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## Technology invades Lied with Orfeo

By Josh Nichols

Staff writer

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this thing called cinema came along that everyone was fascinated by but couldn't quite figure out.

It used technological advances that audiences never had witnessed before.

Coming to the Lied Center for Performing Arts this weekend is a new 21<sup>st</sup> century technological wonder that many have never seen before.

The production of "Orfeo," by Canadians Michel Lemieux and Victor Pilon, is a cutting-edge mix of virtual reality, theater, performance, music and dance.

"It is, something different that many people have never seen in their life," Pilon said in a telephone interview from his home in Quebec. "People want to know what this is and how it is done, just like when cinema first came out."

The story of the Greek mythological character Orpheus will be told using cutting-edge visual technology. The original myth is about Orpheus' inability to accept the death of his wife, Eurydice.

He travels to the underworld and sings so passionately about the love he holds for his wife that the keepers of this world allow Eurydice to return to the living world.

New interpretations have told dif-

ferent stories, but this performance, which has a modern-day setting, falls somewhere between the original and contemporary versions.

Pilon chose to use Orpheus because he described Lemieux and himself as very romantic people and because every great love story is based on the Orpheus myth.

"It's a love story. It happens constantly, where one dies and the partner must deal with it," Pilon said.

"He defies death because of the love he has for her. The question is, in 2000, can we still love beyond death?" he said.

As for the special effects that will be seen on stage, Pilon said the two creators have grown up with technology.

"We've always played with technology," he said. "We use it as a tool to express ourselves as a musician would use an instrument."

Despite the continuous special effects during the show, the effects' production is hidden from the audience.

"The audience sometimes doesn't know what is and isn't real," Pilon said.

That even applies to actors "on stage."

"Sometimes an actor will go backstage and walk into a studio. From this studio, their image is projected back onto the stage," he said.

An example of when it may be difficult to distinguish between real

PREVIEW

## Orfeo

**WHERE:** Lied Center for Performing Arts, 12th & R streets

**WHEN:** Tonight and Saturday Night, 8 p.m.

**COST:** \$34 and \$30 half price for students

**THE SKINNY:** Theatrical show on the cutting edge of visual technology.

and illusion is Eurydice's death scene.

Her body is transformed into a ghost, which seems real, but is lacking solid form.

Despite the directors' fascination and use of modern technology, Pilon wanted to stress that the story is not lost in a barrage of special effects.

"The technology is at the service of the performer. The actor is not suppressed by the technology."

It is difficult to categorize this show, but it is closer to dance or ballet than a theatrical performance.

"Orfeo" is filled with music and dance but contains few words.

"There are few words because sometimes words limit the meaning of a performance," Pilon said. "Music can often times be a universal language."

Because of their new-wave approach to the theatrical world,



Courtesy Photos

Images From "Orfeo," by Canadians Michel Lemieux and Victor Pilon, show a cutting-edge mix of virtual reality, theater, performance, music and dance. The production takes the stage this weekend at the Lied Center.

Pilon and Lemieux have been criticized for their effect-filled shows.

"Some purists do have a problem with our work, but we have a lot of respect for theater," Pilon said.

"We are just proposing something different."

Charles Bethea, executive director of the Lied Center, said he and the staff at the Lied Center are more excited about this performance than a lot of the other work they bring in.

"I'm fascinated by work in any field, but this is really cutting edge," he said.

Bethea said he went to a 1995

performance and met Pilon and Lemieux, and he was also able to see one of their shows two years ago.

He said what he saw was some people in Nebraska have never seen before.

"It is good we are able to bring this and be on the cutting edge of performance in Nebraska," he said.

"It is great for the artistic community."

Pilon said the people at the Lied Center deserve credit for bringing a show such as theirs to Lincoln.

"It's wonderful 'Orfeo' can go to a place like Nebraska."