

Kroon—such was her command of the words, music and drama that the production could have been billed as *Amneris*.
ROBERT NACHBAHR

New Zealand

Wellington

Wellington's small but enterprising opera company, ETERNITY OPERA, was clearly buoyed by the good support for both *Don Giovanni* and *The Marriage of Figaro* in 2016 and 2017. Its third presentation, a single concert performance on August 4, was of Monteverdi's *Orfeo*. Surprisingly, given that so little early opera has been ventured in New Zealand, this was not its first New Zealand hearing; that was an admirable student performance in 2002 by the Victoria University of Wellington's school of music, which has for at least three decades been a leader in the early music sphere.

The 270-seat HANNAH PLAYHOUSE, designed for spoken theatre, was sold out. There was no orchestra pit and space was limited, but the Eternity Renaissance Orchestra, with nine players and many fewer instruments than listed by Monteverdi, was energetically led by its music director, Simon Romanos, who had also provided the English translation, which was delivered with clear diction by most of the cast. Orchestral support, and the impact of choral passages, suffered on occasion, where more players and singers would have produced a richer sound.

The one Baroque trumpet in the opening toccata was vivid and confident, giving way to a dignified welcome by Music (Laura Loach). Orpheus was sung by William King, still a student at Victoria University, who exuded confidence and provided ornamentation and colour that offered a real sense of the late Renaissance; a little more accomplished than Alexandra Gandionco, still very capable as Euridice. Alexandra Woodhouse Appleby's arrival as the Messenger with news of Euridice's fatal snake bite was strikingly dramatic, a deeply moving performance. Joe Haddow was authoritative in his singing as both Charon and Pluto, with an imposingly mature and polished sound. The appearance of Apollo brought another fine voice, Theo Moolenaar.

Given its reception by the capacity audience it was a pity that more performances had not been scheduled, as was the case with the company's two earlier productions. However, the fact that this was the performers' one and only chance may well have inspired the thoroughly committed, artistically admirable performances that we heard. LINDIS TAYLOR

Poland

Warsaw

This has been a good year for Ignacy Jan Paderewski—composer, virtuoso pianist and statesman. The centenary of Polish independence, which he sealed at the Paris Peace Conference and which propelled him into prime ministerial office, has inspired something of a retrospective of his music, with several major recordings being released and POLISH NATIONAL OPERA putting on a powerful new staging of his only opera, *Manru*. Emerging from the TEATR WIELKI on October 14, it was hard not to feel that the Great Polish Opera has indeed been hiding in plain sight, its virtues not fully revealed previously by the couple of extant recordings (one on CD, one on DVD) or in the pages of the score alone.