century.

During the Renaissance period, the Florentine Camerata Group, formed an aristocratic movement for the revival of Greek tragedy. Founded in 1580, it was made up of scholars who were amateurs in music, singing and poetry, who met regularly to discuss Greek culture. The group's sponsor, Count Bardi, commissioned J. Peri to compose a score for Dafne (based on the ancient Greek myth of Daphne) in 1597. This was considered the first modern opera, although the music was still subordinate to the play. This was about to change, with Orfeo, composed by Monteverdi in 1606.

2. The Story of Orfeo

Orpheus, a classical hero of the ancient world, and his beloved, Eurydice, are soon to be married. While he is singing praise to her in the woods, the nymphs and shepherds join in, in songs and dances of praise. Meanwhile, Eurydice leaves with her companions. The build-up of celebration is instantly shattered by the entrance of the messenger, Sylvia, whose news of Eurydice's death from a snakebite causes deep lament. Orpheus, initially stunned, resolves to reclaim his beloved from Hades, the Underworld. Hope brings him to the gates of Hades, where Orpheus lulls the boat-keeper, Charon, to sleep and crosses the river Styx. Proserpina, queen of the Underworld pleads with Pluto, the king, to let Eurydice return with Orpheus to earth. He agrees, but stipulates the famous clause - that he must not look back at her until they have crossed the Styx. As Orpheus moves upward, earthward bound, he has his doubts. He looks over his shoulder, only to see Eurydice disappear in front of his eyes, back to Hades. Orpheus returns to earth alone where his father Apollo, the God of the Sun, consoles him, and reassures him that he and his beloved will meet again. The moral of the story being, he who can conquer Hades, cannot conquer his own emotions. Finally the skies open, Apollo, Orpheus and Eurydice are reunited in heaven.

Alessandro Striggio, who wrote the above libretto for Orfeo in 1607, supplied not just one but two endings. The second ending is different from the score that Monteverdi wrote for the opera, but closer to the myth, written in the fourth book of Verdi's Georgics. The second ending is as follows: the women who were rejected by Orpheus (when he turned around to make sure Eurydice was there behind him in the Underworld) felt so betrayed that they tore him limb from limb, whereupon his head floated down a river singing and landed on an island where it became an oracle to rival Apollo's own Delphic oracle, causing Apollo, eventually, to silence his own son's song.

3. The History of Orfeo

The composer, Monteverdi, and librettist, Striggio, revived the interest in tragic and religious festival drama in 1604, when composing Orfeo. The two earliest versions of Orpheus' journey to the Underworld are those written in books ten and eleven of Ovid's Metamorphoses and in the fourth book of Virgil's Georgics. Of the two, Ovid was the more important for the early history of the opera, as the libretto of Orfeo is based on material from the Metamorphoses. As well as providing a mythological basis, Ovid also initiated the pastoral setting for the love story, lament and supernatural happenings that were common to such an amorous and tragic tale.

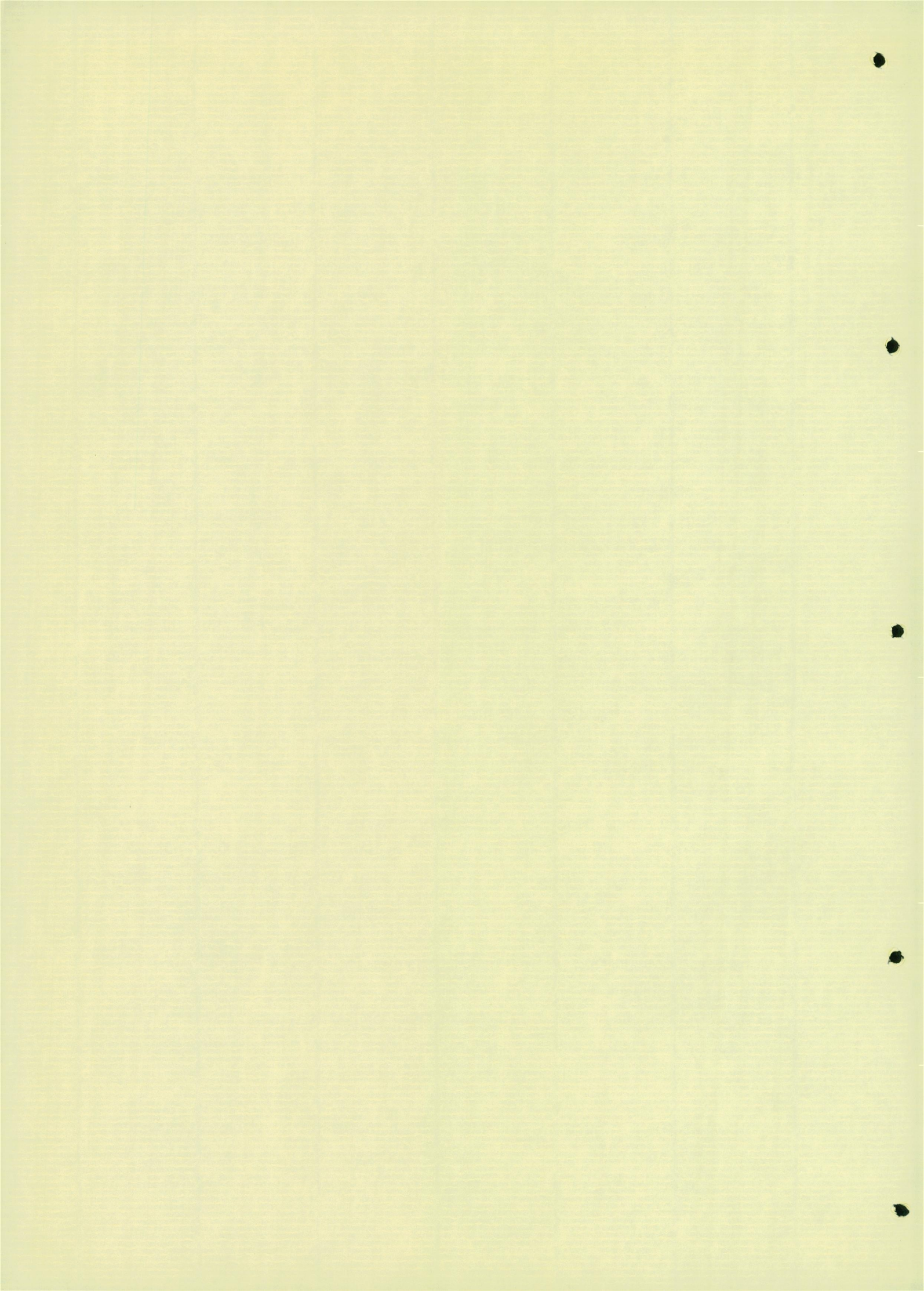
The work of Ovid and Virgil formed part of the essential literature of the educated classes during the Renaissance, so they would have been familiar with the plot of Orfeo, through either Latin or Italian translations. Two such translations were in circulation in the sixteenth century: Giovanni Andrea Dell' Anguillara's Le Metamortosi di Ovido and Lodovico Dolce's Le trasformationi.

Born in Cremona, Italy in 1567, Monteverdi was one of the most outstanding composers of opera in the seventeenth century. He studied music in his home town initially, before moving, in 1590, to the palace of Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga in Mantua, where he was employed as a 'sinatore di vivuola', a violinist. Apparently it was the Duke himself who, in 1606, encouraged Monteverdi towards Opera. One of the younger secretaries within the palace, Alessandro Striggio, wrote a revised libretto of Orfeo and Monteverdi composed the score.

In this pastoral drama, Monteverdi effectively moved beyond the Florentine Camerata model of recitative-dominated drama by creating a more flexible means of expression.(Morgenstein, 1956, p.19). His score was an amalgam of monody, madrigal and instrumental music of diverse kinds.

Monody is the single song of individuals in personal conflict and development, attached to melody flexible enough to combine dramatic action with musical expression.(Ewen, 1973, p399). This can be seen in "Tu se' morta mia vita, ed io respiro" (You have left me, my dearest, and I still living ?), where Orpheus displays grief over his wife's death, and in his desperate plea to the boat-keeper, Charon, "Possente spirito".

With the madrigal music form, "the music follows the words, searching out those more or less expressive chords according to the sentiments they should convey and conceding as much of the counterpoint" (Morgenstern, 1956, p. 16).Monteverdi used this musical



form in Orfeo, with the use of pizzicato (where, within the violin family, the strings are plucked or pinched with the fingers) and tremolo (where, in playing the violin, cello etc., the rapid reiteration of a note or notes to produces a trembling effect) in the opera orchestra.

Finally, Orfeo was the first opera to have an almost complete orchestra and diverse kinds of instrumental music. This resulted in a richness of expressive detail, a flow of musical invention, in which the rhythms and the pitches of speech were followed no less exactly than before, but more imaginatively.

Monteverdi strongly believed that to rely on a set of rules was not adequate for musical drama. He thought there was a need to use free modulations in order to introduce credible situations, life and passion into this new form of drama. When Artusi, the academic critic, criticised this conscious breaking of age-old rules, Monteverdi lashed back by advising Artusi to write what he felt, not what the law prescribed (Morgenstern, 1956, p. 17).

As I have said earlier, the pastoral opera was first performed at the ducal palace of Mantua, in 1607. The opera was actually commissioned by Duke Gonzaga's son, as a carnival entertainment to be performed before the Accademia delgi Invaghiti. The opera was a success. Cherubino Ferrari, the Mantuan court theologian, in a letter to the Duke of Mantua said:

The poetry is lovely in conception, lovelier still in form, and loveliest of all in diction; and indeed no less was to be expected of a man as richly talented as Signor Striggio. The music, moreover, observing due propriety, serves the poetry so well that nothing more beautiful is to be heard elsewhere. (Rider, 1981, p172)

What is believed to be the first modern staged version was given in Paris on may 2nd, 1911. Since then the opera has been intermittently revived, notably at the Florence May Musical Festival in 1949, at the New York City Opera in 1960, at the Aix-en-Provence Festival in 1965 and at the Holland Festival and Berlin Opera in 1967. When heard today, the opera is often performed in an edited version, usually that of Malipiero, Respighi or Orff, the last of whom made not one but three different adaptations.

4. Stage Design

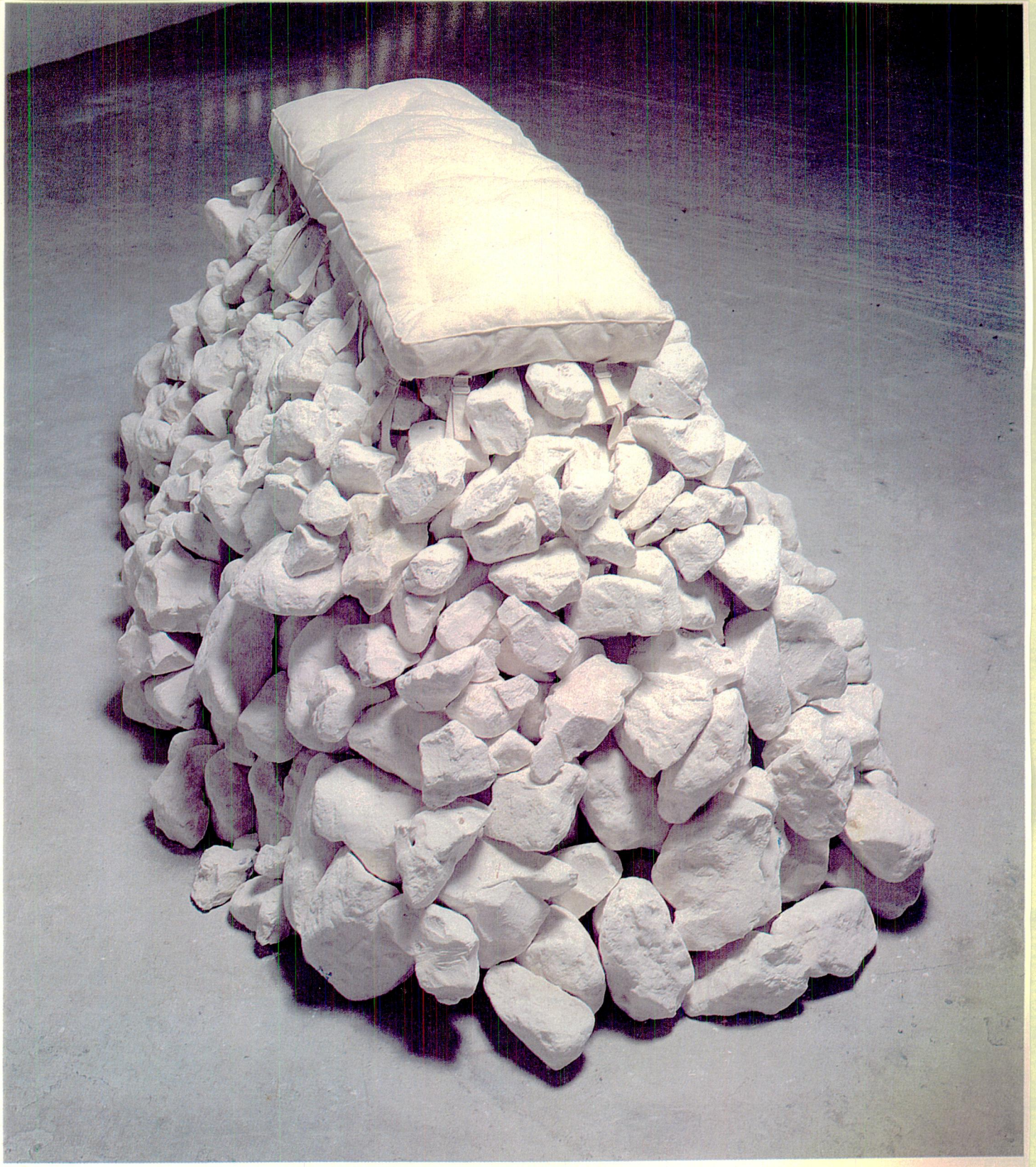
The problems of stage design are central to the important issues concerning the theatre and art in general. It has been said that theatre is the mirror of man, by it might be asked - what mirror and of which man? Is it enough for the theatre to offer a simple and fruitful image, or should it attempt to introduce a new universe that will give us a better understanding of the real world? Can theatre be called creation or is its role merely one of imitation? (Baslet, 1977, p. 7)

It is on some of these issues that I will be focusing in this chapter - spatial design, abstract and realist design, the audience and the collaborative effort that was applied to the recent production of Orfeo in Dublin.

The Greek drama Orfeo was to be performed in two halves, the Realworld - Acts I & II, projecting a rural peasant landscape; and the Underworld - Acts III, IV & V, also known as the 'Inferno', the land of spirits and eternal darkness. James Conway, the director, was adamant that he wanted a rural and spiritual setting created for the production, using the reality of the rural landscape as a starting point to create an abstract and spiritual atmosphere.

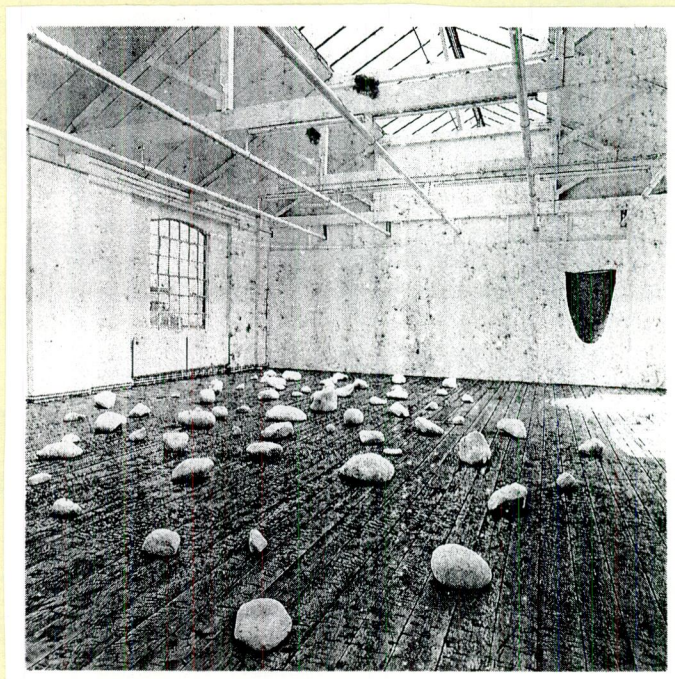
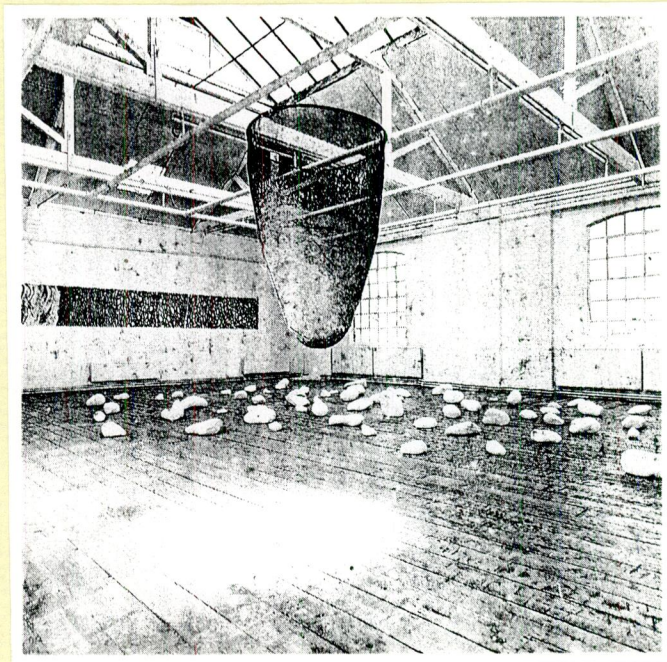
When Conway saw the work of the artist Kathy Prendergast about two years ago, two of her individual pieces particularly enthralled him. These were A Dream of Discipline, 1988 and Installation, 1987, referred to as Unit 7, Peckham (the gallery in which it was displayed). A Dream of Discipline was a single tomb or island-like structure, assembled out of white rocks of chalk, with a white mattress laid across the top, standing alone in a white room, with a wooden floor.(Illus.1). Unit 7, Peckham was also chalk based, with a scattered collection of pitted and rounded pieces of white chalk on a wooden floor. On one of the walls hung a charcoal drawing of a beach with the sea visible at the top. Suspended above the floor was a ten foot sieve partly filled with chalk.(Illus.2). Prendergast's fundamental idea of portraying the same subject matter in many different ways could be considered limited however it was this starkness, the deathly silence, the feeling of another presence which appealed to Conway. This conceptual and artistic freshness was what the set for Orfeo needed.

Orfeo deals with the very essence of isolation, suffering, death, rebirth of society and finally of hope and the human spirit itself. Conway knew the design concept could be nothing less; as Ming Chaon said, "anything short of a visual counterpart to the essence of opera is inadequate and becomes merely window dressing" (Burdick, Hansen, Zanger, 1974, p. 41).

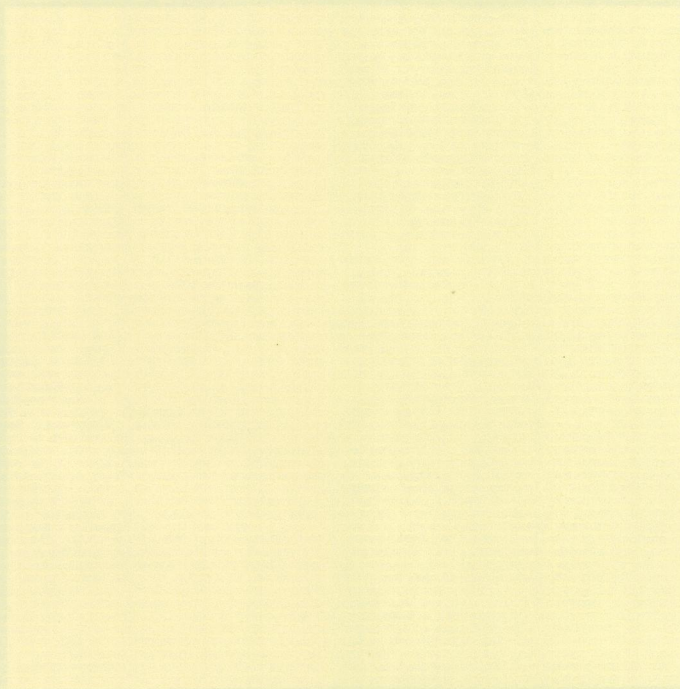
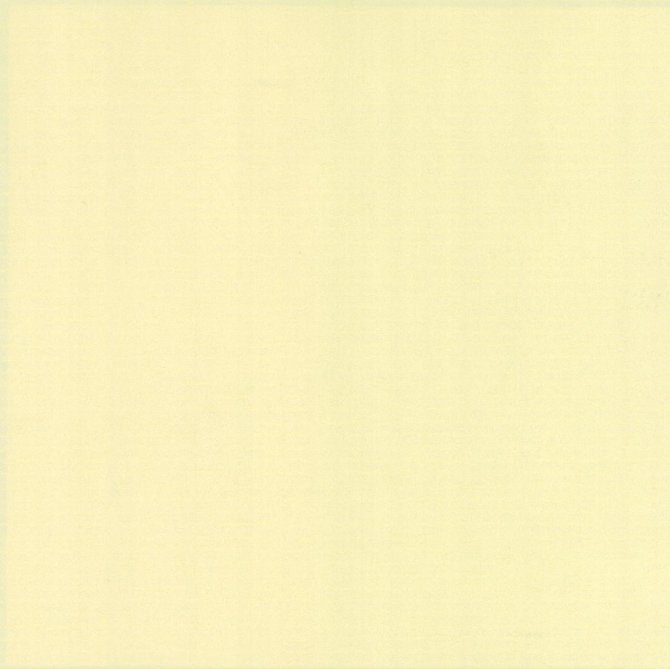


Illus.1 A Dream of Discipline, 1989





Illus.2 Unit 7, Peckham



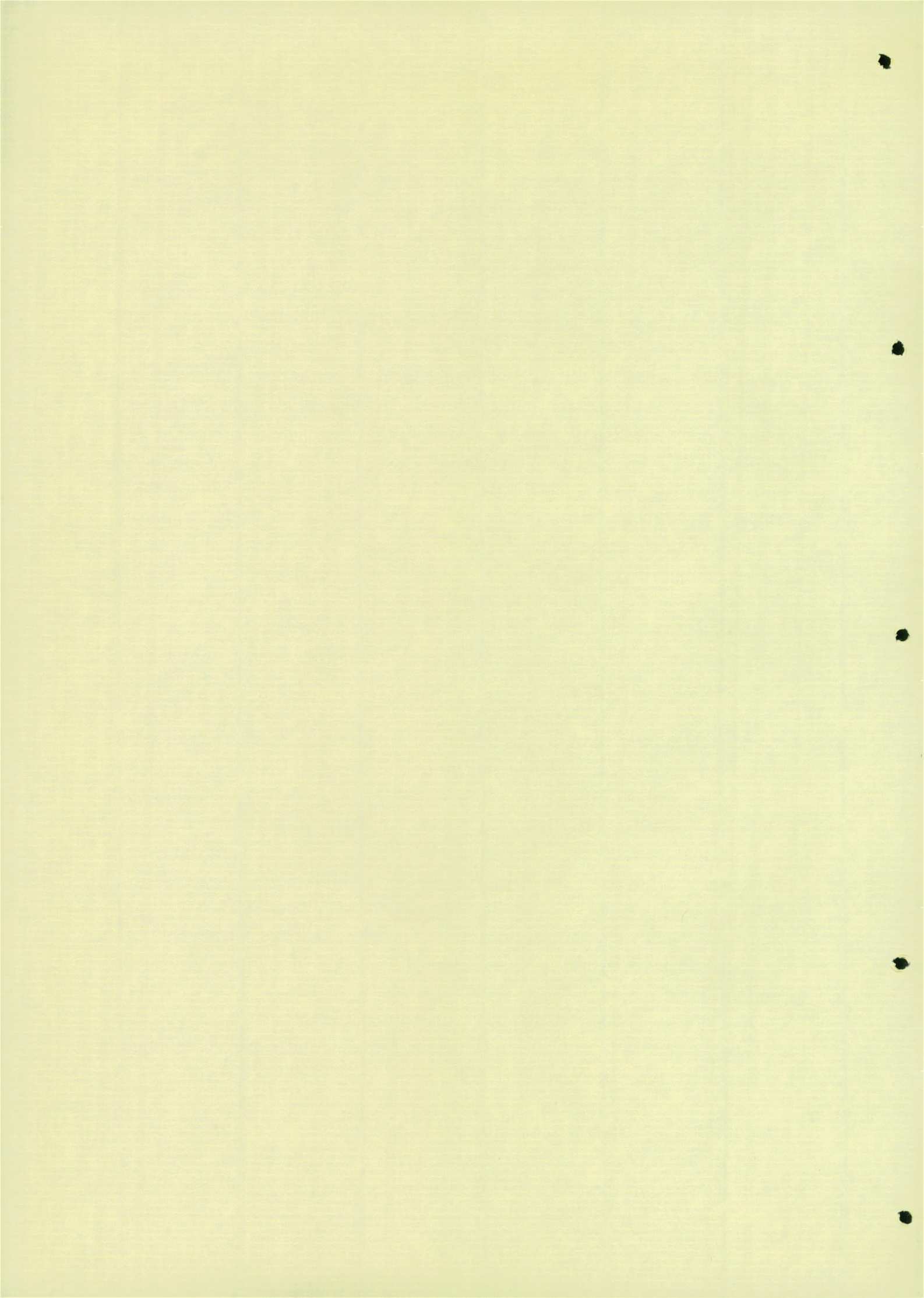
Kathy Prendergast was still a student at the National College of Art and Design, between 1976 and 1983, when she established her reputation as an artist in Ireland. This had a lot to do with the success of her diploma and degree shows, which she received first class honours in. From the beginning her art has been concerned with an, "investigation of the essence of life; an attempt to make sense of our existence." (Douglas Hyde Gallery, 1990, p5). In all of Prendergast's work, unnecessary detail is removed, whether the piece is large or small. However, each piece still maintains a stronghold of singularity with a powerful presence, which makes it difficult for the viewer to forget.

Prendergast's set for the first half, the Realworld, in the production of Orfeo, was very selective. a three foot circle of white chalk rocks surrounding a glow of fire was used to allow a group of peasants to huddle around it in the beginning of Act I. The white muslin curtains 'standing proudly' across the centre of the stage were the woods through which Orpheus sighed and wept in Act I, and which stood by him in Act II. A Dream of Discipline was stationed to the rear left hand corner of the stage, which Orpheus, the one chosen to follow the ritual, stood upon, reminiscent of a lamb about to be sacrificed upon an altar. Two white, wooden boards were temporarily placed on the floor during Act I, as a miniature stage for the celebration dance before the marriage of Eurydice and Orpheus. They were also used as symbolic doors to heaven, positioned directly behind Orpheus as he was saying goodbye to heaven and earth before his descent into the Underworld.

Prendergast incorporated Unit 7, Peckham and A dream of discipline into the 'sad and shadowy kingdom which no ray of sunlight ever pierces' of the Underworld. The pitted and scattered white rocks also helped to clarify Orpheus' tough journey through the 'Inferno' and A dream of discipline was used as a tomb for the dead Eurydice.

Although there are many conflicting styles on the stage, there are two distinct trends which characterise stage design today: realism and abstraction. With realism in the nineteenth century, the importance of portraying "the exact locale of the script became an indispensable witness to the action" (Bablet, 1977, p. 11). In addition, the importance of focusing on the narrative and its literal translation was crucial, whether or not the drama suffocated. In saying drama, I mean that form "of theatrical expression, that is constituted primarily as a literary artefact according to a particular 'dramatic convention'." (Vanden Heuvel, 1911, p. 2).

In the 1890s, abstraction arose to oppose realism in the theatre. The modernist aesthetic, apparent in painting and sculpture, began to affect operatic productions. Swiss designer Adolphe Appia and British designer Gordon Craig were the first designers to accept this



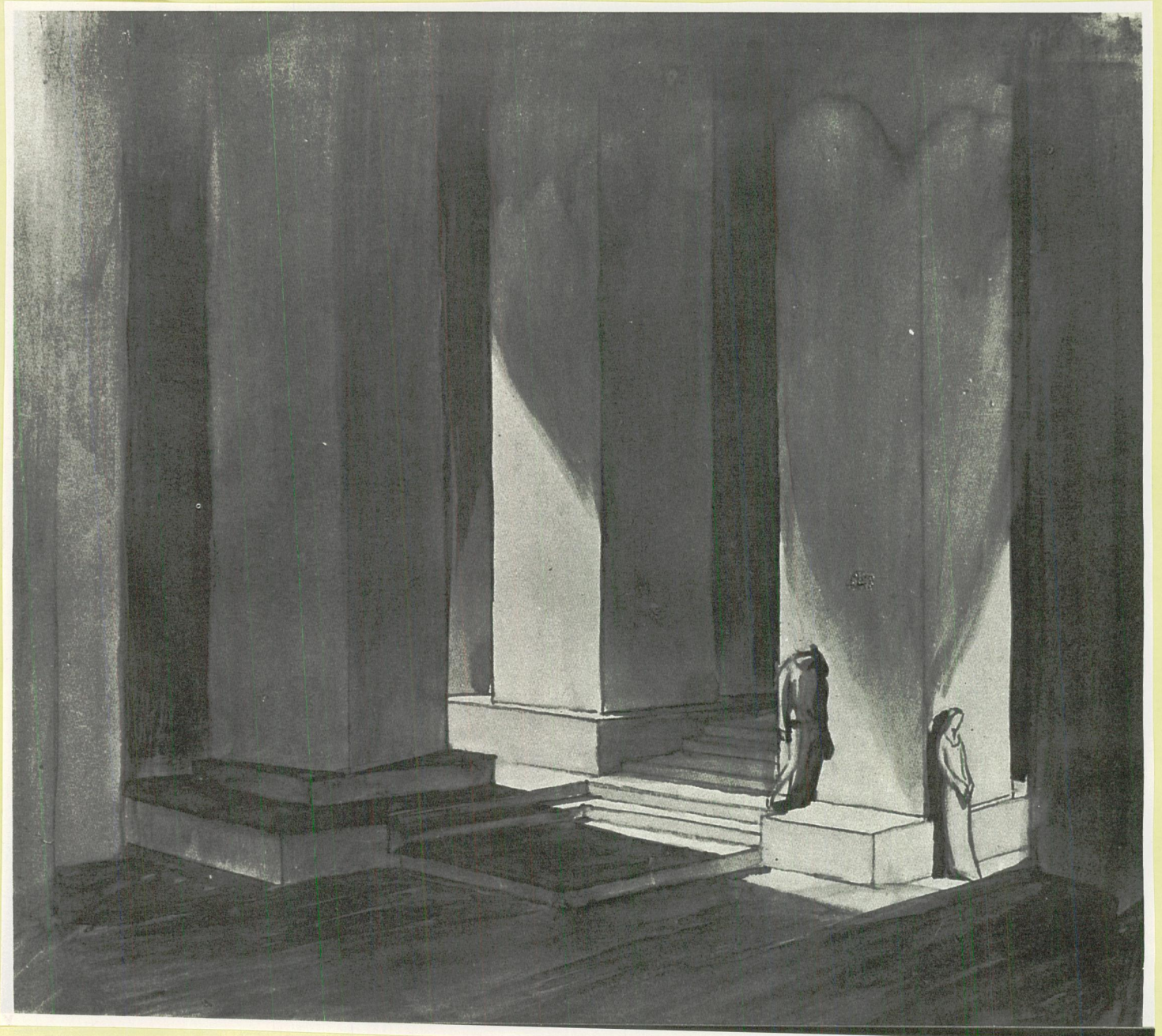
challenge, and used new techniques to create a non-realistic, sleek, modernist look for the stage. Their aim was abstraction as an interplay of forms, materials and colours to be used symbolically and metaphorically within a performance addressing our sensibilities. Appia believed that the actor was the essential element of the stage, for it was he who provided emotions and it was he who brought people to the theatre. Prendergast, similarly, felt there was no point in building an actual forest for Orpheus, but rather that it was the atmosphere of a forest that was necessary. As Appia said, "we want to see on the stage not things as we know them, but as we feel them" (Bablet, 1977, p. 41).

Appia and Craig felt that, similar to Bablet, the determination to "convince the spectator that the universe of the stage was real, a mirage more convincing than our own world" (Bablet, 1977, p. 11) was inhibiting creativity.

However realism still remained popular in the mid-twentieth century. The famous director of that time Franco Zeffirelli lived for realism. His successful 1956 production of Verdi's *Aida*, staged at La Scala in Milan, which established him internationally, was characterised by realistic, painted sets, elaborately ornamented costumes and convincing perspective.

Today, realism still has a strong hold on stage design, as exemplified by James Varten's design for *The Playboy of the Western World* by J. M. Synge, performed in the Abbey Theatre, Dublin this January. Personally, I found his interior of a public inn entertaining in its realistic simplicity (pub bench turned into cot with straw), and visually impressive with its compactness and easy accessibility to literary elements within the script, such as the large cupboard which opened up into a bar counter. Considering its Irish location, its blasphemy and thick, guttural accents it is unlikely that an abstract, atmospheric design would have worked.

On the other hand, the abstract designer, Gordon Craig's rule of thumb was simplification, selection and synthesis. An example of this is one of his first revolutionary sketches for *Hamlet*, consisting of bare walls, limited colour (gold backdrop and gold costumes), rectangular surfaces and lighting which projected zones of mysterious shadow and light. (Illus. 3). Prendergast's thoughts were along the same lines as Craig's when designing the set for the second half of *Orfeo*. She decided to collaborate the bare stone walls of the studio space in the Samuel Beckett Theatre with scattered white rocks on the floor, and a similarly mysterious, low-key lighting plot.



Illus.3 Sketch for Hamlet



Finally, on abstract stage design, the belief was that opera is a non-realistic art-form, therefore the most effective sets should represent the very nature of this form. None the less, whether or not the designer chooses to design with abstraction or realism, the script must be made coherent to its audience. As Dr. Kiesler said, "In the realisation of a script, the specific purpose should be the understanding of the script by the audience. Creating a nucleus and bringing together the elements which will make that understanding occur" (Held, ,p. 147).

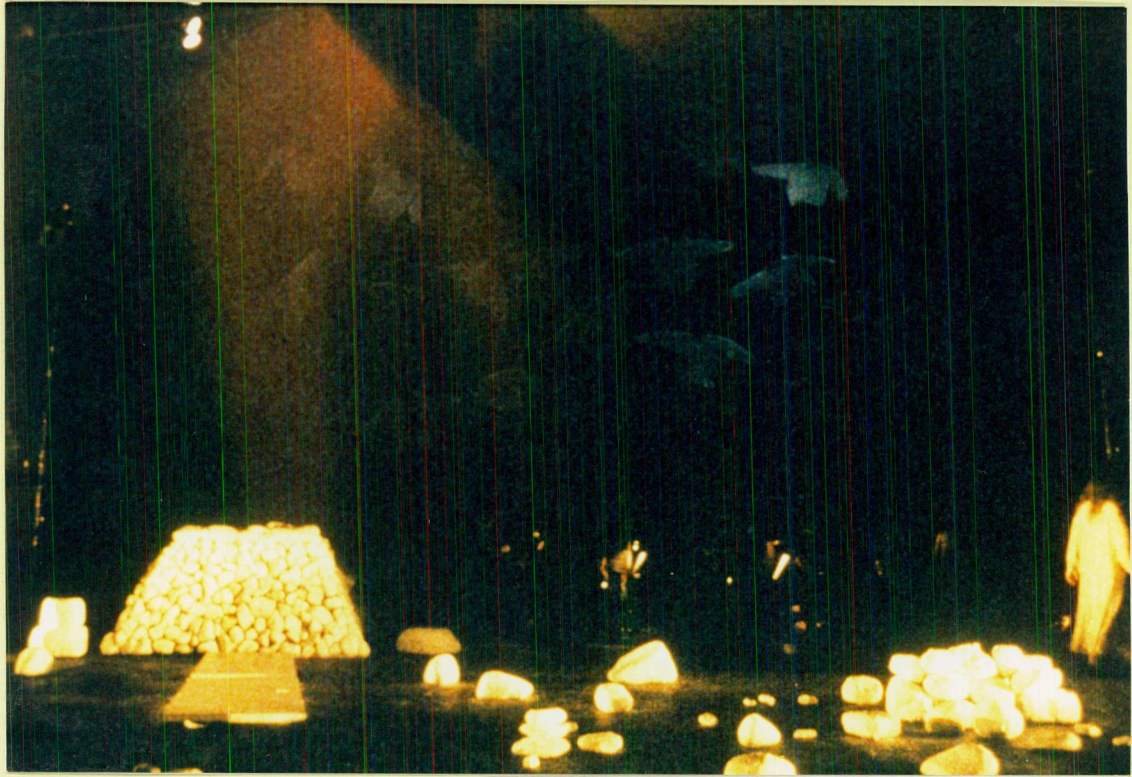
Once an audience makes the decision to go to the theatre to see a performance, they are usually willing to offer up their imagination to the unbelievable images presented to them. In Orfeo, for example, the audience and I were willing to believe that Prendergast's use of white muslin to give the feel of a forest was actually a forest.

When, last November, people went to the Samuel Beckett Theatre to see a performance of the Greek drama Orfeo, they had to accept its location in a studio space, with assorted machinery, ropes and flies (above-stage arrangements for accommodating technicians, props and lights) rather than a mysterious, mythical world. Then, when the performance began, it was up to the audience to decide whether or not to participate in this illusion, whether to accept it or to reject it.

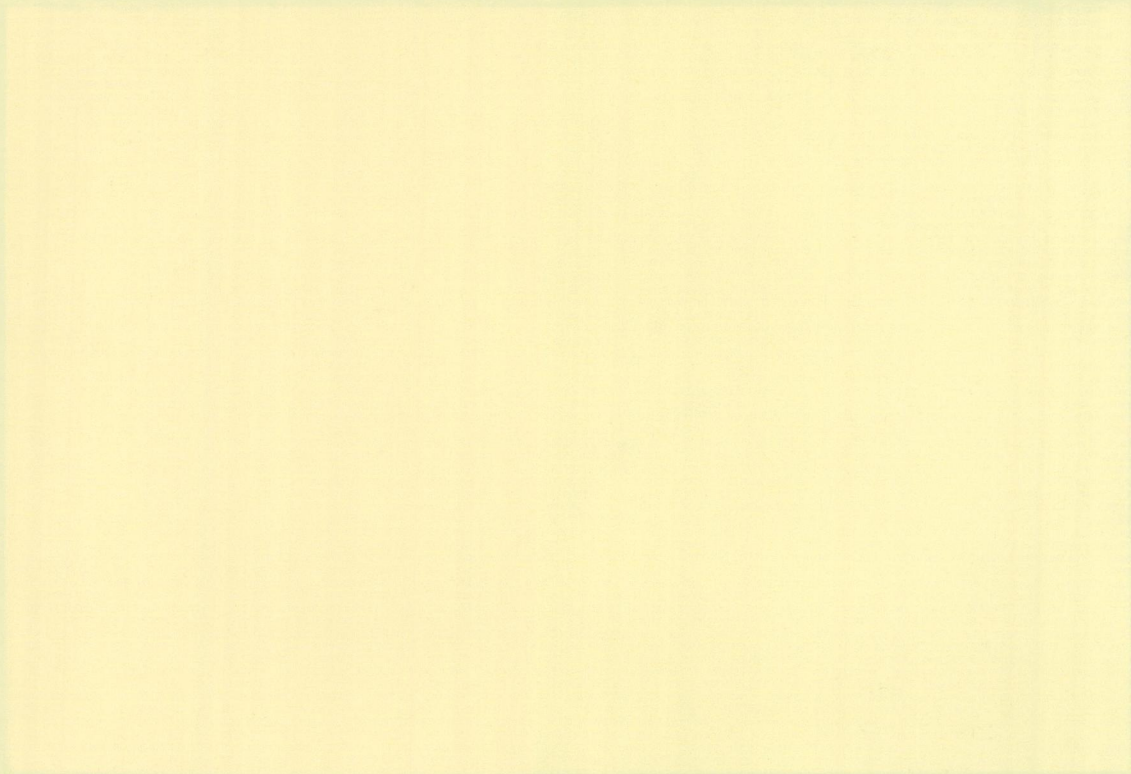
When myself and Jo Tyler, an Irish stage designer, went to see the performance we were willing to take part in the drama. However, in the first half both of us were distracted by the orchestra, which we could see through the gaps of the muslin forest. While wondering whether it was the lights that may have been positioned wrongly, enabling us to see behind the scenes, or whether the orchestra was actually a part of the set, Prendergast had temporarily lost our attention and conviction.

The second half, the Underworld, was captivating and convincing. The simplicity of Prendergast's design achieved a tangible atmosphere and, more importantly, the audience's imagination had successfully been captured. As John Willet said, "there were dark enigmas in which the thinkers could entangle themselves" (Willet, 1986, p. 9). (Illus. 4).

When working on a production like Orfeo, a close-knit team is crucial, working together to exploit all the possibilities that are opened up to them, infusing the stage design with life and coherency. This team consists of the stage designer, the director, the lighting designer, the production manager and the various technicians.



Illus.4 The Underworld



Prendergast related very well to Conway, but the rest of the team frequently seemed to be misinformed by her regarding her decisions, resulting in moments of confusion and wasted time. Paul Taggart, the production manager, thought that Prendergast did not realise, as a first-time stage designer, that the set would largely be her vision. This should have meant being present to manage problems as they arose. It was possibly this lack of collaboration and communication that led to mistakes, such as the orchestra being visible behind the forest. However, the props chosen for the second half of the performance, and the way they were used, enhanced the atmosphere and coherency of the opera, proving the ability of the crew to collaborate successfully, at least for half of the time.

Theatre can take place wherever there is space, whether it be in a church, on the street or in the back room of a pub. The assumption, however, ingrained over the past two hundred years through cultural habits, has been that theatrical performances belong in a purpose-built building with a proscenium stage (like a picture frame, through which one looks at a picture). In theory, such buildings extend the potential of stage design. In practice, they curtail it "wrapping it up in an architectural cocoon" (Goodwin, 1989, p. 198). Theatre people have, in recent years, sought alternative locations, such as existing buildings with theatrical potential. An example was the performance of the Drunken Madness Invertebrate Living, staged in an old abattoir (London's Waterloo Studios, 1987). Small, adaptable studios, such as the Samuel Beckett Theatre, are also inspiring and stimulating for stage designers. Such locations challenge designers to confront, rethink and use their basic instincts.

The Samuel Beckett stage is an end stage (seating at one end of space, stage at the other). The block seating can also be removed to make the space into a 'black box'. This allows you to determine the seating arrangements, making the space completely flexible. When speaking to Frank Conway, the Irish stage designer, he commented that the Samuel Beckett studio space provides a fruitful interaction between the rawness of its interior and its adaptability to most performances. (Conway, 1995, Jan).

Prendergast left the stone walls, the rafters and the machinery exposed to the audience, reminding them of the space's rawness, which was similar to the exposed rural landscape conjured up in Striggio's libretto, such as the frost which pierced the bones of the naked winter in Act I. I don't think, however, that she took full advantage of the studio space in the first half. The white muslin trees which 'were' the set, could just as easily have been displayed on a proscenium stage; why use traditional stage design methods when handed and alternative and potentially innovative space?

The British stage designer, Gordon Craig, strongly believed that when dealing with the whole of a space, you should design with your feet as well as your eyes (Goodwin, 1989, p. 200). Prendergast seemed to have done just that when designing the Underworld. Orpheus' heroic attempt to bring Eurydice back to the real world meant that he had to circle the stage of white rocks and get past the boat-keeper, Charon, while laden down with his heavy, stone shoes. If there had been no opposition, the significance of his heroic attempt would have been diminished in front of the audience. For the only real opposition in Striggio's libretto was Charon, who with time was induced to sleep by Orpheus' singing.

Designing the set for Orfeo, was first time a first time experience for Prendergast. Paul Taggart, the production manager's opinion this, was that, Prendergast's crossing art forms, from sculpting to stage designing, was refreshing to work with in ways. The fact that she was largely unaware of the limitations and practical pressures inbred into a stage designer, concentrating solely on her imagination and instincts, meant that she was to refrain a design, if they, the construction team thought it would be too difficult or tedious to construct.

In summary, in the first half of the production, Prendergast did not quite reach a collaborative, common effort amongst the elements she used to create the Realworld. The general atmosphere seemed disjointed between the orchestra, A Dream of Discipline hovering in the left-hand corner, the trees, the performers and the audience. Too many objects with no tangible connecting point.

In the second half, the Underworld was abstract yet descriptive. The scattered rocks leading up to and leaving the tomb (A Dream of Discipline) pinpointed the reason for Orpheus' journey into the Underworld, to retrieve Eurydice from her death-bed. The audience were willing to feel the Inferno (another term for the Underworld) and its desolate surroundings. As Vanden Heuvel said, "you must compel the spectator to feel the same thing as the creator of the drama, to truly appreciate it" (Vanden Heuvel, 1991, p. 9).

5. Lighting Orfeo

"The nature of the light falling on our surrounding environment- its brightness, the angle at which it falls, and so on, have a profound effect on the way in which we perceive it." (Gardner, Hannaford, 1993, p. 2)

Light is a form of electromagnetic radiation. It is the medium through which we see the world around us. Taking this into account,

The earliest theatres were in the open air where the source was the sun itself. Dramatists exploited the situation and Euripides, for instance, made references to the sunrise in *Iphigenia in Aulis*, which coincided with the time of day when the play was actually performed. (Ham, 1972, p. 110)

When the theatre came inside people resorted to candles and oil lamps, changing to gas and then electricity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries respectively. Each of these changes increased the control of the lighting of a production. Now, lighting as a component of theatrical performance is no longer a means of simply illuminating the actor or scenery but a form of highly developed, artistic expression.

As the action unfolds the lighting can draw attention from one area (of the stage) to another, or from one actor to another. A change in colour or intensity of light, or in its direction, can produce a variety of moods and atmospheres. The pattern of light seldom stays static for long, changing from scene to scene and often-times within a scene.

Conway, the director of the opera, was concerned with the total effect, aural and visual, of the production, which includes the lighting. About five weeks before the opening night of *Orfeo*, Conway and Prendergast worked on developing the design of the production. At this early stage the lighting designer, Simon Corder, met with them a number of times to offer his input. Prendergast then made a scale model (maquette) and prepared construction documentation. Corder studied the model and drawings, in order to work on a lighting plan. While the set was being built in the theatre, he directed the position, colour and adjustment of the lights. Over the period of technical rehearsal in the theatre, a lighting plot was developed by the lighting designer with input from the director.

The first opportunity the lighting designer has to try out his scheme is with the scenery in position on stage. All other departments will have had time to rehearse, improvise and alter before the production reaches the stage, but the lighting can only be set up at

the end of the preparation period. Time is limited and at this point, the operation must be carefully planned to avoid, as far as possible, the delays which can be caused by having to rig lanterns (a light with a transparent, protective case) more than once. The lighting designer will have prepared a layout plan of the stage, showing the position of each lantern, its type, its colour filter and the dimmer circuit (a regulatory device in the electrical circuit controlling the intensity of the light) to which it is to be connected. Using this layout, the lanterns are rigged in position, plugged into the proper circuits and each one is angled and focused on the area of the stage chosen for it. This process of 'setting' the lanterns is best done one by one with all the other lights out, a difficult ideal to achieve when all the other departments are pressing to complete their work.

With all the lanterns set, the lighting designer will sit in the auditorium with the director and stage designer and build up each picture. This is done by calling out on the intercom the circuit numbers to the operator of the stage-lighting control desk and deciding the intensity of light on each one. Each picture must flow into the next with the right timing. the lighting plot is recorded onto a complete memory, allowing a particular selection of circuits at particular intensities to be recorded and instantly recalled.

In Corder's own words,

The process is a fairly organic one, coloured by conversations, the set, research and 'the piece' on one hand, and time, money and technical demands on the other, and I see it as a process where I am like a sausage machine: the above ingredients go in one end and a lighting design comes out the other.

In this non-realistic production, Conway wanted to achieve a setting which gave a loose impression of a rural site, but one which could also encompass spirits, rituals, nymphs and the Underworld.

Lighting the set fulfils first the function of naturalism. It renders the scenic investiture believable or acceptable to the viewer. It is also the major element in design and mood. It blends the visibility, light and establishes the dominant colour. (Meyer, Cole, 1974, p. 261)

Between a close reading of the musical libretto and observation of Prendergast's design, Corder produced first and unremarkable lighting design for the first half (Acts I & II) of the production and then an interesting plot, varying in strength, colour, brightness and intensity for the second half (Acts III, IV & V).

In the opening of Act I, the only source of light was the bright light dominating the performers in the centre of the stage. Ham comments on this sort of lighting, when helping to create an atmosphere in a restaurant, "this situation increased the spectator's awareness of nearby detail, of the other people and their movements. This condition seemed to encourage an attitude of social involvement, thus providing a public impression." (Ham, 1972, p. 31)

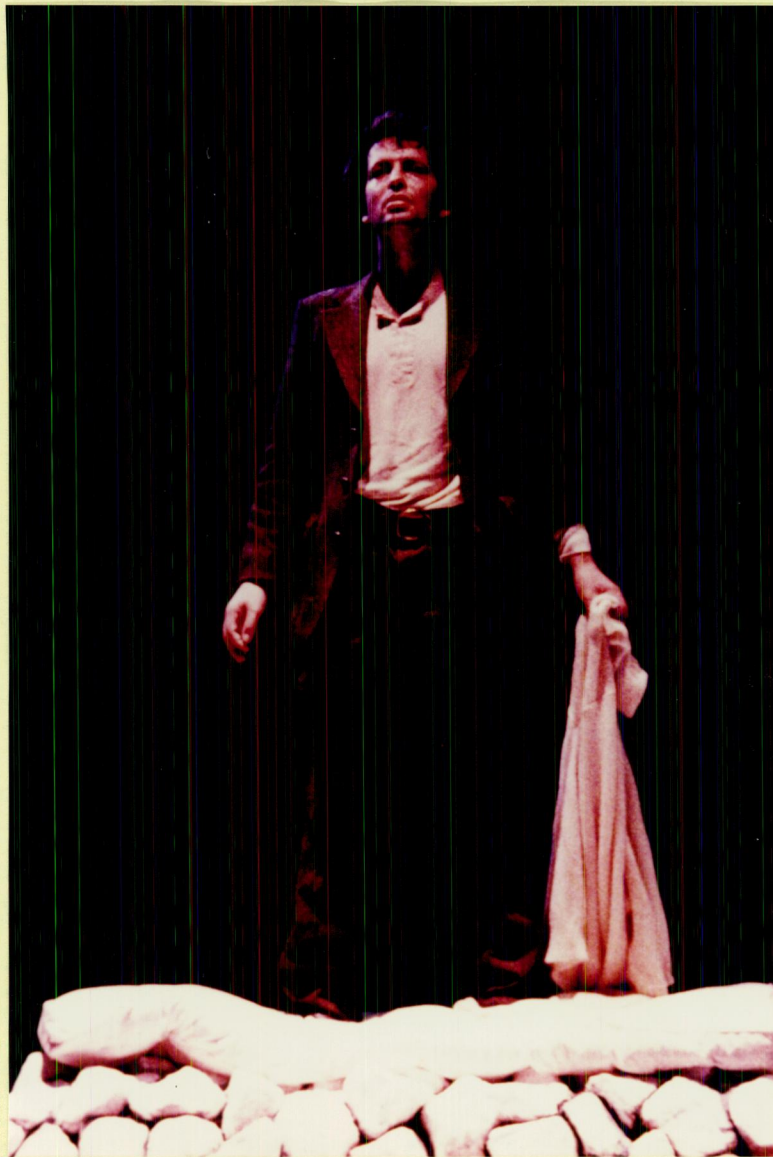
While the peasants sat around the fire, they drew lots to see who would be the one chosen to enact the ritual. Orpheus drew the shortest stick. Discovering this, he stood erect on the white tomb, with a white source of light from a floodlight shining on him. This light, which was rich in energy at the red end of the spectrum, complemented and flattered his complexion, lending a ruddy and tanned character to his skin. This enhanced the strength of his being, emphasising his role as the chosen one, to follow the ritual of love, despair and, finally, hope.(Illus. 5).

Following this scene the peasants (chorus) chanted "Come Hymen, come with blessing, be like a sun arising" followed by "darkness turned into day, storm clouds dispersed, leaving the sun to shine more brightly" (Act I).

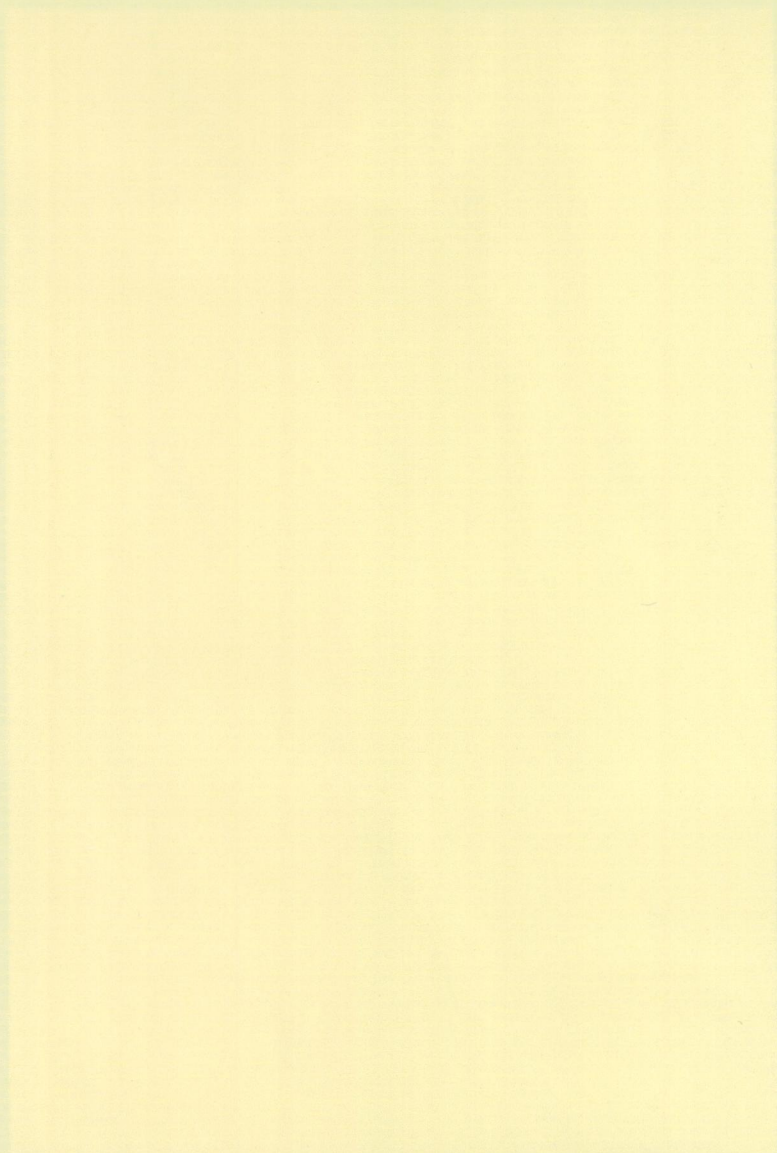
In order to create this new day, Corder considered primitive man, who was at his most active at noon when daylight was strongest and most blue. He used blue fluorescent lamps to create the day (of activity) which had just begun. While the day was still blue, Eurydice was killed "The colour vanished from her cheeks and she fainted. And in her eyes was quenched that radiance which robbed the sun of brightness" (Act II) In sympathy with her death, the blue light enhanced the features of the other performers' complexions to a pale appearance.

As the day progressed and the sun set, the light in the sky was rich in red, pink and orange allure. Here Corder used low intensity, dimmed, fresnel spotlights and bifocal spotlights (both add soft edges to beams of light), with pink and orange filters. In addition, he used light scallops which produced irregular brightness patterns to add interest and depth to the white muslin trees.(Illus. 6).

Towards the end of the first half, when Orpheus said farewell to the Heavens and the sunlight, he was backed by intensely illuminated 'white' doors to heaven. The visual emphasis here was focused on vertical and overhead architectural elements, stressing the sincerity of his goodbye to heaven and earth for ever.(Illus. 7)



Illus.5 Ruddy and tanned complexion

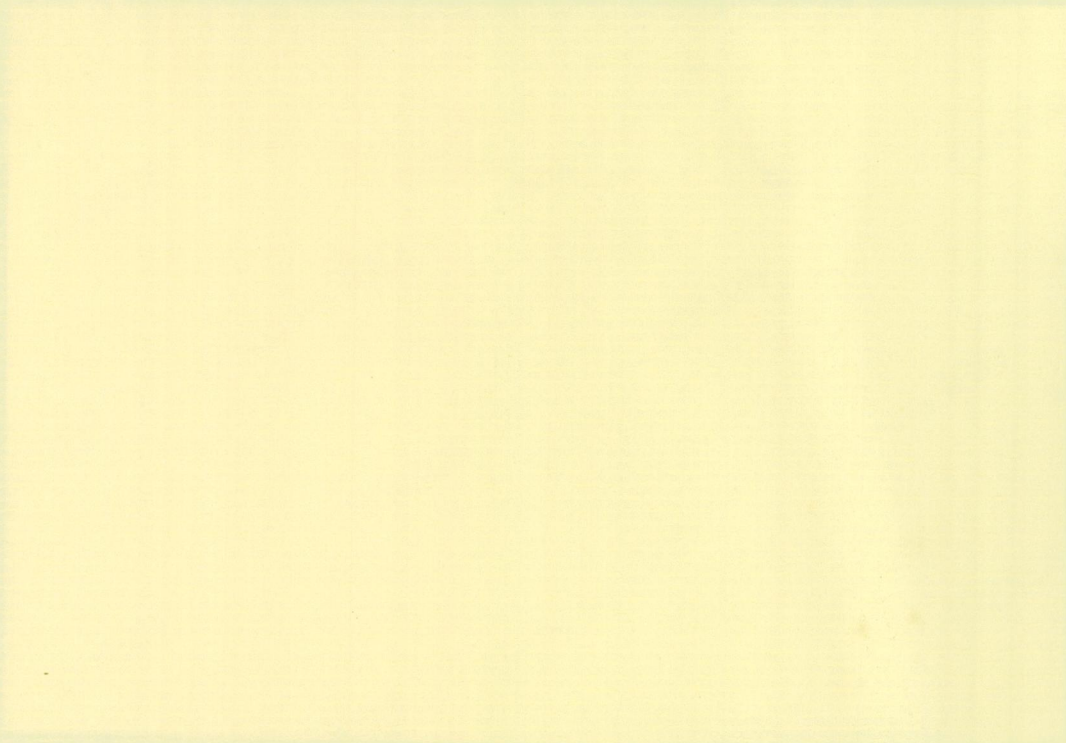
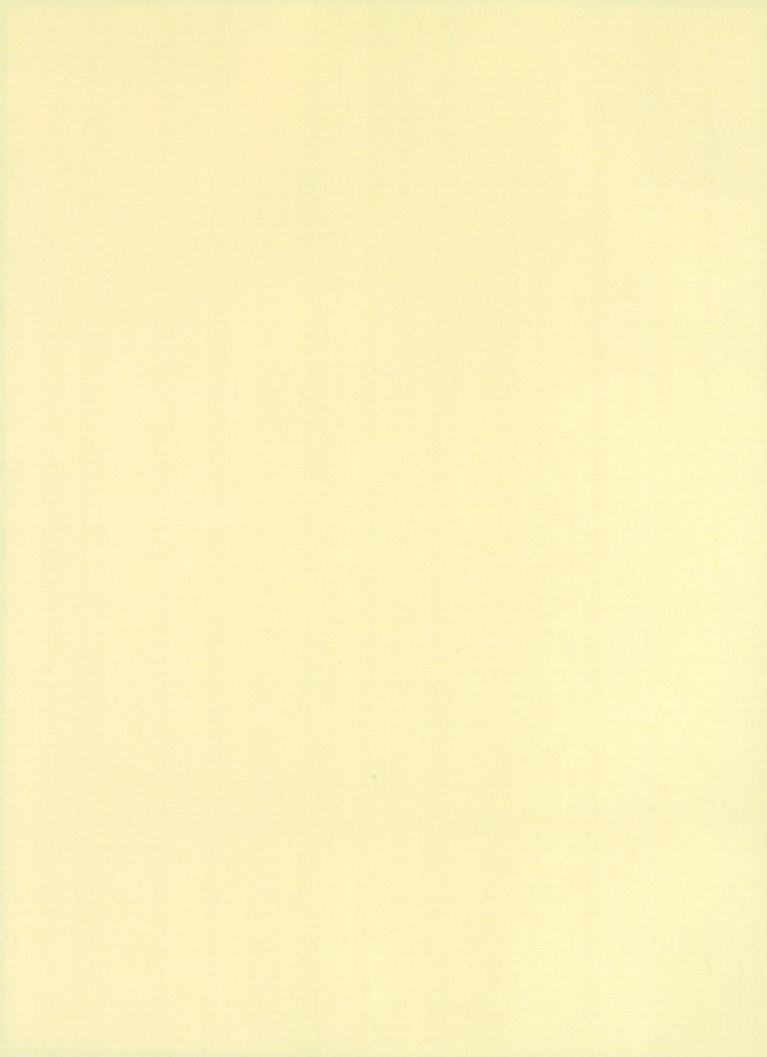




Illus.6 Scallop effect with lighting



Illus.7 Intensely illuminated 'white doors'



In Act III, as Orpheus descended into the abyss of dark and cheerless regions, the set changed dramatically and so too did the lighting. It was no longer vertical and upward, giving the impression of daylight, but low down and horizontal, to emphasise the gloomy labyrinths and caverns of the underground world. This effect was achieved with sealed-beam lamps, reflecting even beams of light, rich in yellow and short of red, encouraging a yellowness onto the stage surface. This dimly lit enclosure contrasted strongly with the single concentrated spotlight directed on Orpheus, which emphasised and clarified his facial expressions, stressing the torture he was enduring. (Illus. 8).

At the end of Act IV, when Orpheus reclaimed Eurydice, she told him how she thought never again would "I feel the warmth of earth and sunlight". (Act IV). Yet the monochrome yellow which hung over the set told us that more sorrow was in store. For the "fog of human passions can darken her ... so it extinguishes her light and leads a man blindfolded to the end" (Act IV). Only in Act V, when Orpheus mounts to the skies with the Sun-god, Apollo, does a floodlight brightly shine white/blue light through from the skies.

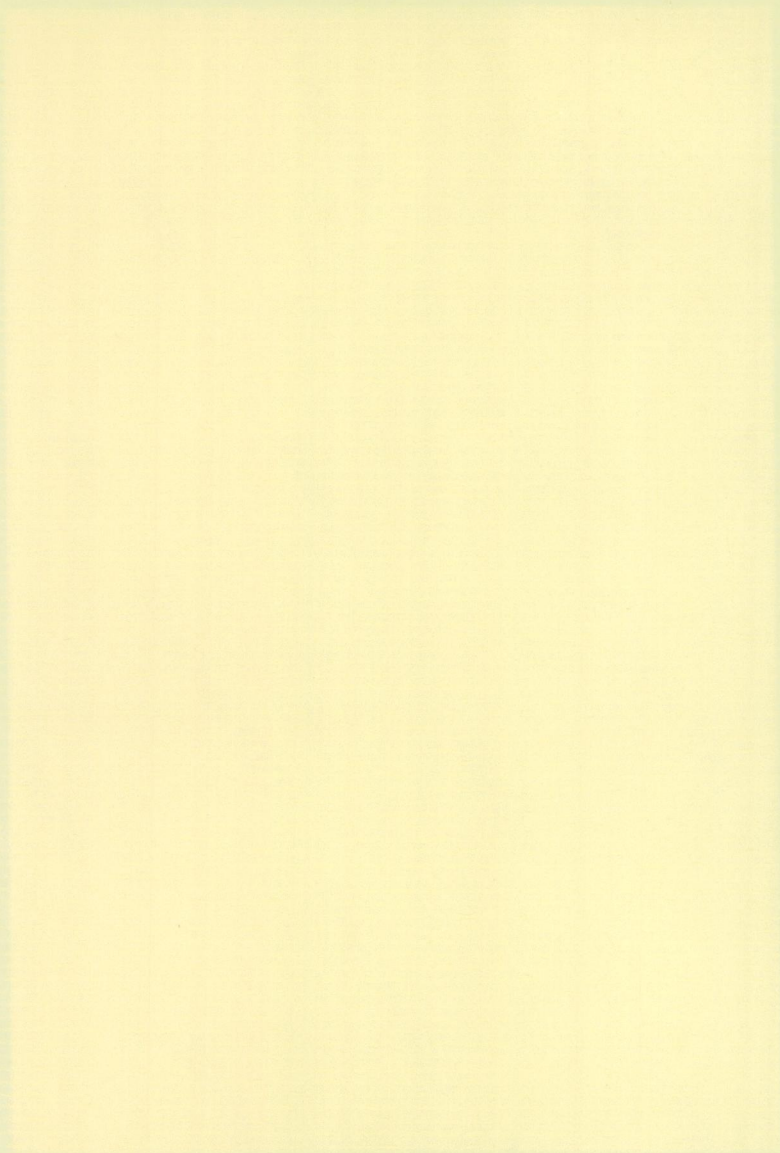
With regard to the costumes, Corder thought it was not necessary to see their true colours. He felt that, in a non-realistic production such as Orfeo, it was more important to consider the atmosphere and the idea through the musical libretto and stage design.

Unlike Karl von Appen (a nineteenth century realist lighting designer) who felt that everything on stage should be clearly recognisable to the audience, and that there should be no need for chiaroscuro effects to create atmosphere or for partly illuminated actors (Bablet, 1977, p. 317), Corder relied on lighting "to enhance the actors in space, to fuse the various visual components to contribute to the decor" (Bablet, 1977, p. 46) and to help evoke dramatic atmospheric moods.

Regarding the lighting in the first half, I thought Corder's design plot created a general environment only. Dramatic effects - such as the white floodlight which shone on Orpheus while he was standing on A Dream of Discipline, lending a ruddy and tanned character to his skin to emphasise his role as the chosen one - went unnoticed by the audience. His use of predominantly low-intensity yellow lighting on the set in the Underworld and the single, white spotlight directed at Orpheus was dramatic and worked well during his journey.



Illus.8 Dramatic contrast in lighting



6. The Costume Designs for Orfeo

The word theatre is derived from the Greek word 'seeing places'. Theatrical costumes, being a visual aspect of the production, play an important role in enhancing characteristic qualities of the play and of the characters wearing them. On the one hand, the costume helps support the interpretation of the play and establish time and locale, and on the other hand, it defines character, social status and relationships between the characters.

Theatrical costume must fulfil certain requirements, with which the street-wearer is not concerned. It must have a larger than life quality, be organically in tune with the production, meet the needs of the playwright's dramatic intentions and fulfil the director's concept and interpretation. In order to project these elements, questions such as what colour, fabric, shape and accessories should be used to exaggerate, define, simplify or enhance the illusion of the play and help project the performer, must be addressed.

The design of the costumes is obviously the costume designer's primary responsibility. The designer begins with the libretto, examining it in objective terms, not through a haze of likes and dislikes. Reading and re-reading the libretto allows the designer to see it in her mind's eye, to conjure up the individual scenes at will. From the libretto, the designer discovers

“...the largest number of possibilities and finds many visual statements that are true to the play, so that she can absorb and assimilate all the ideas the director, actors and other designers have about the play.” (Ingham, Covey, 1983, p. 11.)

This analysis helps combine the intellectual with the imaginative, psychological, and emotional responses. The designer will, thus, note the facts, such as the geographical locations, textual references and descriptions; day, month, year; relationships; socio-economic factors; the major characters' views about the world; and the function of each character within the totality of the opera.

The costume designer's first design conference is usually with the director. This is when they share ideas, look at the period, style, characters, script, costs and budget. This creative collaboration carries with it the responsibility of sharing

In the case of Orfeo, Conway, as director, had strong but general ideas about how the opera was to be approached. It was then up to Prendergast, as costume designer, to

respond, be inspired and guided by what was conveyed during the initial meetings, and finally, design coherent costumes. Prendergast and Conway decided that a mixture of ethnic and Western clothes, the type that might conceivably be worn by peasants somewhere between Turkey and Afghanistan, would blend in with the mountains, rocks, fountains and shady woods of the script. They wanted the performers to look like members of a close-knit peasant society which, like nature, is comparatively unchanging and, therefore, timeless.

From this Prendergast drew up sketches of the characters' costumes and a rough costume plot. (Illus. 9) This plot is a list drawn from the designer's reading of what each character might be likely to wear in each scene of the play. The garments are not described, merely listed: trousers, shirt, belt, socks, shoes, overcoat, and so on. The costume plot helps to give the designer and costumer (pattern cutter) a sense of the play's visual shape and scope.

The first thing an audience sees when an actor is revealed on stage is the outline of the figure against its background. The shape of that outline creates a strong impression of character. Success within this first impression depends on the designer's ability to convey the appropriate information about the character through a shape of clear, crisp lines. Keeping this in mind, Prendergast achieved a peasant look collectively with 1920's heavy, high-waisted trousers, layers of 'grandfather' shirts, wool jumpers, blazers and overcoats for the men, and A-line wool dresses with wool smocking for the women. Sylvia, the messenger of Eurydice's death in Act II, for example, she wore an ankle-length, A-line shaped dress with long sleeves and a long, sleeveless waistcoat with sturdy ankle boots. It was also the wide angled shape of Orpheus' cape, which allowed for his dramatic, sweeping arm movements when painstakingly travelling through the Underworld. (Illus. 10)

The proper selection of fabrics for a costume is as important to the style of the production as good design is necessary for character delineation. Badly chosen fabrics can ruin even the best designs. Struck by the numerous references to the mountains, woods and the seasons, Prendergast chose natural fabrics such as wool, cotton and linen, reaped from the land. In keeping with this, Prendergast chose a georgette (cotton crepe) fabric, with a large and rough floral tapestry print for Eurydice's costume throughout the performance. This costume lent itself well to the image of Eurydice "in a flowery meadow with all her young companions, wandering to gather blossoms" (Act II). (Fabric sample. 1).

6 lines

leg 50"
C. 15 1/2"
S. 9 1/2"

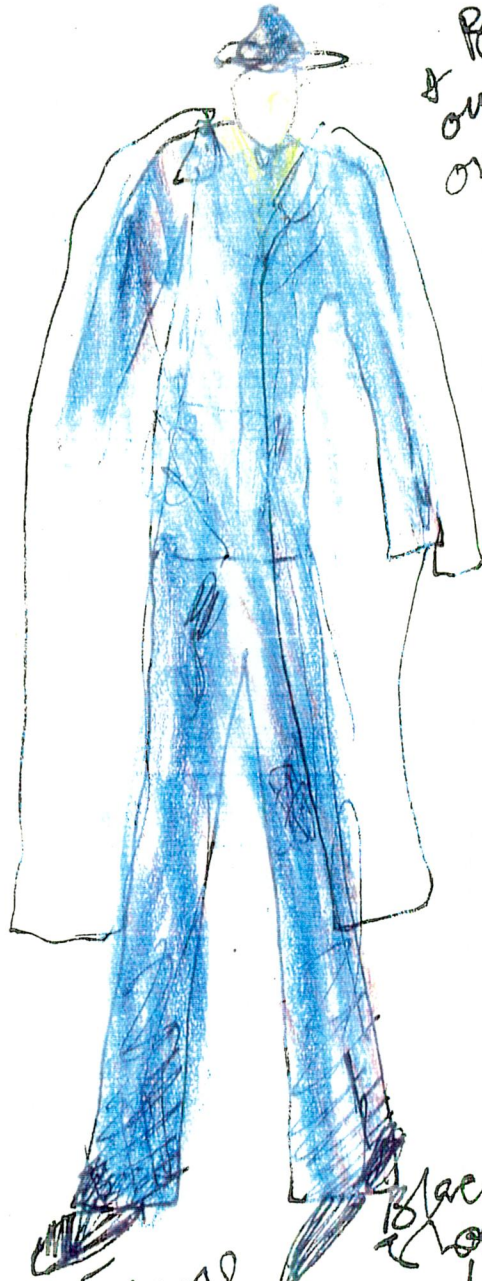
Baritone
Act I.

2 finds
The same
1 bleached out.

PLUTO



Black
Well worn
Shoes



Bleached
out
overcoat

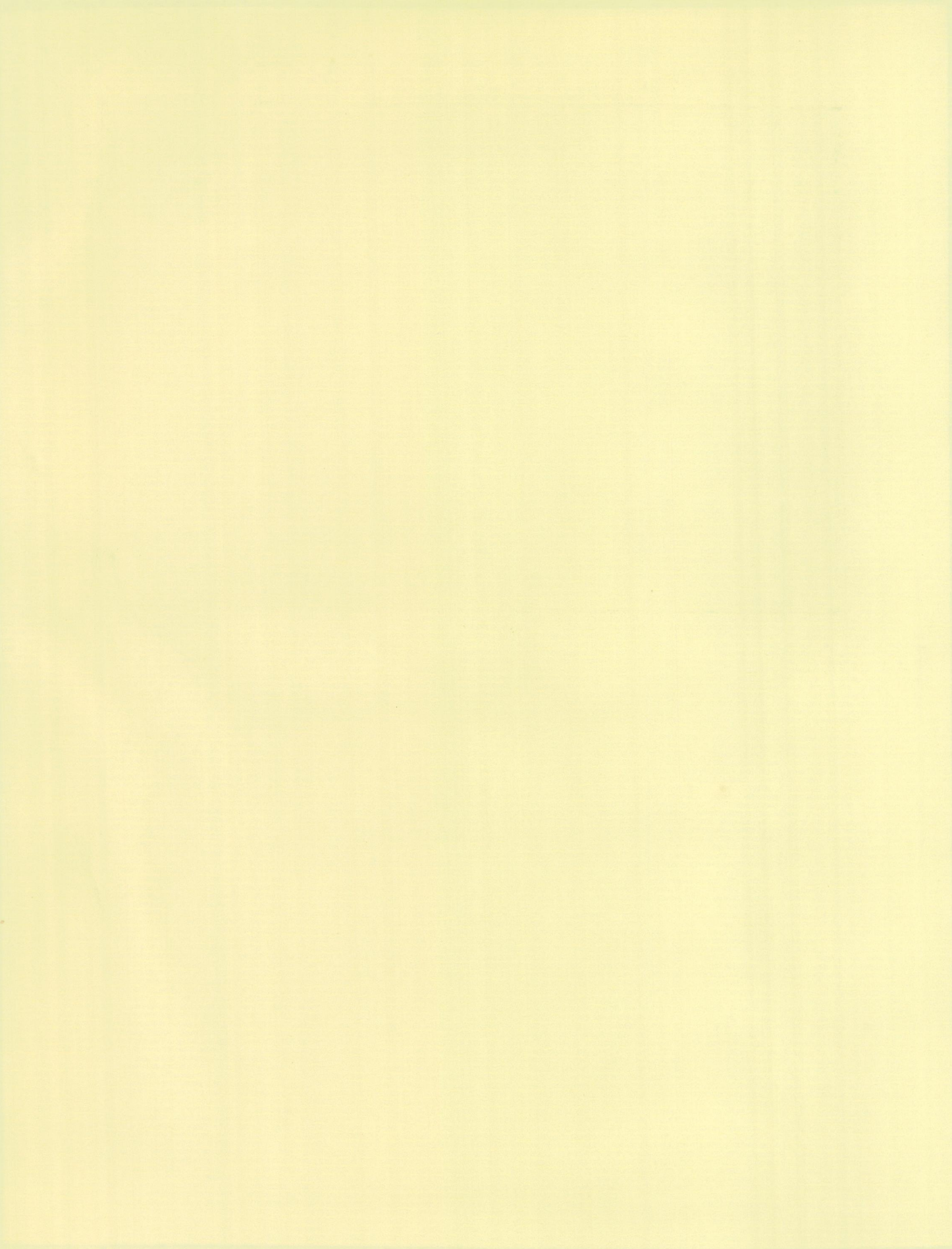
Blue
Suit
Shirts
waistcoat
war

Black
shoes

Same
Suit
Bleached
out (like
Prosopina)
Black
shoes

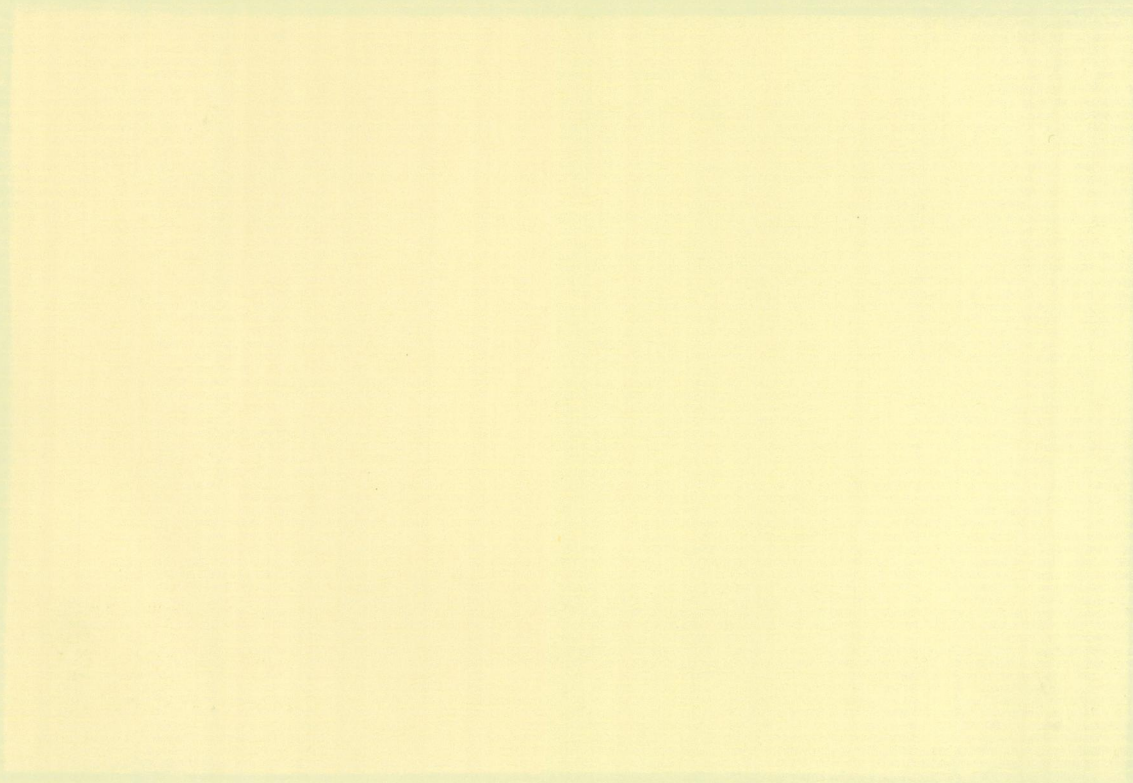
11.30am. Wanda,

Illus.9 Sketch for Pluto's two costumes





Ilus.10 Shape of cape allows dramatic movement



Norah Lambourne's comment on fabric suitability was

"Character in costume can be expressed by fabric, almost as well as by colour and design. The very nature in which a fabric drapes or folds can add to or detract from the finished product." (Lambourne, 1953, p. 37)

A good example of this in Orfeo was Hope, the 'kind goddess' of hope and goodness, who brought gentle comfort to Orpheus. She wore a lightweight viscose dress with a mottled floral pattern. This viscose with its subdued pattern was less cumbersome and in strong contrast to the peasant's costume fabrics. (Fabric sample. 2)

"Colour is a natural part of all light, and human perception of colour affects a significant portion of your physiological being, it is not surprising that people respond more intensely to colour than they do to any other design element." (Ingham, Covey, 1982, p. 78)

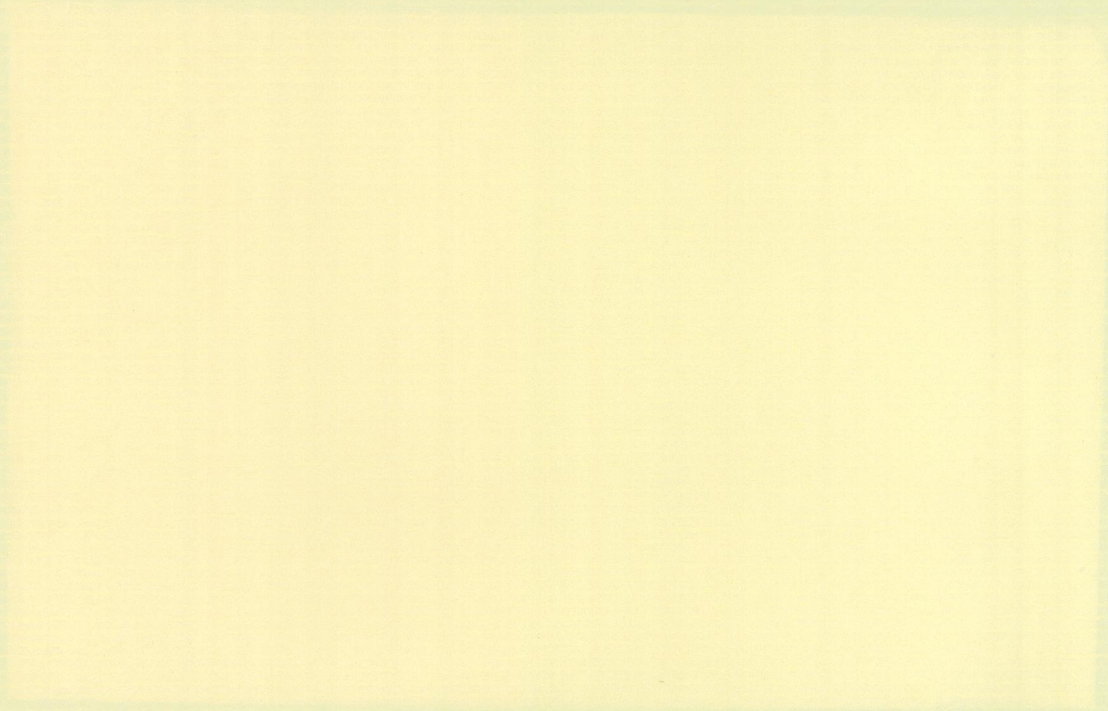
Therefore colour is a universal language and much can be said by it, both symbolically and atmospherically. Using colour symbolically, Apollo, the God of the Sun, wore a yellow/orange/rust fleck pair of trousers with a vibrant yellow/orange jacket and a bronze mac in the second half. Used as a medium for creating atmosphere, it helped visually to establish the purity of the love between Eurydice and Orpheus; his cream vest and cream cape matched her cream georgette dress.

Accessories can help to embellish or accentuate the costume even further. Prendergast used this to her advantage with Orpheus' character. As he battled his way through the Underworld he wore a cape decorated on the back with strings of calico (unbleached cotton) attached to miniature white rocks made out of sponge and masking tape, plus a pair of rock shoes. Both accessories convincingly portrayed the task he had set himself up against. (Illus. 11).

It is the rare production that will not require dying or bleaching of some sort. The costumes in Orfeo were no exception. For the Underworld, Hope's semi-transparent sleeveless chiffon coat was dyed a dirty green, subduing her existence. Eurydice's georgette dress was stained with tea bags to achieve an off-white colour similar to that of Orpheus' vest. The front of the costumes that Proserpina, Pluto and Charon wore in the Underworld were white-washed to give the impression that the light of day had been drained from them. This was done with bleach, water, tey ink and spray-on white emulsion.



Illus.11 Accessories - Strings of calico plus sponge and masking tape rocks



Before the first half of the performance ended, Prendergast felt that something was needed to signify the link between the Real and the Underworld. This was achieved by the handing over of a cream wool jumper to Orpheus by Hope, which he then put on over his vest. It was identical to the jumpers which were suspended in the 'sky', symbolically referring to all the other Orpheus' who had followed through the ritual before him.(Illus. 12).

A dress parade took place eight days before the opening night. This was an opportunity for the director, designer and costumer to give their full attention to the costumes, assembled individually and in groups. It was a time to consider what problems needed solving and what changes needed to be made. There was only one change necessary; the coat of Sylvia, the messenger, was restricting her arm movements somewhat. This was dealt with by removing the arms of the coat and turning it into a long waistcoat.

The dress rehearsal took place the night before the opening. This was a full run of the show, properly dressed. Here, every aspect of the costumes was scrutinised, with a final opportunity to review them. Fortunately, everyone was happy with the final product.

Prendergast did well in selecting appropriate colours for the leading characters, which were in harmony with the predominantly white stage set, and assembled a more general palette for the secondary group.

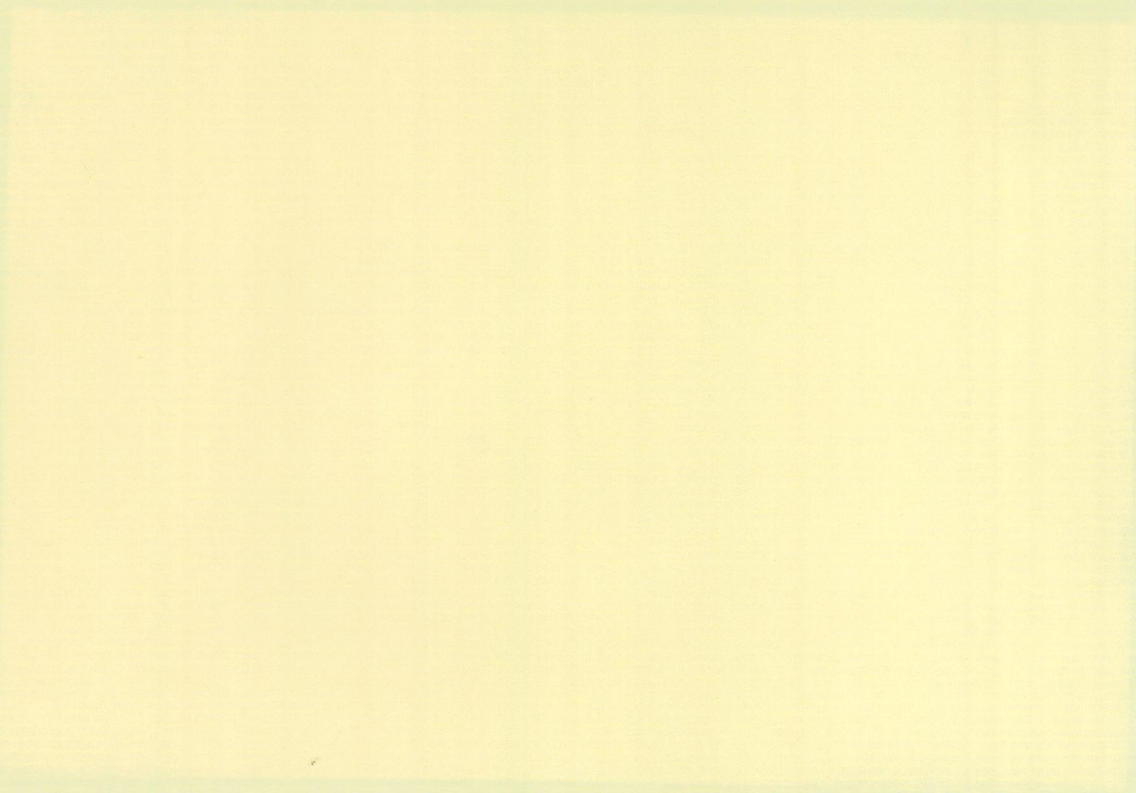
The fabrics however were not bold enough in the Underworld to project over a distance under low lighting. The 'white-wash' effect was not distinctive enough and went unnoticed by the audience.'(Illus. 13).

It has to be said that Orpheus' costume with its sculptural accessories did enhance the illusion of the environment in the play, while aiding the actor through the performance. But, it was as if Prendergast concentrated solely on the single element of Orpheus' costume to the exclusion of the others.

The relationship between the costume designer, costumer and technicians, who enable the designs to move smoothly from sketches to dresses and suits, obviously reflects largely on the quality of the work done. Unfortunately, as Prendergast was based in London, she was not there to discuss each sketch, describe how she envisioned them in motion, answer questions, chip in with jobs like dying or agreeing fabrics, making accessories or participating in the fittings. The result was a qualified or partial success.

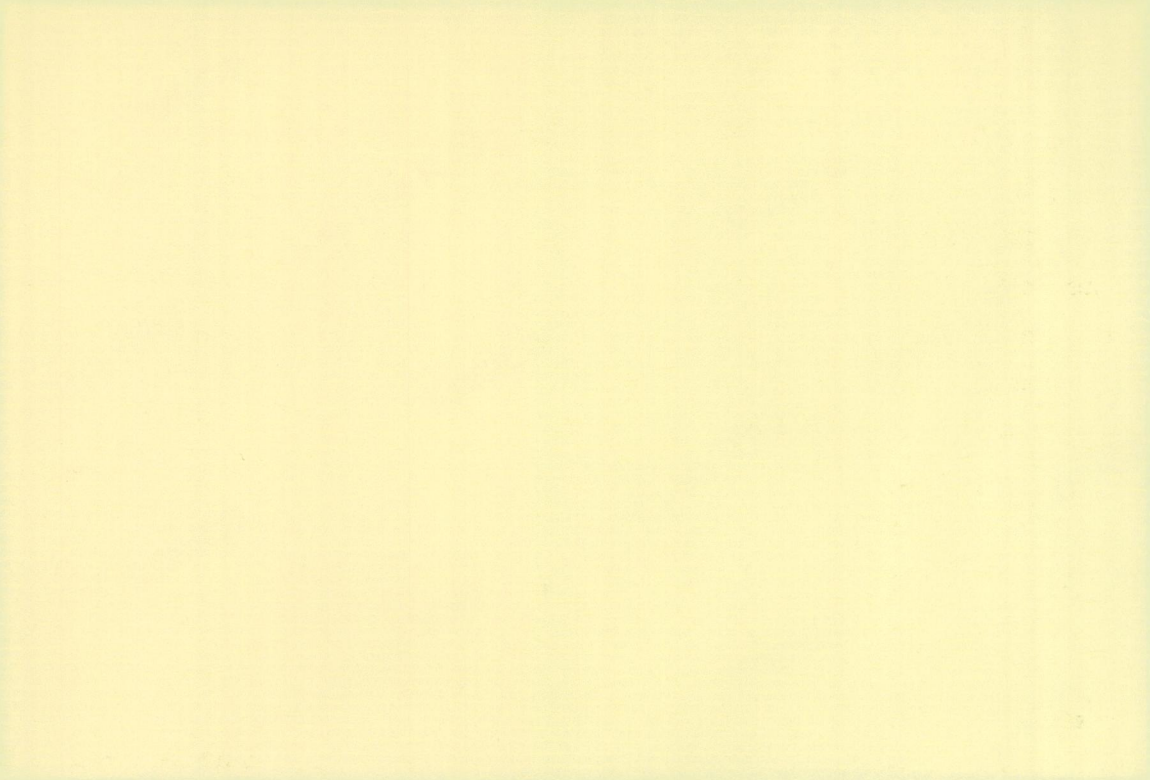


Illus.12 Symbolic jumpers in the sky





Illus.13 White-washing goes unnoticed



Conclusion

The first performance of the Greek tragedy, Orfeo, revised by Monteverdi and Striggio, took place almost four hundred years ago, in 1607, and the most recent one took place last November, produced by the Opera Theatre Company. James Conway, the director wanted to emphasise the pastoral element of the drama, similar to Monteverdi's version, in the production at the Samuel Beckett Theatre, Dublin. Kathy Prendergast, as stage and costume designer, and Simon Corder, as lighting designer, helped him visually to create this impression, throughout the production. Conway had asked Prendergast in 1993 to do the set and costumes, after discovering the strong connection between her regular use of pitted and rounded white rocks of chalk, and the setting that was needed for Orfeo. Conway chose Corder to do the lighting, simply because they had worked together before, and understood each other.

The fact that the production was taking place in a flexible studio space, which could be adapted to the needs of the drama, allowing it to breathe, meant that there were little limitations on the designing, except those that the script imposed.

As stage designer, it was Prendergast's responsibility to invent a visual language for the opera, underscoring its various meanings, extending and echoing it. She did this diffusely and subtly, by infusing two of her previous works, A Dream of Discipline and Unit 7, Peckham, into the second half of the production. However, props such as the white muslin trees, in the first half only succeeded in raising questions, rather than enhancing an understanding of the performance.

As lighting designer, it was up to Corder to enhance the actor in space, to fuse the various visual components and to contribute to the decor by permitting the lighting to evoke the places and dramatic mood. His comment on how Prendergast's design for the first half was 'unremarkable' might have had something to do with his possible lack of enthusiasm, and only mediocre lighting plot for the Realworld, whereby dramatic effects such as the white floodlight shining on Orpheus' face lending a ruddy and tanned character went unnoticed. His decision to cast predominantly low-intensity, monochrome, yellow lighting onto the set in the second half, enhanced Orpheus successfully, and helped to evoke the dramatic mood of the Underworld.

The costume designer's final product, the costumes for the production, must express a quality that is 'larger-than-life', be organically in tune with the script and the production, and express visual qualities of the individual character and groups. Prendergast's costumes were a partial success. Orpheus' rock cape blended in smoothly

with the set in the Underworld, at the same time retaining his individual character and purpose. The shape, colours and fabrics chosen for the overall cast were perceptive of the libretto, unfortunately detail such as the whitewashing of the costumes' fronts in the second half was not applied boldly enough, and went unnoticed by the audience, because of failing to project over the long distance and low intensity lighting.

1

The critical reaction from the press, was a mixed one. Michael Dervan from the Irish Times, believed that the abstract design input of Prendergast and Corder into the production of Orfeo, in the Samuel Beckett, was a success, and that,

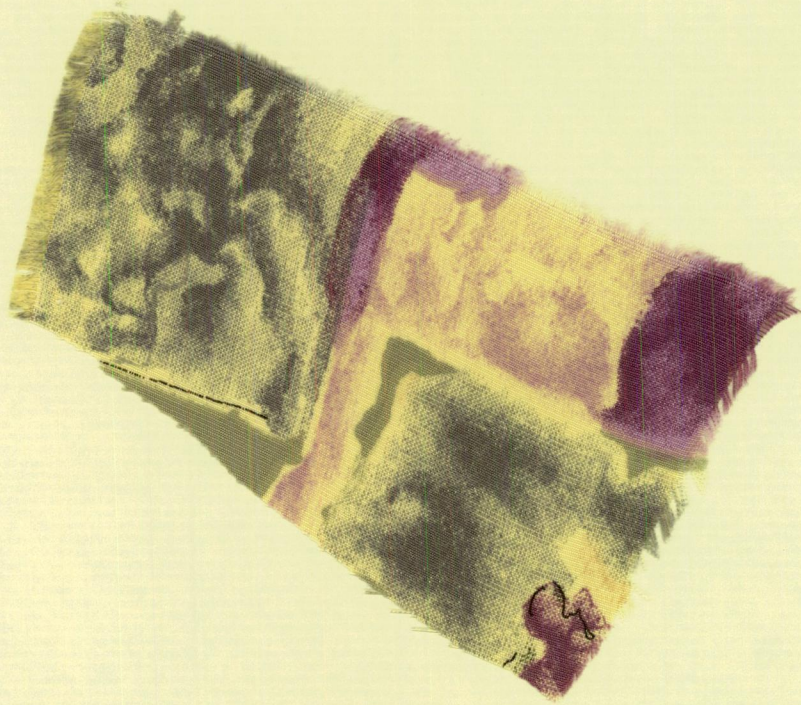
James Conway's scenario ("a group of people banded together in an hospitable landscape") was well served by Kathy Prendergast's scratched, stony setting and Simon Corder's characteristically saturated lighting. (The Irish Times, 1995, p.5).

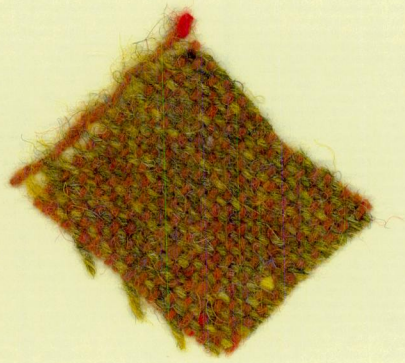
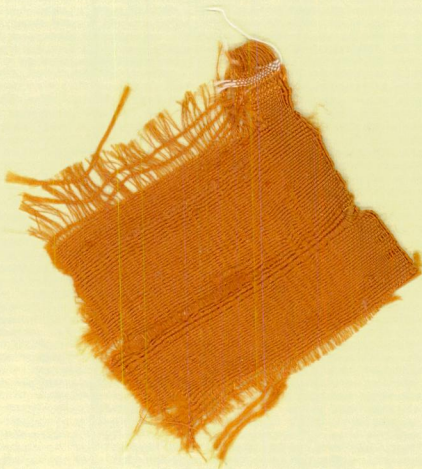
However, Gus Smith from The Sunday Independent, personally felt that a more appropriate to the "sheer beauty of the legendary love story involving Orpheus and Euridice," (The Sunday Independent, 1995, p.9), but that unfortunately the austere staging of the work, and Prendergast's use of a stony setting in an hospitable landscape, deprived the dramatic love story, and "made for a dull evening in the theatre."(The Sunday Independent, 1995, p.9)

In my opinion, as a whole, the performance traversed smoothly from start to finish, with the audience's attention and imagination captivated most of the time. However, to achieve that complete universal art form, a consistent collaborative common effort is needed. For the production design is never the brainchild of just one person, but of a team of designers, artists and technicians working together towards a shared vision.

Fabric Samples

1. A georgette fabric sample of Eurydice's dress
2. Fabric sample of Hope's viscose dress
3. Fabric sample of Apollo's orange/yellow/red-based costume





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CORDER, Simon, the role of a lighting designer, why he decided to work on the production of Orfeo in the Samuel Beckett Theatre, the lighting plot he used, Collaboration, and other things which needed to be taken into account when lighting Orfeo, London, 25th November 1995.

FERRARI, Luigi, the role of the Artistic Director, directing the Wexford Opera Festival, Designing for Opera, and Collaboration, Wexford, 27th October 1995.

LANE, Robert, Discussed stage design, stage design in Ireland, the responsibilities of a stage designer, Ard-Mór Studios, Dublin, 16th October 1995.

LOONEY, Sadey, Discussed the role played by a costumer, the work schedule of production, previous experiences, the dos and don'ts of working on a production, The Gaiety Theatre Sewing Room, Dublin, 21st October 1995.

MEKUS, Tina, the priorities of a lighting designer, her goals while lighting the set for the Playboy of the Western World, Collaboration, and working in the Abbey Theatre space, Dublin, 28th November 1995.

PRENDERGAST, Kathy, her first experience of stage designing (on Orfeo, 1995), discussed her style and costume designs for the production, and collaboration, London, 26th November 1995.

TAGGERT, Paul, the role of a production manager, his experience as production manager on Orfeo in the Samuel Beckett ,Dublin, 20th November 1995.

TAYLOR, Joanna, Discussed stage design and opera, suitable operas on which to do a thesis, Orfeo, and how a stage designer differs from a sculptor designing the set for a production, Dublin, 10th October 1995.

TAYLOR, Joanna, Talked about the opening night of Orfeo in the Samuel Beckett 's Theatre, and discussed Prendergast's stage and costume designs and Corder's lighting plot, Dublin, 15th November 1995.

