

Orpheus: The Song of Life

By Ann Wroe

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Orpheus: The Song of Life By Ann Wroe

The captivating "history" of the figure of Orpheus, his enduring legacy as the force and muse of creation itself.

For at least two and a half millennia, the figure of Orpheus has haunted humanity. Half-man, half-god, musician, magician, theologian, poet, and lover, his story never leaves us. He may be myth, but his lyre still sounds, entrancing everything that hears it: animals, trees, water, stones, and men. In this extraordinary work, Ann Wroe goes in search of Orpheus, tracing the man and the power he represents through the myriad versions of a fantastical life: his birth in Thrace, his studies in Egypt, his voyage with the Argonauts to fetch the Golden Fleece, his love for Eurydice and the journey to Hades, and his terrible death. We see him tantalizing Cicero and Plato, and breathing new music into Gluck and Monteverdi; occupying the mind of Jung and the surreal dreams of Cocteau; scandalizing the Fathers of the early Church, and filling Rilke with poems like a whirlwind. He emerges as not simply another mythical figure but the force of creation itself, singing the song of light out of darkness and life out of death.

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Editorial Review

Review
"This insightful and visionary study, treading a perfect line between imagination and scholarship, is as readable and necessary as a fine novel. Ted Hughes, another mythographer, would have loved it." — ***The Independent***

"Ann Wroe has an acute eye for pastoral detail . . . [Orpheus] will leave you dancing." — ***New Statesman***

"Wroe's melodic style breathes new life into his adventures with Jason and the Argonauts, his eternal love of Eurydice and interminable mourning for her and descent into Hades . . . Wroe brings mythology and Orpheus so vividly to life that readers may be convinced that he actually did exist and, indeed, still does. A book to make readers laugh, sing, and weep." — ***Kirkus*, starred review**

"Did Orpheus exist? Wroe thinks he did, and still does, and dedicates this lyrical biography to doubters." — ***New Yorker***

"In rich, poetic language, Wroe (an editor for *The Economist*) reflects on the meaning of Orpheus's life, in terms of both its mythological origins and its influence on art and literature." — **CHOICE**

"*Orpheus* combines a scholar's attention to evidence with a poet's flair for words in this startlingly original history that traces the obscure origins and tangled relationships of the Orpheus myth from ancient times through today . . . This is a brilliant book. The reader will come away with a new appreciation and understanding of the power and beauty of the Orpheus myth." — ***Library Journal***

About the Author
Ann Wroe writes for The Economist. After earning a doctorate in medieval history from Oxford, she worked at the BBC, covering French and Italian politics. She joined The Economist in 1976 and has held the posts of Books and arts editor and American editor. She has written five other books and is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and the Royal Society of Literature.

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