

Synopsis

First night: Parma, Teatrino di Corte, 24 August 1769.

Scene I. The tomb of Euridice. Orfeo and a chorus of nymphs and shepherds mourn the death of Orfeo's beloved wife, Euridice (*Ah, se intorno*). Orfeo sings of his grief (*Chiamo il mio ben*) and then resolves to bring Euridice back from the land of the dead.

Scene II. The same. Amore appears. The god of love tells Orfeo that Zeus has taken pity on him and will allow him to descend into Hades, charm the Furies with his singing and rescue Euridice. But if he looks at her on the journey back he will lose her forever (*Gli sguardi trattieni*).

Scene III. A hideous grotto near the banks of the River Cocytus. After a violent orchestral introduction, the music of Orfeo's lyre is heard as he approaches. The Furies sing and dance in a frenzy, and Orfeo tries to calm them. Eventually he succeeds, and they allow him to pass through Hades into Elysium.

Scene IV. The Elysian Fields. The inhabitants sing of their joy in being in such blissful surroundings. Orfeo enters, exclaiming at the beauty of the place (*Che puro ciel*), and the Blessed Spirits tell him that Euridice will soon be restored to him (*Vieni a' regni*). Euridice is brought in, and Orfeo leads her away without looking at her.

Scene V. A dark grotto in an ugly landscape, leading away from Hades. Orfeo leads Euridice by the hand without looking back at her. Euridice cannot understand his strange behaviour, and wants him to explain (*Vieni, appaga il tuo consorte*). When he is unable to do so, she becomes suspicious (*Che fiero momento*). Unable to contemplate her suffering, Orfeo turns to her and she immediately sinks to the ground and dies. Orfeo laments her death (*Che farò senza Euridice?*).