



Dear Friends,

BOX OFFICE OPENS 3 JULY

Newsletter subscribers may buy tickets for *IDOMENEO* from 3 July at the City Recital Hall, Angel Place box office. You may go there in person or phone 02 8256 2222.

Ticket Prices are

A Reserve	\$95
B Reserve	\$75
C Reserve	\$60
Under 27 (B/C Reserve only)	\$45

The City Recital Hall makes a booking charge on top of these prices. There are also group discounts for groups of 10 or more. Please call Liz Nielsen on 02 9908 1962 for more information about this.

However, for the first 2 weeks – until 16 July – newsletter subscribers are entitled to a **special offer: \$5 discount from the A or B Reserve prices** for the opening night (Wednesday 6 December). This offer is not available online – only in person or by phone.

Last year, the best seats sold quickly so we suggest that you book early.

The dates, in case you have forgotten:

Wednesday 6 December	7:30 pm
Friday 8 December	7:30 pm
Saturday 9 December	7:30 pm
Sunday 10 December	5:00 pm

A note on prices:

We had a lively discussion among ourselves about whether to increase ticket prices this year. There has been no increase since our first production in 2002. We decided to hold prices for one more year. We need money but even more than that, we would like full houses. We want as many people as possible to come and experience the Pinchgut way of opera. Now, if you think we are great value for money and would like to pay a little (or a lot) more to help us, how about making a donation? Opera Australia's tickets range from \$96 to \$220. You might like to think how we compare with other companies and work out your own price – making a donation of the difference. What's more, donations over \$2 are tax deductible. Donations can be sent by cheque payable to Pinchgut Opera Public Fund and sent to PO Box 239 Westgate NSW 2048.

SUSPENSE!

For us, there are two especially exciting events each year – opening night, of course, but also about now when the director and designers present the concept they will be using. From that, the sets, costumes and the detail of the production all follow. At the time of writing this newsletter, we have not seen it. Lindy Hume knows what she has in mind, she has told Dan Potra and Hamish Peters and will tell Antony Walker in a day or so. All very proper of course. The artistic team should all be in agreement before it comes to management. But we are almost unable to stand the suspense. It's a bit like getting to the last chapter of a novel and finding you have to wait another week to see the end.

Of course, you will have to wait until opening night when you will see the whole production: sets, costumes, lights and music all together. We can promise that it will be worth the wait.

Let us introduce you to Fiona and another Nicole

Going on from our last newsletter we'd like to introduce you to two more of our singers. Firstly **Fiona Campbell** who is going to play the crucial role of Idomeneo's son Idamante. We asked her about herself :-



Well, apart from the vast amount of professional concert and performance experience I have gained over the course of the last ten years, what would you like to know about me? I am a very happy individual who has the great fortune of having a wonderful husband and the two most beautiful children in the world. People (mostly of the eastern state variety) often ask me why I choose to live in Perth. And my reply is usually along the lines of; glorious weather, beautiful city, wonderful lifestyle, I actually get the time to enjoy life with my family. I work at a fabulous university and have the opportunity to be involved in interesting projects with world class musicians. For example, I recently recorded some breathtakingly beautiful French cantatas by Montclair, with ensemble arcangelo, which is being released as part of a joint research project between UWA and ABC Classics. But don't get me wrong, I am completely in love with Sydney and Melbourne and all that they have to offer. Once again I am most fortunate to be able to spend time and work in these wonderful cities.

Music is an integral part of my life. I am particularly excited about *Idomeneo* and having the opportunity to perform one of the greatest 'pants' roles ever written, Idamante. Being a mezzo soprano, I have a lot of experience at playing the boy. I was a real tomboy growing up, and I love the physical freedom that comes with playing the role of an exuberant young male. The particular challenge that I will face playing Idamante however, is that he is a man, not a youth, but a warrior and a Prince. I always strive to make my characters real and convincing. I have had audience members shocked to discover they were actually watching a girl pretending to be a boy, and that's what I want to achieve with Idamante. I want people to really be completely involved in his story and situation and to believe in Idamante and his plight. Fortunately I am not utterly alone in this challenge, the wonderful Lindy Hume (director) will help me make Idamante's emotional journey real. I know it will be an exciting night musically with Antony at the helm. And, oh yeah! there's that other guy, Mozart, what finer inspiration could I possibly hope for? See you there, and if you are convinced by my performance, then you can buy me a beer at the end of the show! Cheers!

And here's **Nicole Thomson** who will be singing with Cantillation in *Idomeneo*.

Name: Nicole (aka Nicky, and to a privileged few, Nony - after Noni Hazlehurst it's a long story!)

History: Moved to Sydney 1996 to join The Song Company [TSC], and am still employed with them (fabulous muso's with lots of enthusiasm, inspirational ideas, and not enough cash to implement them all as with all small arts organisations!) With TSC, I have travelled the world, sung for and dined with royalty, and worked with some of the world's most renowned musician's and composers - not too shabby for a girl who was told she would never be a performer! And with TSC's schedule, I am very grateful to be allowed the time to be involved with Pinchgut - it's SO exciting to do something outside the box!



Vocal Stuff: I am a second soprano, which contrary to popular belief, does not mean I am second best (!), but merely means I have a quality to the voice which helps marry the lower voices to the higher, and which complements our first soprano, Ruth. (She and I were recently on stage as 'Barbie' dolls in the Aurora Festival, and were convincingly plastic!) I love singing operatic repertoire, but also have a hankering for cabaret songs, particular Weill, as well as musical hits of the 1930's and '40's.

Background: A Queenslander, descended from the first couple married in Australia off the First Fleet. My great-grandmother's entire family performed in their own band, and that's where (I assume) my musical attributes were derived from, although my grandfather always used to say that he would give me a few pointers whenever I was home in Mackay on holidays! Needless to say, singing was not his strong point, however, I have recorded a disc of Grandad's poetry (which he wrote while serving in WWII), which he definitely had a gift for. I also have a background of dance lessons (13 years of ballet, tap, jazz, and folk); roller-skating; piano, violin and cello lessons; 21 years of voice lessons (and counting!), currently with Sue Falk; dabbling in conducting, fencing and recording at Weight Watchers meetings.

Inspiration: June Bronhill, whom I had the privilege of performing with many years ago; Greg Massingham (with whom I studied in Brisbane), Paul McMahon (an inspiring and awesome talent); Roland and all The Song Co singers; my Mother and all my family; and the Lord.

Other enterprises: In August, I will be assisting 'Musica Viva in Schools' with a training program for school teachers entitled 'Song Safari', which will be a wonderful experience. Reading, cooking, quilling (a recent hobby, but therapeutic!), embroidery, working out at my gym three times a week, meeting with as many animals as possible on my walk!

Costume Designer



We are very pleased to let you know that Hamish Peters who was the designer for *Dardanus* is coming back this year as the costume designer for *Idomeneo*. As you know Dan Potra, who has worked on many projects with Lindy Hume will be doing the scenic design, and Hamish will be designing the costumes. Hamish is a graduate of the Design course at NIDA and amongst other things designed the set for *Romeo and Juliette* for Opera Australia last year. This production has been recently seen at Opera Queensland too. Hamish has got a number of projects coming up including *Terrorism* directed by Anthony Skuse and *Box* and *Quotations from Chairman Mao* directed by Kevin Jackson. Hamish worked on *Semele* and *Fairy Queen* for us too.

“Opera is when a guy gets stabbed and instead of bleeding, he sings.”

Funny stuff, opera. Most of us know people who will not come near an opera. “Unrealistic” “Old fashioned” “All that singing – nothing happens” are some comments. To make it more difficult, the stories are often pretty weird. Sea monsters, wizards, oracles, Greek gods pop up to get a character into or out of a tricky situation.

We can understand why some people don't bother with opera. But they are missing out on a lot.

Once you accept the conventions of opera – once you enter a world where sea monsters and gods might exist – you discover that there are real people there. Orfeo knew what would happen if he looked around but in that situation, hearing a noise, could you have resisted the temptation to make sure your girl was OK? Didn't you feel for Dardanus locked in the cell after risking capture to see his beloved? Did that scene remind you of something? Was Dardanus or Antenor the real hero at the end?

The ultimate, we suppose, is Wagner's Ring Cycle, which persuades thousands of people around the world each year to sit through 18 hours to follow what is really a fairy story for grown-ups.

Most of you don't need convincing about all this. But if you have friends or family members who have not yet experienced opera, let them read this then bring them along to *Idomeneo* in December. A Pinchgut production is, we think, the best place to start with opera and with our money-back guarantee for Pinchgut virgins, they really don't have anything to lose. And tell them it will be fun.

Idomeneo preview CD

We've spent some time over the past month working on the preview CD for *Idomeneo*. Fiona Campbell came to Sydney a month ago, and we recorded a beautiful Idamante aria (*Il padre adorato*) with Fiona, Neal and Danny. A couple of days ago we went back into the recording studio and recorded a chorus with Cantillation, and one of *Idomeneo*'s arias with Antony Walker singing! This will be very interesting for everyone who is used to Antony's presence as the conductor, and who didn't realise that he has a very fine tenor voice.

The preview CD will be out for the general public opening of the box office, and we'll give you more information next time. A big thank you to ABC Classics for helping us with this again, and to Herschel Asset Management who are sponsoring the preview CD.



Would you like us to send the newsletter to a friend? If so drop us a line or give us a call and we'll be glad to get the newsletter out to them. We are updating our website too, so keep your eye out for that.

To vibrate or not to vibrate

One subject that is always the subject of lively debate - fights, even - between scholars of early music and lovers of the classical and romantic repertoire is vibrato: The wavering effect in a voice or instrumental sounds during a sustained tone. Some say that in authentic early or baroque singing and playing there should be none. Performances of Bach, for instance, rarely use vibrato. In modern performances of the romantic repertoire it is common. Mozart had a clear opinion. "The human voice vibrates naturally - but in its own way - and only to such a degree that the effect is beautiful. Such is the nature of the voice; and people imitate it not only on wind instruments, but on stringed instruments too and even on the clavier. But the moment the proper limit is overstepped, it is no longer beautiful - because it is contrary to nature." (From a letter Mozart wrote to his father 17 March 1781.)

It will be interesting to hear how Antony and our singers use vibrato in *Idomeneo*.

Do you blog?

A Blog, short for weblog, is a journal kept on a website giving regular reports, opinions or personal ramblings. The web contains hundreds of thousands of blogs. Our friend Brian Dickie, General Director of Chicago Opera Theatre keeps one. http://briandickie.typepad.com/my_weblog/. Brian's blog is so interesting that we will pinch the idea. In a few weeks there will be a blog on our website www.pinchgutopera.com.au containing contributions from various members of the team as the production comes together. During rehearsals - starting 9 November - we hope to add daily notes, perhaps with photos from the rehearsals.

Special Hotel package for subscribers.

Pinchgut Opera is delighted to welcome Swissôtel as a sponsor. Our out-of-town artists will be staying in a 5-star deluxe hotel located in the heart of the city. Swissôtel is located atop Myer on Market Street, boasting easy access to some of the best shopping, dining and entertainment Sydney has to offer.

swissôtel SYDNEY



After a day of enjoying all that Sydney has to offer, guests can choose to relax at the tranquil Amrita Spa, laze by the outdoor heated pool, sip a cocktail at the Crossroads Bar or sample the modern-Australian cuisine at JPB restaurant.

Pinchgut Opera newsletter subscribers can take advantage of the special weekend accommodation package at Swissôtel throughout the year. The weekend package is just \$219* per night in a Swiss Deluxe room with full buffet breakfast for two, plus complimentary parking. This package is also available from 5 December to morning of 11 December for out of town subscribers attending *Idomeneo*. For reservations please call 1800 334 888 and mention "Opera Weekend Package" or <http://sydney.swissotel.com/offers/pinchgutopera>.

* Rate of \$219 per night valid Friday – Sunday. Subject to Availability. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer. Terms and Conditions apply.

And that's it from us. Happy ticket buying! Best wishes from Ken, Alison, Liz, Anna and Andrew.

"Mozart's music always sounds unburdened, effortless, and light. This is why it unburdens, releases, and liberates us." Karl Barth

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