

2005 NEWSLETTER #3

Dardanus

City Recital Hall
Angel Place, Sydney
30 November,
3, 4 & 5 December 2005
Tickets on sale July 1

Dear Friends,

We had a wonderful response to our announcement that Paul Agnew will be singing the title role in *Dardanus*, and it's with equally great pleasure that we announce that New Zealand baritone Paul Whelan is to sing the role of Anténor, *Dardanus*' rival in love and war.



Paul was born in New Zealand (and in fact lived just down the road from another very tall New Zealand baritone - Teddy Tahu Rhodes), and studied at the Wellington Conservatoire and then the Royal Northern College of Music. In 1993 he won the Lieder Prize in the Cardiff Singer of the World Competition. Paul has a very busy concert, recital, opera and recording career. He has worked with many conductors and organisations including Rattle, Nagano, Hickox, Menuhin and Covent Garden, Netherlands Opera, the Met, Welsh National and English National Opera.

Paul has been to Australia on a number of occasions performing roles from Mozart (*Don Giovanni*), Tchaikovsky (*Eugene Onegin*) and Britten (Demetrius in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*). Paul has made a speciality of the role of Christ in performances of Bach's Passions often in semi-staged performances, including the 2005 Perth Festival where The Australian said of his performance "Paul Whelan ... brought passion and gravity to the role ... it bordered on sublime" and Opera-Opera said "Paul Whelan as Jesus was the focal point of the first half he was utterly magnificent with masterly word painting".

For more information please see Paul's bio on our website - <http://www.pinchgutopera.com.au/productions/dardanus/cast/pw.html>. We look forward to working with Paul.

Bookings Will Open Exclusively For You on 1 July!

Newsletter subscribers can book for our production of *Dardanus* from Friday 1 July. And, what's more, we have a special offer for you. For opening night - Wednesday 30 November (7.30 pm) only - you may book seats with a \$5 discount off the normal price. Prices to you will be: A Reserve \$90 and B Reserve \$70. These can only be booked over the phone (02 8256 2222) or in person at City Recital Hall Angel Place. The system does not allow Internet booking for this offer. Please mention that you are a Pinchgut newsletter subscriber to take advantage of this offer. (We suggest, though, that if you are coming to the opening night, you should keep another date free: you just might want to come again.) Bookings for the public open 14 July (an appropriate date for this work, we believe). Please round up your friends and make a party!

Jean-Philippe Rameau - everything you always wanted to know about him



Jean-Philippe Rameau lived a long life. Born in Dijon in 1683, he died at age 81 in Paris on 12 September 1764. His life overlapped that of Bach (1685-1750), Handel (1685-1759), Scarlatti (1685-1757) and Telemann (1681-1767). At this distance it is awe-inspiring to think of five such great composers working, in such different ways, at the same time.

Rameau has been described by a contemporary as having "a sharp chin, no stomach, flutes for legs". He was extremely tall and thin; "more like a ghost than a man" recorded another. His father was an organist in Dijon, his mother a member of the lesser nobility.

Not much is known about Rameau's early life. It seems that at 18 (1702) he was sent to Italy to study music but got no further than Milan. What he did there is not known but it seems he returned to France within a few months. Records of churches show him popping up in several places in France over the next 20 year, mostly as an organist on short-term contracts. The next confirmed sighting was in 1709 where he succeeded his father at Notre Dame Cathedral but he was gone from there by 1713 because in that year the city of Lyons was about to celebrate the Treaty of Utrecht (which, I am sure you will remember, was between Louis XIV of France, Philip V of Spain and Queen Anne of Great Britain to end the War of Spanish Succession). Jean-Philippe Rameau was appointed Musical Director for the ceremonies but the musical element was cancelled and the money given to the poor. There must have been more to that story.

Our hero continued his nomadic wanderings between 1713 and early 1720s. He appeared in Dijon, Clermont and Lyons, sometimes signing long-term contracts as an organist and failing to honour them. A story about his escape from a contract at Clermont Cathedral has him composing a mass that was so awful that the chapter conceded that they could not keep a composer who wanted to leave. In this period though he wrote *Traité de l'Harmonie and Nouveau System de Musique Theoretique*. There are published keyboard works and cantatas from this period but he became known as a theoretician before he was recognised as a composer.

By 1724 he was in Paris and, it seems, he never left. The following year two Louisiana Indians were "displayed" in a theatre and Rameau wrote music to accompany their dances: *Les Sauvages*.

In 1726, at age 42 Rameau married Marie-Louise Mangot. She was 19 and the daughter of a family of musicians, originally from Lyons. It seems to have been a happy marriage and produced four children of which one boy and one girl survived their father. Rameau continued his theoretical writings and worked as a jobbing organist - there is no record of any fixed appointment anywhere - and teacher.

Opera appears in his resume in the early 1730s. The first work composed was *Samson a "tragedie en musique"* for which the libretto (still in existence) was written by Voltaire. The music can be dated at 1733 but was unpublished, censored, unperformed and lost.

Somewhere around then Rameau met Le Riche de la Poupliniere a wealthy man who was to become his patron. *Hippolyte et Aricie* was the first product of this patronage.

It was performed privately in 1733 in La Poupliniere's house, with his singers and orchestra and on 1 October that year, just after Rameau's 50th birthday, the opera was performed at the Paris Opera.

The work created a storm. Lully was the gold standard for French opera and the "Lullists" were very unhappy about any departure from his rules. (It is difficult to understand from this distance what the argument was about. Perhaps in the future critics will wonder why the post-modernist German opera directors create such a furore today, though I doubt it).

In 1749 Rameau wrote Nais a pastoral to celebrate the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle. (Intended to end the Thirty Years' War). In England Handel was composing the Royal Fireworks Music for similar celebrations. The Thirty Years war continued, which shows that there are limits to the power of music.

Rameau continued to live as part of La Poupliniere's household and for several periods he and his family lived in apartments in his patron's houses. (Some of those houses are said to be still standing in Paris. We are hoping to take photos for future newsletters). And he continued to compose operas, opera-ballets and write musicological works. - KN

We'll run part two of Rameau's life and times in the next newsletter - watch out for this.

Holman Webb Lawyers and piccolos for Dardanus

David Hartstein at Holman Webb Lawyers has an eye for an interesting instrument. Last year we were delighted that Holman Webb sponsored Nigel Crocker on the sackbut for L'Orfeo. This year we are pleased to announce that Holman Webb are with us again and sponsoring the piccolos. These two French baroque pitch piccolos, which have been especially made for us by Rudolf Tutz, of Tutz Instruments Austria, arrived on April 20. Melissa Farrow and Matthew Ridley are busy breaking them in for us. Our thanks go to Holman Webb Lawyers for this very special sponsorship which has led to these instruments being made for Pinchgut Opera and available in Australia for the first time.



Holman Webb Lawyers partners - David Hartstein, Jonathan Casson and John Wakefield with Matthew Ridley and Melissa Farrow, proud piccolo players. Piccolo photos by Elizabeth O'Donnell

Heroes Sought



Last year there were 38 Heroes of Pinchgut. Each generously contributed money to make it possible for us to present Monteverdi's *Orfeo*. We will always be grateful to them. As you know, Pinchgut aims to be financed primarily by box-office, sponsorship and donations. We do not expect that government grants will ever be a large part of our funding. That is why individual donations, from people who believe that what we are doing is worthwhile, are so vital to our future.

Times are tough in the Australian music scene and there is a lot of pessimism about. We are proud that Pinchgut has been able to arrive at its fourth production in this climate, but we do need help to continue and to get better and better at what we do.

Would you like to become a Hero? All donations over \$2 are tax deductible. Under the tax law, we cannot give any material benefits in return for donations but we do wish to make our Heroes part of the Pinchgut family. We will list all Heroes in the Program (unless they want to be anonymous) and will find ways of personally showing our gratitude, without offending the Tax Office. If you would like to join the order of Heroes of Pinchgut, please send a cheque, payable to Pinchgut Opera Public Fund to P O Box 239 Westgate NSW 2048. If you would like to talk about it, you can phone Liz Nielsen on 0407 916 802. Receipts will be issued in time for tax returns.

And special thanks to those Heroes who have already sent a donation towards the production of Dardanus. You are an inspiration and a wonderful encouragement to the whole company.

Antony Walker triumphs in Washington with Esclarmonde

Antony recently performed Massenet's Esclarmonde in Washington DC with soprano Celena Schafer & Washington Concert Opera. The Washington Post said of his performance "Walker not only chose to perform, cast and lead the opera but was also responsible for the projected English translation of its dizzy libretto ... His conducting was vigorous and proportionate -- he has clearly thought through every note of this gigantic score -- and he summoned eager performances from the orchestra and chorus, who threw themselves into their work as though they were restoring a lost masterpiece."

THE GRACE

The Grace Hotel sponsors Pinchgut Opera

We are pleased to announce that our overseas artists will stay at the Grace Hotel, 77 York Street. The landmark "Grace Building" a grand old heritage building with an interesting history was built by the Grace Bros retail empire in 1930 and remains one of Sydney's best-known examples of pre-war architecture. In 1942, during the war, the Grace Building was requisitioned under national security regulations by the Federal Government for use as headquarters by the Supreme Commander of allied forces in the south-west Pacific, General Douglas MacArthur. It is thought that the series of tunnels that run beneath York Street to Circular Quay, were connected to the basement of the Grace Building during the war. The Grace Building was purchased by Kuala Lumpur based Low Yat Group in 1995. After housing various government departments, the building was restored to its former glory as a beautiful 382-room hotel opening in 1997. We know our artists will be well looked after in this superior hotel and we welcome The Grace Hotel as a sponsor of Pinchgut Opera. Watch the newsletters for offers of accommodation and meal packages for Pinchgut Opera supporters.

What's Happening Now?

Something is happening for the Pinchgut crew pretty well year round. Right now this is what we are up to:

- Contracts for the principals are being finalized and accommodation for visiting artists is arranged.
- Justin Way and the design team are working on the opera: but they refuse to tell us anything until we see the presentation in August.
- Graphic art for posters, flyers and advertisements is being prepared. We are working with a London firm this time www.thisisrealart.com who know what Justin is planning, but they won't tell us either.
- The bassoons being borrowed from Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment are coming from London.
- Marketing plans are being finalized and we are busy writing stuff for newsletters and the website.

And something which we think our readers would be interested in -
Stopera presents the Australian premiere of JANE EYRE by Michael Berkeley and David Malouf

26 May - 4 June The Street Theatre, Canberra

The Australian premiere of a romantic and thrilling chamber opera based on the novel by Charlotte Brontë. More than 150 years after it was first published, Brontë's Jane Eyre is the most widely read in the English language. Composer Michael Berkeley and writer David Malouf transform Brontë's masterpiece into an intense psycho-drama exploring the love affair between Jane and Rochester, as shocking secrets unfold around them. Starring Rebecca Collins & Gary Rowley, conducted by Rick Prakhoff and directed by Caroline Stacey.

Tickets: \$38 full/\$32 concessions/\$16 student rush Bookings: 02 6247 1223 The Street Theatre, Canberra

For more information contact Stopera: 02 6232 4082 stopera@netspeed.com.au

The answer to last newsletter's trivia question was of course Dardanelles.

And that's it another newsletter.

Best wishes from Liz, Alison, Ken, Anna, Andrew, Antony & Erin,

In Greek mythical past, heroes were quite common. These heroes undertook quests, sailed on fantastic voyages, killing villains & monsters, saving beautiful princesses in distress, and fighting in titanic wars. The Greek writer, Hesiod, called this period the Heroic Age - between the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age. Here the heroes were demi-gods, who claimed kinship or direct descent to the gods. They were a race of noble warriors, who lived during the time of wars in Thebes and Troy. (Jimmy Joe, webmaster of www.timelessmyths.com a fascinating site on Greek myths.)

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