

Music

To watch in streaming, “Titon et l'Aurore” and “Cabaret horrifique” at the Opéra Comique: long live the extravagance!

6 minutes to read

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A brand new production, an older show: two possibilities to join the Salle Favart this week, with the happy resurrection of an opera-ballet by Jean-Joseph Cassanéa de Mondonville, and the audiovisual adaptation of the “Cabaret horrifique” by Valérie Lesort.

“Titon et l'Aurore”, by Jean-Joseph Cassanéa de Mondonville

What great music! How to explain that it was forgotten, after its creation, in 1753, to the point that the score had to be reconstructed in order to be able to replay it? Back-to-school production of the Opéra Comique, saved from pandemic nothingness by an audiovisual recording available on medici.tv, *Titon et l'Aurore* is first and foremost a musical happiness. From the opening, the work of Jean-Joseph Cassanéa de Mondonville (1711-1772) reveals all its splendor, through the warm roar of the strings and the trills of the flutes. Until the end, she will remain brilliant, colorful, sometimes dancing, sometimes tempestuous, always virtuoso.

A shrewd explorer of this French repertoire, **William Christie** had not returned to the Salle Favart for six years. He left his "real" garden in Thiré, in Vendée, to invest that of this "heroic pastoral", populated by chubby sheep, teasing nymphs and capricious deities. Obviously happy to be there, the conductor conducts sometimes with full arms, sometimes with his fingertips, Les **Arts Florissants** in excellent shape, instrumentalists and choir included.

Abbé de Voisenon's libretto is hardly more complicated than the synopsis of a *soap opera*. After a prologue which sees Prometheus creating mortals from statues of clay - and Love offering its services to enrich (and complicate) the existence of newcomers - we meet the shepherd Titon, in love with the divine Aurora, which makes him feel good. But Palès, goddess of flocks, has a crush on Titon, while Aeolus, god of the Winds, covets Dawn. The couple of lovers refusing their advances, the gods get angry, and transform Titon into a cacochymous old man ... that Aurora refuses to abandon to his sad fate, thus inciting Love, moved by so much constancy, to arrange everything.

American genius of the puppet, Basil Twist does not seek noon to two o'clock in his first production of a baroque opera: he catches the argument as it is, with all its dramatic weaknesses and its naivety, and puts it in images with a petulance, an extravagance and a poetry that transcend the thinness of the plot. Apart from the prologue, starched with a useless rawness, everything is done to seduce the eye and / or amuse it. The special effects have a deliciously artisanal dimension, the artists share the stage with puppets manipulated on sight or animated by threads (the flying sheep of Palès were our delight), the costumes are funny, beautiful and inventive ...

The show is all the more successful as the singers inhabit their allegorical characters with sincerity and gluttony. At the head of a sumptuous cast, Gwendoline Blondeel (the Aurora) does not hesitate to abuse her beautiful silky voice, with radiant highs, when it comes to expressing just anger. Reinoud Van Mechelen (Titon) briefly covers his voluptuous tone, the "old age" come, to better shine afterwards. Whether she seeks to bewitch, threaten or reason with her interlocutors, Emmanuelle de Negri portrays an exuberant and formidable Palès, which has no equal but the fulminating Éole of Marc Mauillon. And even Julie Roset's timbric little slippages serve the youth and arrogance of her spicy Amour, full of freshness and mischief.

Little additional pleasure, choristers and soloists are entitled, at the end, to real greetings, accompanied and punctuated by the orchestra, stage, pit and conductor then happily congratulating each other during the end credits - the very small audience of the happy few present in the room being, of course, full of gratitude and goodwill, but not large enough to assume, alone, the burden of applauding instead of the forty-two thousand spectators present in front of their screen ...

For those who were looking elsewhere Tuesday evening, we can only recommend a catch-up session, possible for three months on [medici.tv](https://www.medici.tv) (access is free, upon registration).

> **To see on [medici.tv](https://www.medici.tv)**

"Cabaret horrifique", by Valérie Lesort