



The Trip Turns “Orpheus and Eurydice” Into An Experimental Journey

By Pat Launer, December 22, 2014 / *Times of San Diego*

Well, you missed the wedding (the show only ran for five days). It was an offbeat, bare-bones affair, in a cavernous space. The weird thing was, the bride and groom had never been face-to-face in the flesh before.

For weeks leading up to the event, we watched the courtship of “Orpheus & Eurydice” in online videos rife with expletives and rebuffs, approaches and avoidances, texts and Skype, and music (he’s an indie musician/composer reluctant to share his creations).

Eurydice (Equity actor Jenni Putney) flew across the country in her wedding dress. He’s nervous; she seems... spacey. They finally touch and kiss – and then they run off for a pre-nup interlude in the bathroom. Meanwhile, their friends serve us (the audience/guests) sparkling cider in plastic champagne glasses. The requisite, rambling best-man toast is made. The couple and their buddies strip down to their skivvies and do some wild Bacchanalian dancing (a nod to the source myth).

Then Eurydice goes out for a smoke. And, in a scene announced as ‘The Snakebite’ (the cause of the disaster in the original story), she dies. This time, she’s hit by a car. Someone tries CPR, to no avail.

The party’s over. The live part, anyway. For the rest of the time, we watch an extended video sequence (beautifully shot by Karen Janssen) of the ascent from the Underworld. The deal is: Orpheus can bring Eurydice back to the land of the living, but he must lead her out and not look back, or she’ll be lost to him forever.

They emerge from the sea, and make a long trek up to Torrey Pines (where’s that wonderful, crumbling/twisted stone staircase, anyway?). We feel like we’re watching the entire journey in real time. It’s slow, silent, black-and-white – and mesmerizing. This being a production of The Trip, a theater collaborative that likes to de-and re-construct classics, there’s a twist at the end.

Orpheus questions Eurydice’s honesty and fidelity. He catches her in a lie: that day she was hung over, he notes, she wasn’t, in fact, out with her mother doing karaoke the night before, was she? (come to think of it, there was some shadowy guy in one of the online videos).

So, the trust has been broken; the honeymoon’s over. Orpheus willfully looks back, stares at her with affection, regret and skepticism, and lets her go. Much less romantic and heartbreaking than the myth, but provocative.

And The Trip does like to provoke. Their productions are unique, often antic, with elements of testosterone-fueled adolescence. But these (mostly) UCSD alums are imaginative and risk-taking, and they’re hellbent on expanding the boundaries of theater.

This show was their most successful, especially in its thrilling use of media, both multi and social. They sing, they dance, they go wild. And yes, they can act.

Once again, founding artistic director Tom Dugdale is credited with text and direction — and he convincingly plays Orpheus. He and co-founder Joshua Brody (the Best Man) and their pals bat around balloons (more appropriately and effectively than in their “Macbeth”). They change venues with every production. The timing of their productions is unpredictable. They’re keeping us off-guard, and that’s obviously how they like it.

Watch for The Trip productions. San Diego used to have a fair amount of experimental theater. But now, they’re the only game in town.