



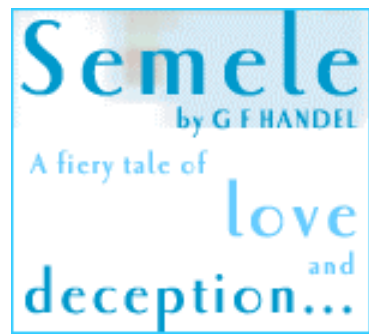
## Newsletter No. 5

April 2002

Dear Friends,

### News

- Our website is live at [http:// www.pinchgutopera.com.au](http://www.pinchgutopera.com.au). If you would like anything added to the web site please let us know as we will be updating it regularly.
- We are delighted to announce that Qantas has come aboard as a sponsor for our domestic and international airfares. We welcome them whole-heartedly to Pinchgut.
- We have discovered a talented young photographer, Ed Hughes, who will be taking all our photographs. He has started on Antony Walker, who was in Sydney a couple of weeks ago to make a recording with Cantillation. One of his photographs of Antony appears below.
- Anna McDonald is touring in Europe leading Paul McCreesh's Gabrieli Consort in performances and a recording of Bach's St Matthew Passion for DG Archiv. She is planning to meet up with Justin Way and Antony Walker while she is in the UK.
- We have received a microfiche of the original conducting score for Semele from the Handel Archive in Hamburg. On a trip to London next month Liz and Ken plan to inspect and obtain a copy of the original composer's manuscript for the work, which is in the British Library. They have also arranged to see all of the many portraits of Handel at the National Portrait Gallery and will discuss obtaining rights to use some on our programmes and publicity.
- Erin, Antony and Justin are working on the cuts for Semele. So much wonderful music and what do we have to leave out?
- Anna Ryberg will be at Welsh National Opera during May with Janacek's Cunning Little Vixen. Antony is looking forward to working with her and getting some ground work done for Semele.
- Tobias Cole has moved back to Australia and recently sang in St John's Passion at Easter in Christ Church St Lawrence.



City Recital Hall  
Angel Place, Sydney  
4,6,7 & 9 December, 2002

Tickets on sale for newsletter subscribers in July

## Bookings

Tickets will go on sale for newsletter subscribers in July. Details in the June newsletter. Please add your friends to the email list to get first choice of seats.

## Publicity

On Radio National Julie Copeland's Sunday Morning arts program on 17 March Erin Helyard was interviewed in a program about the future of opera. Simone Young, Richard Gill and Humphrey McQueen contributed pre recorded interviews. In a live discussion Lindon Terracini, Richard Mills and Erin spoke about their attitudes to opera. Erin spoke in a positive and lively manner about the music and the reasons for Pinchgut Opera.

The 2MBS-FM magazine - Fine Music – April edition which is just out has a story about Pinchgut.

Antony Walker has done several interviews following the announcement of his Washington Concert Opera appointment. See the Australian on 25 March for an interview with Antony about new appointment as well as about Semele.

### A correction

In our email announcing Antony Walker's appointment as artistic director of Washington Concert Opera, we said he was the first Australian to lead an American opera company. Ewart Shaw from 5UV Radio Adelaide (The University of Adelaide's radio station) has pointed out that Ian D Campbell, who was general manager of the State Opera of South Australia, is now general director of San Diego Opera. Quite correct. Our best wishes to them both.

This month as promised we profile Antony Walker and Stephen Bennett.

## Antony Walker



Antony made a flying visit to Sydney recently for a recording session of great Renaissance choral masterpieces with Cantillation for ABC Classics. We caught him at Goossens Hall at the ABC Centre.

Antony was born in Sydney and went to Sydney Grammar School where he was awarded the Charles Mackerras music scholarship. Despite his obvious talent, he took some time to find his speciality. Antony started playing piano until his teacher said he had "spaghetti fingers" and so he switched to cello. He enrolled as a cello major in performance at the Sydney Conservatorium but after a year switched

to a composition major at Sydney University Music department. In second year he became a voice major and in his last year a conducting major under Patrick Thomas. After graduating he sang second tenor with the Song Company and won a place in the ABC young conductor's course under Jorge Mester. This led to opportunities to conduct the ABC symphony orchestras. Aged 22, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs took him on as conductor-in-residence and a year later musical director. For the next five years Antony prepared and conducted many large scale works including Elijah, Mozart's Requiem, Mass in B Minor & St Matthew Passion, Berlioz's Roméo et Juliet and Britten's War Requiem. In tandem with this he also ran the Contemporary Singers, a group specialising in works of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. "The combination of Philharmonia and Contemporary Singers was terrific. I was able to apply knowledge learnt from either group to the other; with Philharmonia I was able to do the great choral repertoire of the ages, and with Contemporary Singers I was able to do some of the more eclectic stuff out there. I was also able to develop working relationships with many of Australia's many composers. One of the things that I am proudest of is that I have premiered about 100 pieces of music, and taken Australian music to all the places that I have gone."

In 1995 he was appointed to the Australian Opera Young Artists program as conductor, and worked with conductors like Richard Bonyngue, John Nelson and Patrick Summers. He conducted a number of productions for Opera Australia including Magic Flute, Tales of Hoffman and Hansel and Gretel.

In 1997 Antony went overseas. He did this with some reluctance – "it can almost be hurtful to have everyone tell you you should go overseas; but then you realise everyone has your best interests at heart, and so you decide to do it." After a period of study, some assistant conducting in various countries, he was offered, at Sir Charles Mackerras's suggestion, the position of chorusmaster and staff conductor at Welsh National Opera. At WNO he has conducted Madame Butterfly, Carmen, Rigoletto, The Barber of Seville, Queen of Spades and La Traviata. He has been a regular visitor to the US conducting at Wolf Trap Opera and for Minnesota and Cincinnati Opera.

Where would he like to end up? "Conducting six months overseas and six months in Australia" Antony says without hesitation. The recent appointment in Washington and his conducting work for Cantillation and Pinchgut mean he is well on the way to achieving that aim.

## Stephen Bennett



We managed to catch up with Stephen Bennett in a break from rehearsals for Sydney Philharmonia's performance of St Matthew Passion.

Stephen's cellist mother and violinist father need not have worried that their teenager son was playing guitar in a band. After only a year of singing lessons with Florence Taylor he

went on to join the Leonine Consort as a very young bass. He worked as a gardener to support himself while he entered and won various prizes in many singing competitions. He was a member of the Song Company and joined Opera Australia in 1986 as part of their Young Artist Development Program.

As a member of Opera Australia he has sung most of the great bass roles, including Sarastro in Magic Flute, Don Giovanni, Leporello and Masetto in Don Giovanni, Figaro in Marriage of Figaro, Publio in La Clemenza di Tito, Achilla in Julius Caesar, Colline in La Boheme, Arkel in Pelleas and Melisande, Claggart in Billy Budd, Mephistofeles in Faust and Gremin in Eugene Onegin. As well as opera, Stephen appears regularly in concerts and recitals for Musica Viva and Sydney Philharmonia and the state symphony orchestras, performing Bach's St John & St Matthew Passions and Christmas Oratorio, and B Minor Mass, Handel's Messiah, Samson and Joshua, Haydn's Creation, Verdi's and Mozart's Requiems. He has given many song recitals.

Stephen lives in the Blue Mountains with his wife and four children. He describes the important things in his life as his family, ("I am really a house Dad"), his singing and his keen interest in landscape photography.

True basses are rare in Australia. Stephen is one of the greatest and we are lucky to have him for the joint roles of Cadmus and Somnus.

In the next newsletter, news of ticket sales and opening of bookings for newsletter subscribers, as well as profiles on Tobias Cole and Justin Way.

Stay in touch and spread the word.

Liz, Alison and the Pinchgut team

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**"Handel is the greatest composer that ever lived ... I would uncover my head and kneel down on his tomb." .... Beethoven**