

## Titon and Aurore bleat by day at the Opéra Comique



The **Opéra Comique** begins its 2021 season as it finished the previous one, namely in a closed-door *livestream*, while waiting to be able to welcome back the public. After a disheveled *Hippolyte and Aricie* (visible on arte.tv until May), Olivier Mantei has once again brought together a lively cast and this time in a staging worthy of interest, for ***Titon and Aurore***.



Titon et l'Aurore, Opéra Comique; © Stefan Brion Titon et l'Aurore, Opéra Comique; © Stefan Brion



This heroic pastoral, created in 1753, is due to Madame de Pompadour who, by assuming the role of Aurora in a work in one act before the court of Louis XV three years earlier, set her Parisian networks in turmoil for that the Royal Academy of Music (the Paris Opera) have its version of an opera-ballet on this theme. The very influential composer Mondonville wins the tender with the librettist Voisenon, in a context marked by the quarrel between *opera buffa* Italian and French style. The score is teeming with brilliant ideas and rocky evocations, in melodic and rhythmic superpowers to make mortals talk. Mondonville is himself an eminent violinist, and this is reflected in the astonishing virtuosity of writing for the strings, which, devoid of violas, assert contrasts making the weather of the gods.

**William Christie** and his **Arts Florissants** return Homeric to the Opéra Comique, six years after the exhilarating *Venetian Festivities* of Campra. Projectiles of sound and showers of strokes, epic sprints and poignant supports, coexistence of angular layers and curves in the fist: the fabulous instrumentalists color a paper casserole with a thousand surprises, never letting the luxuriance of volumes and intentions escape. The conductor amazes at a thousand miles an hour, the course of time and the cycle of the sun advance in rapidity, punctuated by biting and electrifying trills, until the simple story takes on Dantesque proportions. What a tour de force is the interpretation of this critical edition reconstructed for the show!



Titon et l'Aurore, Opéra Comique; © Stefan Brion Titon et l'Aurore, Opéra Comique; © Stefan Brion



This Favart production (co-production of Les Arts Florissants and Château de Versailles Spectacles) also cultivates the polarization between the hyperactive auditory and the loitering visual. This is what constitutes its keystone. The director **Basil Twist**, the only American graduate of the National School of Puppetry Arts of Charleville-Mézières, makes the materials speak and flourish swinging clay figurines under the action of Prometheus, sheep to the shovel (and on a skewer!) by the powers of Palès, and wiggling fabrics around Aeolus, under the shrewd lighting of **Jean Kalman**. It is a festival of the strange, where the terrifying side of the three (pointed) Graces nourishes the beauty of artisanal theater. The assured kitsch of the costumes serves the know-how of *slow movement*, and the puppets, functional without falling into "cuteness," solve in all circumstances the dilemmas of the setting in scene, in particular in the ballets, even if the last act seems to be losing creativity.

After a prologue seeing Prometheus wielding fire to animate characters born from the earth under the guarantee of Love, the shepherd Titon welcomes the fleeting Aurora in the vertigo of feelings. Aeolus (the god of the winds), fell in love with the same woman, while Palès (the goddess of the shepherds) has a crush

on Titon. Wrath of Aeolus, vengeance of Palès. The latter transforms Titon into an old man while he sleeps, but the next morning, Amour grants immortal youth to Titon so that the daily reunion can never end.

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collective reminder to the sound of the orchestra replaces silent greetings: here too, 2021 has triggered its good resolutions!

Alongside a choir of Les **Arts Florissants** at the zenith, **Reinoud Van Mechelen** and **Gwendoline Blondeel** encamp the impossible couple between philosophical euphoria and youthful seduction. It draws constellations and makes the wonder of its peaceful lines gravitate. She halos her voice of holiness as much as she expresses the *drama queen* galante buried in her character. **Renato Dolcini**, **Aiguisé Prométhée**, and **Julie Roset**, Amour jovial, make a successful debut in Salle Favart. Facing a **Marc Mauillon** - see our recent interview - irresistibly hyperbolic and imperial in Aeolus, **Emmanuelle de Negri** shows a fascinating palette of the cloud of affects, in a mixture of overwhelming leaps into the void and radiant expansions of sentences. Let us not forget the solid nymphs of **Virginie Thomas**, **Maud Gnidzaz** and **Juliette Perret**. A

**Thibault Vicq**

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***Titon et l'Aurore***, by Jean-Joseph Cassanéa de Mondonville, available in replay on Medici.tv until April 19, 2021

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### Comments

Aucun commentaire