

PINCHGUT OPERA

Newsletter No 1

Dear Friends,

Pinchgut Opera is proud to announce its first production: *Semele*, one of the finest of Handel's operas, to be performed professionally for the first time in Sydney on 4, 6 7 & 9 December 2002.

Passion, tenderness, jealousy and despair meet as the princess *Semele*, mortal beloved of all-powerful Jupiter, is destroyed through the cunning of his wife Juno.

Conducted by Antony Walker and directed by Justin Way, with period instrument orchestra Sirius Ensemble under the direction of baroque specialists Anna McDonald and Erin Helyard, this will be an experience not to be missed.

This is an exciting opportunity for Pinchgut Opera: *Semele* is a treasure trove of wonderful arias and great choruses. It is sexy, lively and moving and we are delighted to present it in the intimate setting of the City Recital Hall, Angel Place, Sydney.

Chamber opera has a special magic. It requires different forces and a more delicate touch than large-scale, elaborate productions from major opera companies. With the expert guidance of artistic directors Anna McDonald and Erin Helyard leading an orchestra of many of Australia's best period instrument players, *Semele* will be a breath of fresh air.

Why Pinchgut Opera? Pinchgut was the convicts' nickname for Fort Denison in Sydney Harbour. We chose it because we wanted something recognisably Sydney, easy to remember and as a reminder of our tight budgets and humble beginnings.

We aim to present operas that don't get heard very often and which are suitable for a smaller hall.

We are a young company and are keen to work with young singers and players who may not yet have been recognised by the major opera companies. We aim to create more professional opportunities for Australian artists and more opportunities for Australian audiences to hear them. So we are delighted to announce that the ABC has tentatively agreed to record our performances of *Semele* for release on ABC Classics.

We are very pleased to welcome home for *Semele* Antony Walker, currently Chorusmaster and House Conductor at the Welsh National Opera, who is starting to build a reputation in Europe and the US. Welcome home also to Justin Way, Assistant Director at Covent Garden, who will join Australian-based designer Samantha Paxton to create a sparkling production. The soloists and chorus of *Semele* are being recruited at the moment and we will let you know who they are as soon as we can.

The Pinchgut Opera team—Liz Nielsen, Alison Johnston, Russell Beardmore, Ken Nielsen, Anna Cerneaz, Anna McDonald and Erin Helyard—is very excited to be part of this new venture. We hope to be able to take you on the journey with us from our beginnings to our first production and on into the future.

Our newsletter will keep you in touch with what is happening: future issues will feature news of the singers and more information about the music and the story of *Semele*.

Please feel free to relay this newsletter to friends who might be interested or, better still, let us have their addresses or email addresses so we can add them to the list.

With best regards,

Elizabeth Nielsen
Chair
Pinchgut Opera Limited
A non profit company, limited by guarantee.

PO Box 1017 Neutral Bay 2089
Phone 9908 1962
liz@pinchgutopera.com.au

PS If you have an email address, perhaps you could let me have it, so we can send future newsletters that way.