

# **Dernieres Nouvelles d'Alsace (Alsace Times)**

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## The Orpheus metaphor

The Danish theatre company Hotel Pro Forma dematerialises the Orpheus myth to the point of abstraction. A pure object of contemplation, last week, at the Filature de Mulhouse. Af Laima Mellena

There are various ways of envisaging Operation : Orfeo. Consider it as a simple opera and the deception is guaranteed. The myth has been stripped of its substance to such an extent that nothing is left – scarcely an abstraction. Operation : Orfeo is in fact similar to an opera that has been stripped of all dramatic art. All that is left is the essence: staggering music and breathtaking beauty.

Everything is enacted beyond a luminous framework asked even of the stage itself. A framework that seems to open out onto a different dimension where everything is nothing more than metaphors and crystalline singing. One's gaze cannot help but immerse itself, attracted by a dozen immobile shadows.

The first minutes stretch out thus in darkness: Orpheus descends into the depths of hell, while a luxuriant vocal landscape unfurls, consisting of polyphonic reminiscences and splintered fragments from Hymns & variations by John Cage. Moments of introspection. Then, light suddenly appears, revealing an unending staircase. A silhouette that one guesses is that of Eurydice is lying on the stairs. Orpheus is in a retreating position. With paper crowns on their heads, a dozen chorus members seem to be obeying some obscure, unchanging ritual. And while the voices pour out in fluid fashion, a skilful lighting ploy modifies one's perception of the stage. Gravity no longer seems to apply – Eurydice floats in space and the chorus topples forwards.

Orpheus starts on his abstract ascent from hell, and when finally he loses his companion because of a backward look, it is a fluorescent flood that submerges the audiences to the point of drowning. Smoke mists and lasers in a moving wave: magnificent.

*Jean-Michel Lahire*