

## 2005 NEWSLETTER #5

Dear Friends,



### Pinchgut Invasion

It all started as a bit of a joke. We were reading about contacts between France and Sydney. Comte de la Perouse, the great French explorer, arrived at Botany Bay on 24 January 1788, just a few days after Captain Arthur Phillip. But what if he got there first? Sydney would have become a French colony. What would be different? Would the food and wine be better? Hard to imagine, but probably opera would be different.

So, we thought, let's find out. Let's do a fast rewind of history and invade Fort Denison (Pinchgut) on behalf of France. And let's do it on 14 July, Bastille Day, that just happened to be the day bookings were to open to the public for our production of the great French opera *Dardanus*.

With security alerts heightened, we thought we'd better make it legal so we asked NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, who manage Fort Denison, for permission. They were enthusiastic but thought we should check with Bob Debus, the Minister. Bob liked the idea so much he said he would come. The French Consul sent a representative, as well as lending a flag, and we organized some lovely Pinchgut singers, with drum and piccolo accompaniment, to sing La Marseillaise. Though it was scheduled for 11:00 am, we decided that the occasion needed French champagne.

Anne Maria Nicholson, Arts Reporter for ABC TV News, brought a camera crew and Sharon Verghis from the Herald came with a photographer. Oh, and AAP to send the story around the world. The story was on the ABC TV news that night, with a photograph in the Herald next day. And the choir enjoyed the champagne. There are a few more photos, taken by the very talented Simon Hodgson if you'd like to see them on [our website](#).

Footnote: There is a very interesting museum at La Perouse, celebrating Le Compte's visit to Botany Bay. <http://amol.org.au/guide/instn.asp?ID=N042>

### **Bookings are open!**

The opening night (Wednesday 30 November) is selling fast. Please book your seats at City Recital Hall Angel Place Box Office on (02) 8256 2222 or online at [www.cityrecitalhall.com](http://www.cityrecitalhall.com).

We are thinking of offering a special package for parties – probably for groups of over ten people. What do you think? Let us know by email [liz@pinchgutopera.com.au](mailto:liz@pinchgutopera.com.au) if you are interested.

Here's an interesting piece of trivia - the toccata that which calls Isménor the Magician forth from under the ground in Act II of Dardanus has become widely known in France as a radio program theme.



Did you know that you can visit Fort Denison by arrangement through NPWS? The details are at <http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/parks.nsf/ParkDiscovery?OpenAgent&ParkKey=N0039>

Between now and 30 October 2005, if you mention that you are a Pinchgut Opera subscriber and you buy one Fort Denison Heritage ticket you will receive an additional ticket of equal or lesser value free - maximum of one free ticket per booking. A paying ticket holder must accompany the recipient of the free ticket. To book, phone NPWS on 9247 5033.

### **Introducing our heroine - Kathryn McCusker**



Sydney Opera lovers will remember Kathryn McCusker, who is singing the role of Iphise in *Dardanus*, though they have not had the chance to hear her for seven years.

Kathryn was principal soprano with the Australian Opera between 1994 and 1999 and sang many major roles, including Barbarina and Susanna (*Marriage of Figaro*); Pamina (*Magic Flute*); Ilia (*Idomeneo*); Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*); Drusilla (*Coronation of Poppea*); Dircé (*Médée*); a wood-sprite (*Rusalka*); first lover (*Il Tabarro*); Suor Genovieffa (*Suor Angelica*); Lauretta (*Gianni Schicchi*); Marzelline (*Fidelio*); Oberto (*Alcina*); Servilia (*La clemenza di Tito*) and Iphigenie (*Iphigenie en Tauride*). She sang the role of Tytania in the Baz Luhrmann production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* performed at the '94 Edinburgh Festival.

In 1999 Kathryn moved to Europe where she has sung at the Covent Garden Festival, Vienna Staatsoper, Glyndebourne Festival Opera and English National Opera, among others.

We asked her about her decision to leave a very successful career with the Australian Opera.

"It was a difficult choice to leave the security of A-O for the unknown prospects and uncertainty of a freelance career in Europe, however I feel living in Europe has given me a broader perspective on life and a deeper understanding of myself. It is challenge to begin a career in Europe and requires incredible patience, perseverance and belief in yourself, but I have no regrets. I have had some wonderful opportunities in Europe and I feel I have grown as a singer and as a person."

And living in London has given Kathryn the opportunity to develop another passion of hers: yoga.

"I have always had a strong attraction to the practice of many forms of yoga but it was Kundalini yoga that ignited a greater sense of awareness and energy to express my creativity. I cannot imagine my life now without Kundalini yoga as it has not only given me the tools to cope when I am going through stressful times but it has also

helped me with my singing because of its focus on mantra (sound vibration). I now teach Kundalini yoga which has inspired me to collaborate on a project called Anjali Sisters, dedicated to the potential of mantra. This has been a wonderful contrast to opera as it has allowed me to explore my voice in a different way."

We are looking forward to learning more about Kundalini yoga when Kathryn arrives in Sydney.



### **KLM sponsors our soloists from Europe**

We are very happy to have our soloists flying KLM as we know they are in reliable hands.

KLM wants our subscribers to know that, as well as code sharing with Malaysia Airlines via Kuala Lumpur, we have a new offer with Qantas. The KLM/Qantas fare is from \$1809 plus taxes to Europe via Singapore, Bangkok, Tokyo or Hong Kong.

Also, June 2005 saw the launch of the new Air France-KLM frequent flyer programme "Flying Blue", which allows passengers greater access to airline lounges around the globe, easier connections and additional flights. KLM has now a wider range of products, fare options and offers Australians going to Europe more choice of gateway cities. For more information please go to [www.klm.com](http://www.klm.com).

### **Dardanus - the historical perspective**

When we began to research the Greek myths to find out more about *Dardanus*, we did not realize that we would uncover some questions that are politically sensitive even today. More on that shortly.

If you have been reading our newsletters, you will know that most of the story in Rameau's opera was invented by the librettist Le Clerc de la Bruere. In the Aeneid and other sources, Dardanus was identified as the son of Jupiter and Electra who married Teucer's daughter (actually called Batea, not Iphise as she is called in the opera) and succeeded to his father-in-law's throne. Dardanus founded a city on Mount Ida, which became known as Dardania and the people Dardanians.

(Mount Ida is in the province of Balikesir in Midwestern Turkey. It is now called Kaz Dagi. It is described as "one of the most beautiful national parks in Turkey" and there is still an annual beauty contest there, to celebrate the first one, which was of course won by Aphrodite.

From Dardanus' grandson Tros, the people gained the name Trojans and when his son Ilus founded another city on the plain it was called Ilion (in Greek) or Ilium (in Latin). That city became known as Troy. Its people and the Dardanians later fought together in the Trojan war, which historians now think, was probably not about Helen after all. And anyway, she was really Helen of Sparta, not Helen of Troy.

Dardania is also sometimes used as the name of Kosovo in the Balkans. In the long-running dispute between the Albanians and the Serbians over Kosovo, the Albanians

claim that they are descended from the Illyrians and therefore the legitimate inhabitants of Kosovo. The Serbians deny this. The dispute involves different views of history over the past 2000 years, as well as the pre-history of the Illyrians and the Thracians. Who said the stuff of opera was far-fetched and irrelevant to our times? If you are interested in a family tree showing the houses of Troy and Dardania have a look at <http://www.timelessmyths.com/classical/family7.html>; and thanks to Diana Fraser for getting us interested.

If any of the classical scholars who read these newsletters can add or correct anything in our notes, we would like to hear from you.

Meanwhile, a trivia question: A trojan is still a very dangerous thing. Why? Copies of our Dardanus preview CD will go to the first three correct answers to [acerneaz@pinchgutopera.com.au](mailto:acerneaz@pinchgutopera.com.au) or 0412 093 063.

### **Pinchgut goes bush**

Music in the Hunter, which happens each Spring at Rothbury Estate Winery in the Hunter Valley, is one of our favourite weekends. This year it will be 2 to 4 September. Sydney's Goldner Quartet (Dene Olding, Dimity Hall, Irena Morozova & Julian Smiles) present a weekend of great music with wonderful food and wine. This year Pinchgut will perform excerpts from *Dardanus* on Saturday night. As well, we will hear Duo Sol, the Australia Ensemble and, of course, the Goldner Quartet. There will be four concerts, beginning with a champagne reception on Friday evening. Cost, for all concerts and food & wine, is \$450 a person. For information phone Anna on 9362 5711. Bookings on 9318 0400.



### **The music of Dardanus**

A number of people have asked what makes the music of Rameau, and *Dardanus*, so special and unique. We asked Antony about this and he has explained it thus - "Rameau's music is very expressive and passionate. He took more risks than many of his contemporaries, which is very interesting for us to listen to today, as it can

almost sound like music from the 19th century on occasion. He has an amazing way with both melody and harmony; and his style is very representative of what we think of as French elegance; beautiful, but subtle simplicity, and incredible feeling for letting the drama flow." A number of wonderful performers know about and have been performing music from Rameau's operas in recent times; Simon Rattle, Franz Bruggen and Les Arts Florissants spring to mind, and the Australian Chamber Orchestra is doing a suite of dances from *Dardanus* in October. Performances of his complete operas are much rarer, though we are very happy to say that they are beginning to be done a lot more often.

### **Special offer to Musica Viva's 60th Anniversary Gala Concert featuring Emma Kirkby**



*"For two decades, Emma Kirkby's clear, agile voice has been the quintessence of pure sound in the singing of early music. She is still one of the treasures of the music world."* Toronto Globe and Mail

Heralded as one of the world's truly great performers, don't miss this exquisite concert featuring masterpieces by Vivaldi, Bach and Handel, joined by Cantillation and Orchestra of the Antipodes and conducted by Antony Walker. For two performances only, Emma will perform in August to celebrate Musica Viva's 60th anniversary. This is one performance not to be missed!

Musica Viva would like to offer friends of Pinchgut Opera a 20% a discount on A or B reserve adult tickets. To take advantage of this offer, call 02 8256 2222 and quote: Pinchgut Opera 20% offer. Sat 20 August, 8 pm & Wed 24 August, 8 pm at The City Recital Hall Angel Place. For further information about this concert, please visit [www.musicaviva.com.au](http://www.musicaviva.com.au)

### **So what are people up to now?**

During the European summer Justin Way, our *Dardanus* director, has just returned from being in Bregenz, Austria assisting on Carsen's new production of *Il Trovatore* on a floating stage on the lake; Antony Walker is in Illinois at a summer festival in Sugar Creek conducting *Cenerentola*; Paul Agnew performed the role of Abaris in Rameau's *Les Boréades* conducted by Emmanuelle Haïm at Strasbourg Opera; Paul

Whelan has been singing the title role in *Don Giovanni* for New Zealand Opera; and Damian Whiteley is currently rehearsing for Paisiello's *Barbiere di Siviglia* at Lake Constance. Erin Helyard has been teaching summer courses at McGill university in Montréal; Neal Peres da Costa and Danny Yeadon have been back in Europe performing and teaching in the UK and Italy; and Josie Ryan and Sophie Gent have been on tour with Ton Koopman in Germany, including at the palace Bach worked in at Köthen. Cantillation and Orchestra of the Antipodes are about to join Emma Kirkby for concerts in Sydney and Melbourne, and will be recording the program for future release on CD, and Cantillation is also delighted to learn that a film score that they recorded last year (*Salem's Lot*, score by Christopher Gordon) has been nominated for an Emmy!

Justin and Hamish Peters, our *Dardanus* designer, will be making their design presentation to us in a couple of weeks - and we can't wait!

### **Thank you**

Your response to our plea for donations has been wonderful. Many of you sent cheques before 30 June and have received receipts for tax purposes. If you prefer to make a donation in this tax year (or would like to make another one) please send your cheque made out to Pinchgut Opera Public Fund, PO Box 239 Westgate 2048. For information about us and our need for donations, please phone Liz Nielsen on 9908 1962. And once again, thank you: Pinchgut Opera needs your support and all of us are grateful.

Our preview CD is out (you may have already heard it on the radio); we'll tell you more about this next time.

And that's it from us for now. Best wishes from Ken, Alison, Liz, Anna, Andrew, Antony & Erin.

"One of the most sublime conceptions of dramatic music" Berlioz on hearing Rameau's *Castor & Pollux*.

### Sponsors

