

2005 NEWSLETTER #4

Dear Friends,

Firstly - as promised - excellent news from both of our Artistic Directors. Antony Walker has won the Richard F. Gold Debut Award for his recently completed performances of Handel's Orlando with countertenor Bejun Mehta and New York City Opera. Antony has also just finished conducting very well received performances of John Adams' Nixon in China for Minnesota Opera, and he's now back in Washington DC where he will be doing Verdi's Luisa Miller for Washington Concert Opera this coming weekend. The award is given by NYCO to an artist in recognition of an outstanding performance and is rarely awarded to conductors. Erin Helyard, who is working for a doctorate at McGill University in Montréal, has had a paper that he wrote about Clementi's revisions of his own works chosen by the American Musicological Society to be presented at a conference in Washington in October. This is a great honour, especially for a Ph.D student. We're very pleased for both Antony and Erin, and of course very proud.

Cantillation has just returned from a Musica Viva country wide tour through northern NSW, conducted by Paul Stanhope. They presented a program of folk songs and Australian choral works, and had wonderful receptions throughout their trip. And we're very pleased to report that there are some lovely folk in Armidale who have come to previous Pinchgut productions and will be coming to Dardanus, and there's now a group in Lismore and Ballina who will be investigating the possibility of hiring a bus and coming down to see this year's show.

Last week a group of our singers and players went into the Goossens Hall at the ABC to record the Dardanus preview CD. The CD is going to feature three tracks - a track of two short choruses, another of two instrumental dances and the third of Dardanus' famous aria Lieux funestes (sung on this occasion by Paul McMahan, as Paul Agnew of course was not in Sydney to do this). We know a lot of people don't know the music of Dardanus very well if at all, and we are hoping that this preview CD will be a chance for anyone who is interested to listen to some of the music before coming to the performances. We'll also be using the CD as a promotional tool again. Many thanks to all the performers and the ABC for helping us with this.

A reminder that 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! We'll remind you again before the opening date, but please mark this date in your diaries!

The Grace Hotel is offering package deals for those coming to Sydney to see Dardanus. See further on for these.

Sara Macliver & Sally-Anne Russell in a concert to launch their new CD



Sara, Sally-Anne, Antony and Orchestra of the Antipodes have just released another CD, to follow on from the great success of their first album - the Bach Arias & Duets. This disc features the Pergolesi Stabat Mater and duets of Handel, Vivaldi and Monteverdi. The CD is being launched at a concert in the NSW Art Gallery on Monday 20 June at 7 pm, and Pinchgut readers in Sydney might like to attend this. The concert will be preceded by a champagne reception and private viewing of the Archibald, Wynne and Sulman Prizes. For more info and to book tickets please call (02) 9225 1878 or book on-line at <http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/events>.

In Search of Rameau in Paris



Liz and Ken Nielsen have been doing some research during their stay in Paris. Here's their report: There are not a lot of reminders of Rameau in Paris. The Church of St. Eustache (near Les Halles) is where he was buried though the exact location is unknown. In the church there is a bust and a plaque in his memory (appropriately in the Chapel of St Cecilia) but these were erected in the 19th century. There is a Rue Rameau near the Biblioteche Nationale but this seems to have had no connection with him. We had read that Le Riche de la Poupliniere, Rameau's patron, had owned some houses that were still standing in Paris, but we could not find them. We did discover, though, that Opera de Paris is presenting Rameau's Platée, with Paul Agnew in the title role and conducted by Mark Minkowski, in its next season.

Meeting Paul Agnew

Liz and Ken met Paul in Caen in Normandy and heard him sing in a performance of Handel's oratorio *L'Allegro, Il Penseroso ed Il Moderato* with William Christie and Les Arts Florissants. They had heard him only on CD and DVD before this and were delighted with his engaging stage presence. He has a very busy schedule: in May he went on with Christie to Spain and Italy for more performances of *L'Allegro* then was off to Strasbourg to begin rehearsals for a new production of Rameau's *Les Boreades*, conducted by Haïm for Opera Nationale du Rhin. Then, after a short summer break, he is back with Christie for a performance of Charpentier's *Le Jugement de Salomon* in Spain. Paul is looking forward to coming to Sydney immensely and said he hoped to come to Sydney a little before our rehearsals start. He just might inspect a golf course or two.

Dardanus - the Plot

Read about the [plot of Dardanus](#).

Jean Philippe Rameau - his life and works continued

If you missed the last newsletter the first part of this article on the life and works of Rameau it's up on our website - www.pinchgutopera.com.au

Dardanus was the product of 1738-39. At the first performances (there were 26 initially) the reception was cool. The reservations were not, it seems, about the music but the plot and poetry. Rameau sought help from another poet and a revised version was presented in 1744. This was better received. (Our production will be an amalgam of the best parts, musically, from the two versions). It was revived in 1760 and again, after Rameau's death, in 1768 and 1771. After that, performances were few and infrequent. The French public fell for Italian opera buffe and all but forgot their own geniuses for a couple of hundred years.

More operas and opera-ballets followed from Rameau after Dardanus. *Platée* (1745) *Zoroastre* (1749) *Les Paladins* (1760). All were well received, except by the Lullist traditionalists.

Rameau also continued theoretical writings. He wanted to be famous for his writings, more than his music. Late in life he said he regretted the time spent composing, as that had taken time he could have spent writing. We, respectfully, disagree.

This was the Age of Reason and Rameau, a friend of Rousseau, believed harmony could be reduced to mathematical rules. He sent one of his writings to Johann Bernoulli (a Swiss mathematician, brother of the more famous Jacob Bernoulli, whose theories on fluid dynamics became the basis of the aerofoil and who should perhaps be the patron saint of air travellers) seeking and receiving his seal of scientific approval.

Towards the end of his life Rameau found his creative powers weakening but his reasoning powers remained. He continued to write and just four months before his death he was ennobled by the Emperor. He seems to have had good health throughout his life until the fever from which he died on 12 September 1764. He was buried in St Eustache, near Les Halles.

By this time, Rameau's fame ensured a send-off with great ceremony. Three memorial services were held in Paris and others throughout France. His widow lived until 1785 but nothing is known of his descendants. Perhaps the genes have survived and they are composing today.

Some described Rameau as mean, bad tempered, unapproachable and unsociable. But we know he had enemies and perhaps these were judgments coloured by disagreements. One story, we like to think, gives greater insight into his character. Michel-Paul-Gui de Chabanon, a young friend (later a member of Academie Française, occupying the seat later taken by Victor Hugo) saw him at a performance of Castor et Pollux at Fontainebleau not long before his death. Chabanon records: "I ran towards him to embrace him; he started abruptly to take flight and came back only on hearing my name. Then, excusing the weirdness of his welcome, he said he avoided compliments because they embarrassed him and he never knew how to reply."

This article is based on various sources, including Girdlestone's excellent book "Jean-Philippe Rameau" as well as The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians and credible, if not academically authenticated, writings available on the Internet. However all errors, as well as irrelevant interpolations, are the responsibility of Ken Nielsen.

PS - Ken got his wars wrong

In the last newsletter, the first part of the Rameau biography said: "In 1749 Rameau wrote Nais a pastoral to celebrate the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle. (Intended to end the Thirty Years' War)" This is incorrect. It was the War of The Austrian Succession. This was quite an interesting war. It ran from 1740 to 1748 and involved nearly all the powers of Europe and extended as far as North America and India. It is not to be confused with the War of the Spanish Succession, which happened earlier in the 18th century. Ken apologizes for his carelessness. We have asked him to stay off wars in future.

Special packages for supporters of Pinchgut Opera at The Grace Hotel



The Grace Hotel is very pleased to be able to offer the following packages for our supporters from Wednesday 30th November - Monday 6th December 2005 inclusive.

All prices are include GST.

Superior Room: \$195.00 per room, per night (single /twin share) or \$225.00 per room, per night and full buffet breakfast for two.
Deluxe Room: \$235.00 per room, per night (single /twin share) or \$265.00 per room, per night and full buffet breakfast for two.
Heritage Superior Room: \$245.00 per room, per night and continental breakfast for two.

Heritage Deluxe Room: \$285.00 per room, per night and continental breakfast for two.

**** Special offer for Heritage Floor **:** book any Heritage floor room and receive a complimentary bottle of sparkling wine on arrival.
Additional rates including car parking are available on request. Rooms are subject to availability and reservations can be made by contacting The Grace Hotel
Reservations department : phone: 02 9272 6890 or fax: 02 9272 6677 or email: reservations@gracehotel.com.au. Website: www.gracehotel.com.au.

Save tax, donate to Pinchgut

For most people, tax rates will go down after 30 June, due to bracket changes made last year. And if the budget changes get through Parliament, there will be a further reduction. So a deductible donation to Pinchgut Public Fund made before the end of this financial year will probably be worth more to you than one made after 30 June.

Well, that is one reason you might think about helping us. Another and probably more important reason is we really do need your help to continue our productions. We do not receive large government support (and in the present climate, do not expect to) so our main sources of finance are box office, donations and sponsorship. We believe that we are achieving something worthwhile for music in Sydney but our survival is not yet secure.

If you can help, please send a cheque payable to Pinchgut Opera Public Fund to us at PO Box 239 Westgate NSW 2048. Donations over \$2 are tax deductible. Receipts will be issued before 30 June.
And thank you, from all of us at Pinchgut.

PS If you cannot make a donation, how about persuading a few more friends to buy tickets? We bet they will be grateful.

And that's it another newsletter. Best wishes from Ken, Liz, Alison, Anna, Andrew, Antony & Erin.

"Not a bad bloke after all." Ken Nielsen after researching Rameau's life.

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