

Carmina Burana

- * The most popular work for choir by Carl Orff
- * With 24 vocalists based on medieval vagabond poetry
- * As a "musical world theatre" in magic images
- * Performed for the ancient Augusta Raurica Theatre in Augst (CH)
- * In co-operation with the Basel Theatre
- * Premiere 6 September 2008

Carl Orff (1895 - 1982)

The most famous work by the composer, who, as a music educator, developed the "Orff Schulwerk", or "Orff Approach", for the purpose of rhythmic movement education, is the setting to music of 24 poems from a manuscript of the Benediktbeurn Abbey from the late Middle Ages. He summarised it as a vision of a "musical world theatre" in the first part of a triptych in a "scenic cantata". However, since Orff never formulated implementations for the staging or dramaturgy, Carmina Burana is usually performed only as a choral work.

Performance

For the open-air performance PAN.OPTIKUM adopted Carl Orff's vision of a "musical world theatre" and had the ancient theatre in Augst specially remodelled and enlarged as an amphitheatre:

While the audience takes their places in the new half of the construction, a choir of more than 240 persons performs in a dramatic narrative manner in the ancient Roman half of the theatre - in keeping with the tradition of large-scale, ancient Roman drama.

The human condition of powerlessness unrolls in magical images, acoustically in the song cycle of Spring - Tavern - Love, and visually in a horizontal Wheel of Fortune which also draws the audience into the action. The song of suffering of the swan plays a central role in this regard. The illustrations of the medieval manuscript broaden into fantastical visions of the microcosm in the macrocosm, projected into three-dimensionality - before they are brought back to the hard ground of reality by an unpredictable Fortuna.

The production was developed for the Basel Theatre and 240 choristers (opera choir, lay choirs, boys' choir), as well as for the ancient Roman stage in Augst. However, it is possible to implement and adapt it to other circumstances similar to the performance of Philip Glass' opera "The Civil wars". Such cases would involve working in a new co-operation with an orchestra and choir on site.