



Dardanus

City Recital Hall Angel Place, Sydney
30 November, 3, 4 & 5 December 2005
Tickets on sale from July

February 2005

Dear Friends,

Best wishes to everyone for a terrific year in 2005. Welcome to all the new newsletter subscribers – lovely to have you with us for the journey.

This is our first newsletter for 2005. Thank you to all those who supported us last year, including those who made financial donations and those who came to one of the performances of *Orfeo*. We were very happy with the production quality. The reviews were all very good, we received wonderful feedback and the live recording made for ABC Classics sounds excellent. The CD will be out towards year-end.

Most of you will know by now that our 2005 production is Rameau's *Dardanus*. This work, first performed in Paris in 1739, has never been produced in Australia. The French baroque has been neglected on opera stages, which is a great pity as *Dardanus* and several other works by Rameau rank with the greatest works of Handel, Monteverdi, Vivaldi and Purcell.

Dardanus will be directed by Justin Way, who did *Semele* and *The Fairy Queen* with us. Samantha Paxton (who designed *Semele*) will design the sets. Antony Walker will again conduct with the Orchestra of the Antipodes and Cantillation. We are not going to tell you anything about the soloists just yet. We are about to sign an excellent group and will be able to tell more in the next newsletter.

Dardanus will be at the City Recital Hall, Angel Place for the following four performances :

Wednesday 30 November 2005 7.30 pm
Saturday 3 December 2005 7.30 pm
Sunday 4 December 2005 5.00 pm
Monday 5 December 2005 7.30 pm



A contemporary portrait of Rameau

It will be sung in French with English surtitles. Bookings will open in July. Newsletter subscribers will have an exclusive booking period and a discount price for one week. Details will be in a later newsletter.

What's it all about?

Like many early operas, *Dardanus* is based on a Greek myth. But only a little bit. In mythology, Dardanus was son of Jupiter and Electra and was the founder of Troy (trivia question: which geographic entity did he give his name to?) The legend also says that he marries the daughter of Teucer, king of Phrygia, and succeeded to his father-in-law's throne. The rest of the plot of the opera was, we have to admit, concocted by Le Clerc la Bruere Rameau's librettist who was at the time 23 and who died of smallpox in Rome at the age of 39. (If you stick with us, you will end up knowing more than you ever thought you wanted to know about French music of the 18th Century).

We will give you a synopsis of the story in a later newsletter. Right now, we will, tell you that it involves a dragon. The snake in *Orfeo* was such a hit that we would like to use a real dragon. None of the theatrical animal wranglers seem to have one. It does not necessarily need to breathe fire but must be very scary. And it must be able to play dead. Can you help?

Musical Pitch

We will be performing *Dardanus* at French pitch where A = 393 Hz (vibrations per second). Modern works are generally at 440 Hz while for most baroque music 415 is used. As often, there is an *exception Francaise*. When Antony and Alison first proposed this, we asked whether it really made a difference. They assured us it did and to the audience the music will sound warmer and richer. So we agreed.

Trouble is, we need to find instruments that can handle this pitch. The strings and harpsichords are no problem – they can be tuned down. The winds are different and we need instruments that are made for this pitch. The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment in London (with which cellist Danny Yeadon regularly plays) has kindly agreed to lend us two bassoons. We have located a couple of oboes in Australia and have commissioned a maker in Germany to make a pair of piccolos.

That was a sort of French Pitch for Dummies. Later, Alison will give us a more detailed (and more interesting) explanation.

The Fairy Queen CD



The CDs of our 2003 production *The Fairy Queen* were released in December last year, and we are very happy with them. They've already been very favourably reviewed in Sydney Morning Herald and The Australian newspapers, with the Herald saying "Pinchgut Opera has captured the freshness that is the enduring miracle of Purcell" and the Australian saying "The Fairy Queen is 400 years young and Pinchgut Opera plays it that way" and awards the discs four stars (their highest rating).

We'll put links to these reviews up on our website – so have a look at www.pinchgutopera.com.au if you'd like to see them. Meantime you can buy the two CD set at any ABC or good record store, or online from Buywell Just Classical at <http://www.buywell.com>.

Don't forget too about the recording of our 2002 production – Handel's *Semele*, which is available from the same outlets.

So what's everyone up to after Orfeo?



Mark Tucker returned to the UK soon after we closed *Orfeo*, and has been working on various projects including the Britten's *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings* with the London Mozart Players conducted by Andrew Parrott, and Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*. It was very sad to see him go, and we are looking forward to seeing him again at some stage in the future.

Antony Walker stayed in Sydney for Christmas, but then returned to the US where he's just about to begin work on Handel's *Orlando* with New York City Opera. From there he'll be going on to Minnesota Opera where he'll be conducting John Adams' *Nixon in China*. He'll next be back in Australia in July/August when he'll be conducting some concerts for Musica Viva with the wonderful early music soprano Emma Kirkby, and Cantillation and the Orchestra of the Antipodes.





Sara Macliver is back in her home town of Perth, and has been performing there in the Perth Festival in two concerts – Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*, and a semi-staged performance of Bach’s great *St Matthew Passion*. Sydney audiences will next see Sara in Sydney Philharmonia’s Bach series this year. The first concerts in this series are at the end of March, and will also feature other Pinchgut regulars – Sally-Anne Russell, Paul McMahon, Stephen Bennett and Brett Weymark.

Director Mark Gaal was Artistic Associate of Summer @ NIDA and soon will be working with opera and music students at the NSW Conservatorium of music on stagecraft. And with the Really Useful Company he’s developing a circus-theatre production, planned to tour Australia and Asia in 2006.

Bass Damian Whiteley has returned to Switzerland and the Zurich Opera, after enjoying the Sydney summer in December. He’s very much missing the warm temperatures. He’ll be meeting up with Antony in New York next month when they are both there.



Designer Alice Lau went straight from *Orfeo* to work on the costumes for the Sydney Festival’s production of *The Three Furies*.

In the orchestra assistant conductor and harpsichordist Erin Helyard and theorbo player Deborah Fox have returned to Montreal and New York respectively to a lot of snow and very cold temperatures. Both are now involved in other projects (Erin is back studying for his PhD) but are thinking of us very fondly. Violinist Sophie Gent has returned to the Netherlands and is doing lots of performing work, and Neal Peres da Costa and Danny Yeadon have been recording the Bach gamba suites for CD with ABC Classics.



Cantillation has several projects this year including working with the SSO and Musica Viva and doing some more film and recording work. They are starting to work on the French for *Dardanus* already and are very much looking forward to the challenge. There will be lots of opportunities to hear various Cantillation members as soloists throughout the year, and we’ll give you details of these events as they come up.

If you’d like to see more of the wonderful *Orfeo* production photos taken by Simon Hodgson we have a slide show up on our website.

***Dardanus* Recording**

As I type this I am listening to a recording of *Dardanus* conducted by Mark Minkowski on Archiv label. It is absolutely wonderful music and until ours is released, this is the best recording of the work. Fish Fine Music and Michael’s Music Room should have it.

And that’s it for this newsletter. Best wishes from Liz, Alison, Ken, Antony, Erin, Anna & Andrew.

“With the beauty of the music, and the magic of Jélyotte’s voice, I wept bitterly half the time, behind my fan.” writer Mme de Graffigny at a rehearsal before the opening of *Dardanus* in 1739

Sponsors

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