



## Different Frame

Operated in TripSpace, *Orpheus & Eurydice* is surprising and funny

By Jeff Smith, December 18, 2014 / *San Diego Reader*

“TripSpace”: 1. theater outside, beyond, sometimes even prior to the box; 2. slang term for “what box?”

The “box,” well one of them, is the standard, stage-audience configuration of traditional theater. Actors perform a story in sequence, from beginning to end. The audience observes from afar.

The Trip Theater’s newest piece retells the Orpheus myth in TripSpace.” It began online almost a month ago. Eight chapters video the long distance courtship of Orpheus Johnson, musician, and Eurydice Jones. “She lives far away,” we learn, “and the other does too.”

I can’t ever recall seeing so much of a play weeks in advance.

Orpheus finds a note — “call me you f...ing bozo” — on a napkin. Doesn't recall who put it there, though she's convinced he can.

They iPhone and email (we don't see her until Chapter 4). Their story goes viral on the net, and they become the fourth most famous pair in history. But their actions aren't mythical: just two people growing together and taking a chance, even though they've only touched once.

The live performance begins at their wedding. We're “friends” of the groom. The bride's late.

Another aspect of “Tripspace”: the situation's so un-staged we could actually be at a wedding: white balloons bounding on the floor, long table, white tablecloth, rows of champagne glasses. When panic sets in, the glitch feels unrehearsed. They aren't acting. It just happens.

What follows recounts the double tragedy of Orpheus and Eurydice. She died at their wedding and Orpheus, the greatest of poets and musicians, became so inconsolable the gods let him lead her back from the Underworld. On one condition: he can't turn around. One glance and she's gone forever.

In the Trip's version, Orpheus should have kept his eyes on her at the wedding. They were still forging a visual link.

The show's a trip. At times it's a "performance," as when the six actors dance in styles ranging from Apollonian solemnity to Dionysian mania — the historical Orpheus was linked to both - in their underwear.

At others it stands still, or seems to, and fumbles its way along. The pace can feel slow, especially during the longish filmed sequence at the end, as Eurydice trails Orpheus from Shores Beach (aka the Underworld) and up the winding road above Scripps to UCSD.

But Tripspace has "Triptime" as well. The piece unfolds at its own chosen speed. Un-buffed and seemingly haphazard, it could care less about traditional theater's hair-pulling obsession with fast-pacing. Almost mocks it in a way.

Written and directed by Tom Dugdale, each act has a different frame: both live and multimedia sources (sounds, videos) present often surprising, and funny, takes on the familiar story.

Dugdale plays Orpheus to Jenni Putney's Eurydice. They aren't "characters," just plain folks in an extraordinary situation (they sing a terrific serio-comical duet, "The Tip of Your Tongue," which — in yet another Triptime happenstance — gets cut off).

Joshua Brody, as the harried best man (who does one of those far too revelatory best man speeches), Miranda Dainard, Joey Odom, and Mohammad Shehata enhance throughout.