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Reviews **Film & Music**

# UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

## OPERA

### ICARUS/ORPHEUS AND EURIDICE

Riverside Studios, W6

★★★★☆

KIERON QUIRKE

CLOSE-UP opera is, any arts feature writer will tell you, super-groovy-cool at the moment. Tête à Tête Opera has a claim to being ahead of the curve. This is the company's fifth festival of short, intimate operas at the Riverside Studios, and there's a smorgasbord of musical drama on offer.

I opted for a piece about Dedalus, the first inventor, and one about Orpheus, the first musician: an all-protean diet. Icarus is by Michael Zev Gordon, with libretto by Stephen Plaice. It's a work-in-progress: the first act of a piece that will, I assume, eventually follow the eponymous bird-man to his doom.

In this early chapter of the story, father Dedalus grows jealous of his apprentice, Talus – who has invented flight. Dedalus kills the boy and nicks his ideas. It looks promising. Zev Gordon's music thrills with the sounds of the forge. Pipes and percussion shriek and grind over driving piano vamps (Dedalus was a blacksmith). In the quiet moments, the composer evokes a world on the edge of discovery, yet to feel the elevating, corrupting effect of Dedalus's invention. The slow ebb and flow of the accordion backs a sweet, pious aria from Lucy Schauer as Polycaste.



ALASTAIR MUIR

Meanwhile, Ricky Ian Gordon's Orpheus and Euridice takes a more familiar subject. The lovers' meeting, her death, and his descent into the underworld are recounted by Joanna Strand, singing, Jay Bevan on clarinet (representing Orpheus), and Magnus Gilljam on piano. The three sell the

piece tremendously. Jazz-tinged impressionist passages, in which the voice and clarinet intertwine over plangent piano, give way to sections where the instruments swap urgent, bluesy riffs. The songs tend to merge pleasantly into one another but a couple of dramatic moments stand

out; an anthemic song of love or other positive emotion: "I am part of something now"; and the mad dash of notes that "Orpheus" spouts as he plays for Euridice's life before Hades.

■ *Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival, until August 21 (020 8237 1111, riversidestudios.co.uk)*

**World of discovery:**  
Christopher Diffey (rear) and Keel Watson in *Icarus*

## WHAT ELSE IS NEW

### EDINBURGH COMEDY

#### PHILL JUPITUS

The Stand

★★★★☆

#### BRUCE DESSAU

GIVEN the current insatiable appetite for live comedy it is unsurprising that TV humorists are rediscovering their roots. Never Mind The Buzzcocks captain Phill Jupitus explained onstage that his comeback was not part of a financial masterplan but to get Eddie Izzard, who kept pestering him, off the phone. Jupitus certainly looks match fit, having lost more than six stone since January, but his show could do with some bulking up.

Much of his material concerns the moth-eaten topic of ageing. He jogs through the decades and highlights instantly recognisable clichés. Teens are a hormonal mess, fiftysomethings are falling apart, parenthood's road is riddled with potholes. It is efficient, not epochal. Elsewhere, Coldplay get castigated by yet another stand-up for making moany music when they have nothing to moan about.

But when things become predictable Jupitus unearths a victorious phrase or a winning anecdote. A running gag about a US-based Welsh porn star who has her pickle regularly sent from Swansea keeps things ticking over and he paints an evocative picture of his eccentric parents. Could do with more fireworks, though his Izzard impression is undeniably spectacular.

■ *Until August 28 ((0131 558 7272, edfringe.com)*

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HOT TICKETS