

Synopsis

A brief orchestral ~~prelude~~ ^{introduction} suggests the ex-
pressionistic atmosphere of the work. ^{with violent dynamic contrasts and ~~diffuse~~ involuted polyphony} ①

Act One.

The first scene is taken up by a dialog between Orpheus and Eurydice full of innuendos that ~~heighten~~ ^{highlight} the complication of their ~~mutual~~ love relationship. Psyche is introduced as a wistful, somewhat precocious girl who is supposed to protect Eurydice. She mentions the appearance of three suspicious looking females. Vocal score p. 21

Second scene. Psyche sleeping on the threshold to the house. The three furies appear, demanding to enter. Psyche tries to shoo them away because she is expecting her lover, Amor. They ~~make her~~ ^{manage to} persuade her to open the door so that in the light of their torch they might see her elusive lover, and they succeed in entering the house. vs. p. 34

Third scene: The furies explain to Eurydice that they have come to take her ^{for seven years} to Hades. ~~At first she~~ ^{she} resists ~~this command~~, but eventually ^{to the in-} ~~resigns~~ ^{table}. Orpheus and Eurydice have a melancholy last supper together. Then the snake which ^{the furies} have brought in bites ~~to~~ Eurydice's heel, she loses her wing and is taken away by the furies.

~~Act two.~~ Act two. First scene. The nether world. It is the only scene for which Kokoschka gave me some indication of what kind of music he had in mind for it, saying it sounded to him like the noise of little electric machinery. ~~Orpheus~~ Guided by Psyche Orpheus asks for Eurydice to be released. When she is brought to him, Psyche ~~instructs~~ ^{instructs} him that consciousness that had left her will return if he does not torment her with questions about the past. vs. p. 58

It challenged me to produce this flavor with the then available orchestral means.

It starts with a chord that ~~has~~ ^{for a long time has} had a quality of magic enchantment upon it. ^{for me} heard it in the opening phrases of the prelude to the

last act of Debussy's Pelléas et Mélisande.

Second scene. Orpheus leads Eurydice through ~~land~~ ^(out of the nether world) ~~land~~ ^{an increasingly bright} landscape of spring toward the ~~sea~~ shore of the Mediterranean. He is serene and optimistic while Eurydice shudders when they notice a black sailboat. For him it is the vehicle to a new life while she recognizes in it a sinister device of Hades. vc. p. 68

Third scene. On the boat. The sailors, falling asleep, pray to Amor. The three furies, plotting the next move for Eurydice's doom, ~~tear~~ tear one of the sailors, a drunken fool, until a net is dragged out of the water. In it they find a skull with a ring between its teeth. Proud of this loot the fool presents the ring to Orpheus who shares the inside of the boat with Eurydice. vc. p. 80

Fourth scene. ~~Already engaged in an acrid combat~~ ^{The lovers'} conversation already is strained. It becomes bitter when Orpheus discovers the mutilated inscription on the ring. He forces Eurydice to confess in a long monologue how she resisted Hades for seven years and finally gave in to him when he ~~was~~ offered to release her. Saddened by jealousy Orpheus kills her with his dagger, and she dies for the second time.

Act three. ^{First scene} Orpheus has become insane and is seen digging in the ruins of his old home where he finds his broken lyre. A crowd of peasants ~~meets~~ ^{gets in a} fight with a marauding troop of soldiers; they eventually hang Orpheus on a beam of his own home. vc. p. 110

Second scene. Psyche, repenting her negligence in protecting Eurydice, has collected her tears in a jar. Washing Amor's eyes with these tears she restores his sight. v.c. p. 111

(3)

Third scene: Eurydice's ghost appears to meet
Orpheus after his death. They engage
in a ~~long~~ protracted, somewhat Strind-
bergian and ultimately inconclusive
dialogue, expressing a climax of torture
and desperation. (V. 5c. p. 129)

Postlude: Psyche relates ^{with} joy ~~how~~ how her love
relationship with Amor was blissfully
restored. A chorus of peaceful country
folks joins her in praising the eternal
harmony of nature over which the
sun is rising, while the music ends
with the Debussy chord on which it
had started.