

BOSTON

Regional Reviews by Matthew Small

Aurélia's Oratorio

American Repertory Theater

This is your last week to experience one of the most captivating shows to hit Boston stages this year. Perhaps you missed *Aurélia's Oratorio* at the American Repertory Theater during a winter residency in Cambridge. No problem. You have one final chance to enjoy an encore presentation that unites a delightful cross-section of the world's performing arts. I kept wondering: did that really just happen?

Conceived and directed by Charlie Chaplin's daughter Victoria Thierrée Chaplin and starring his granddaughter Aurélia Thierrée, this production has been touring the world for the past few years. *Aurélia's Oratorio* has literally shaken each theater it inhabits, drawing eager audiences into a vibrant and fantastic trance.

Ms. Chaplin's production cannot be defined by any one area of performance. Though the creator boasts French circus roots, *Aurélia's Oratorio* might find a home at the ballet, inside a contemporary art museum, on the vaudeville stage, under a magician's tent, with a puppet troupe, or in a theater that seeks to stretch the boundaries of live performance, as it does now at the A.R.T. Chaplin's sublime tapestry of visual and aural playfulness involves scarves that become hammocks, topcoats that breathe and dance, an orchestra of alarm clocks whose rings play a delicious melody and a woman who magically sleeps within multiple drawers of her own dresser.

Thierrée and accomplished dancer-performer Jaime Martinez seamlessly weave together an evening of surprising and beautiful vignettes with few spoken words. The two turn a black stage with lush, scarlet theatrical curtains upside down, sideways and inside out. The space becomes a playground for the imagination—theirs and ours. Thierrée and Martinez are a mesmerizing pair who meet up briefly throughout the beautiful piece, but who also experience the dreamlike world apart.

Tamara Prieto Arroyo, Antonia Paradiso and Monika Schwartzl bring the curtains and more to life as performers and puppeteers who serve as the "backstage support," an underwhelming job title for three women who make much of the magic happen. Though their work appears graceful and confident now, the talented cast's rehearsal process surely required intense precision and patience.

The local regional theater scene remains relatively quiet in the summer, so it is quite the coup for Artistic Director Diane Paulus and her team to book a return visit from *Aurélia's Oratorio*. The show plays at the American Repertory Theater's Loeb Drama Center, 64 Brattle St. in Cambridge, through August 2. A couple of darker moments make this appropriate for children ages 8 and above, according to the theater. For tickets and information, visit the box office, call 617-547-8300, or click on www.americanrepertorytheater.org.

—[Matthew Small](#)

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