

WHO HAS EVER HEARD OF FRANCESCO CAVALLI?

Pinchgut Opera performs Cavalli's *L'Ormindo*

Francesco Cavalli was the most famous and most-performed opera composer of the 17th century. He is one of those almost forgotten masters that Pinchgut Opera has been discovering for Australian audiences. Pinchgut will present a new, fully staged and costumed production of Cavalli's *L'Ormindo* at City Recital Hall Angel Place, opening Wednesday 2 December 2009.

Pinchgut's co-artistic director **Erin Helyard** will conduct from the harpsichord. "What a great pleasure it will be to present *L'Ormindo* in Sydney," says Erin. "One of the first truly urban operas, *L'Ormindo* played to theatres packed with young operagoers in Venice in the 1640s. We're looking forward to showing Cavalli's vitality and novelty to contemporary Australian audiences."

The cast will include some of Australia's favourite voices. Fiona Campbell will sing the role of Erisbe, Taryn Fiebig will appear as Sicle, and other soloists include Kanen Breen, Trevor Pichanick, Jane Sheldon and Anna Fraser. We welcome the return of American countertenor David Walker (*Juditha Triumphans* in 2007) to sing the role of Ormindo. As usual, the Orchestra of the Antipodes will perform on the instruments for which the music was written: authentic Baroque instruments and replicas modelled on Baroque originals.

Cavalli wrote thirty-three operas and established so great a reputation that he was summoned to Paris twice to produce operas for Louis XIV. His operas have been described by Yale University's Ellen Rosand as "a moment of equilibrium ... a perfectly adjusted meeting of music and drama", with lightly-scored accompaniments allowing the voices to highlight his finely polished dramatic inventions. He understood the business of opera as well, and made sure to keep budgets to a minimum (perfect for today's economic climate!).

Set to a witty libretto by Cavalli's long-time colleague Giovanni Faustini, ***L'Ormindo*** was first performed in 1644 in Venice. The plot centres on a young queen trapped in a political marriage to an aged king. Throw in a couple of cross-dressing characters, two love triangles and a sleeping draught masquerading as poison and you have the makings of an excellent comedy.

The rediscovery of Cavalli in recent years (pioneered by British conductor Raymond Leppard in the 1960s and 70s) has allowed scholars, performers and audiences to appreciate for themselves the full breadth of Cavalli's vision. Full of beautiful melodies, sublimely expressive declamatory passages and harmonic invention, Cavalli operas have been popping up in opera houses all over the world (this year in Amsterdam, Bremen, Linz, Munich and Portland, among others). Pinchgut thinks it is time for Sydney audiences to discover Cavalli.

Pinchgut Opera began in 2001 with the idea of giving audiences a different experience of opera and making opera accessible to a whole new audience. Its aim is to showcase Australian talent, performing fascinating lesser-known masterpieces in an intimate venue with an excellent acoustic. *L'Ormindo* will be Pinchgut's eighth production.

For media enquiries, or to arrange an interview with Erin Helyard, please contact: Anna Cerneaz, Pinchgut on Ph: 0412 093 063 E: anna@pinchgutopera.com.au

Pinchgut Opera presents Francesco Cavalli's L'Ormindo

4 performances: Wed 2, Sat 5, Mon 7 December 2009 at 7.30pm & Sun 6 Dec 2009 at 5pm
City Recital Hall Angel Place, Sydney

Cast includes: David Walker *countertenor* (Ormindo); Fiona Campbell *mezzo-soprano* (Erisbe), Taryn Fiebig *soprano* (Sicle), Trevor Pichanick *tenor* (Amida), Kanen Breen *tenor* (Erice), Jane Sheldon *soprano* (Nerillo), Anna Fraser *soprano* (Mirinda) and Andrei Laptev *tenor* (Osmano)

Conductor: Erin Helyard

Director: Talya Masel

Designer: Adam Gardnir

Lighting Designer: Bernie Tan-Hayes

Orchestra: Orchestra of the Antipodes on period instruments

Sung in Italian with English surtitles (libretto by Giovanni Faustini)

Box office opens July 2009

www.pinchgutopera.com.au

Background information:

PINCHGUT OPERA

An Opera Company for the 21st Century

Pinchgut Opera was created in 2001 to give audiences a different experience of opera and make opera accessible to a new audience. Its aim is to showcase Australian talent, performing fascinating lesser-known masterpieces in an intimate venue with an excellent acoustic. Previous productions have been Handel's *Semele* (2002), Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* (2003), Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* (2004), Rameau's *Dardanus* (2005), Mozart's *Idomeneo* (2006), Vivaldi's *Juditha Triumphans* (2007) and Charpentier's *David and Jonathan* (2008). ABC Classics recordings of all these operas are available, except *David and Jonathan* which will be released later in 2009. All productions have been broadcast on ABC Classic FM.

People of Pinchgut

Artistic Directors	Erin Helyard & Antony Walker
Artistic Administrator	Alison Johnston
Marketing Manager	Anna Cerneaz
Production Manager	Andrew Johnston
Chair	Elizabeth Nielsen