



Dear Friends,

Welcome to the August edition of the newsletter. Everything is whizzing along for us - the box office has opened, we are about to start work on sets and costumes, and arrangements are being made for the start of rehearsals. In this edition of the newsletter we'd like to recommend some books on Mozart, give you some background to the *Idomeneo* story and introduce you to a couple more people.

Introducing Anna Cerneaz - Pinchgut's marketing manager



You have probably met Anna. As well as being our Marketing Manager she works with several other music organizations in Sydney, including The Song Company, Salut! Baroque, New Music Network and the Aurora Festival.

Anna graduated in Applied Mathematics and Marine Science and worked in such hardship posts as Lizard Island on the Great Barrier Reef. She played the oboe when younger and ten years ago music lured her back. She gave up the ocean (though she does still ride a surf-board) and set up her own business in concert management and arts administration.

Anna was one of the founders of Pinchgut and now, in addition to looking after our advertising and publicity, she is a member of the (very small) team that runs the company and decides our future plans.

We are very happy Anna has just been appointed a Churchill Fellow for 2006. The Churchill Trust is a privately funded organization that makes financial grants for people to travel overseas to study and learn things that cannot be learnt here. Anna will travel to the US next year to gain experience of how American orchestras and opera companies are developing their audiences. She will be able to bring that experience back to help smaller music groups here. Alison Johnston and Antony Walker both received Churchill Fellowship some years ago. Please say hello to Anna the next time you see her at a concert in Sydney.

Brett Weymark

Brett will sing the role of High Priest in *Idomeneo*. He has sung with Cantillation in all Pinchgut productions and in a number of small roles (in *Fairy Queen* and *Orfeo*).

Brett is a difficult artist to sum up in a few words. His main job these days is Musical Director of Sydney Philharmonia Choirs – Australia's leading choral organization. With them he conducts several concerts a year, mostly in the Concert Hall of Sydney opera House, and also prepares the choir for performances with the Sydney Symphony under visiting conductors such as Sir Charles Mackerras, Charles Dutoit and Edo de Waart. He was a member of the Song Company for several years in the early 90s and has worked as a vocal coach, pianist and university teacher.



He tells us that Pinchgut is the highlight of his year, but we think he probably says that to all the organizations he works with. He has also said that the only improvement he can imagine for Pinchgut is for us to perform an occasional musical comedy. We think, though, that we will leave this to others who can do it better.

The hundreds of choristers who have sung with Brett on the Sydney Philharmonia annual performances of *Messiah* and on the recent Mozart Requiem he did with them will all agree that, as well as being a seriously gifted musician, Brett is great fun to work with.

Box Office now open!

The *Idomeneo* box office is now open. Please encourage everyone you know to buy tickets. Just a reminder of the performance dates :

Wednesday 6 December	7.30 pm
Friday 8 December	7.30 pm
Saturday 9 December	7.30 pm
Sunday 10 December	5.00 pm

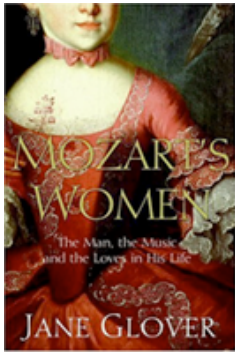
A Reserve	\$95
B Reserve	\$75
C Reserve	\$60
Under 27 (B/C Res only)	\$45

plus booking charges.

Tickets are on sale at the box office at the City Recital Hall, Angel Place, ph. (02) 8256 2222 or online at www.cityrecitalhall.com

New Books on Mozart

There is an interesting crop of books published to coincide with Mozart's 250 birthday.

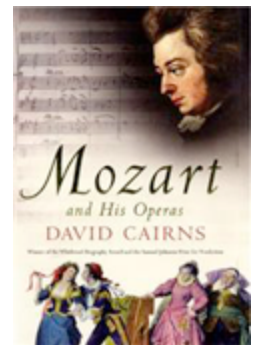


Jane Glover, who has conducted much Mozart music with orchestras and opera companies in Europe, the US and Australia has written **Mozart's Women: His Family, His Friends, His Music**. As well as his mother Maria Anna his wife Constanze and his sister Nannerl, the book introduces us to the women in Mozart's operas. In the first production of *Idomeneo* Ilia was sung by Dorotea Wendling, a good friend on Mozart, and Elettra by her sister-in-law Elisabeth Augusta Wendling.

Glover writes: "Ilia is one of Mozart's first truly great creations, a thoroughly rounded character of sweetness, intelligence and courage..." Then she goes on "But if Dorotea's character encapsulated all the nobility and goodness of human behaviour, her sister-in-law Elisabeth Augusta's was its complete opposite. The unstable Elettra, Wolfgang's only encounter with operatic insanity, is a startlingly original and compelling role."

We will see in December how Lindy, Martene and Penny have developed these two contrasting characters.

Also valuable is David Cairns's recent book **Mozart and his Operas**. It tells the story of Mozart through eight of his great operas, starting with *Idomeneo*. The Prologue of the book begins: "Mozart, like Shakespeare, continues to grow. His music is an ever-expanding universe. The better we know it – the more we explore its heights and depths – the more marvelous it becomes." Cairns then demonstrates this is the book by finding new and thoughtful insights into Mozart's major operas.



Both books should be available at good book shops and from our friends at www.leebooks.com.au and www.abbey.com.au.

And an Old One



Bernard Shaw, who we know now mostly as a playwright past his "produce by" date, was described by W H Auden as "Probably the greatest music critic who ever lived". In 1891, 100 years after Mozart's death, Shaw worried that after being little played for many years (because it was considered so difficult), Mozart's music would disappoint audiences when they heard it at centenary concerts.

"Nothing but the finest execution...will serve; and the worst of it is, that the phrases are so perfectly clear and straightforward, that you are found out the moment you swerve by a hair's breadth from perfection..." It seems that a performance of the Jupiter Symphony at the Crystal Palace did swerve: "...the strings disgraced themselves...(the conductor) should have sent every fiddler straight back to school to learn how to play scales cleanly, steadily and finely".

He does not seem to have reviewed *Idomeneo*, though he does write that he has given up on the hope of seeing a satisfactory performance of *Don Giovanni* in his lifetime. **Shaw on Music**, edited by Eric Bentley, is available in paperback.



Gondwana Voices have asked for our help in getting the word out about the bigger-than-ever 2007 National Choral School. Gondwana does wonderful work with young Australians around the country and have a great year planned for next year, including the 10th Anniversary Reunion Choir. If you know of anyone who would be interested, or any former choristers who may not have been contacted please phone (02) 9251 4226 or email info@gondwanavoices.com.au. More information at www.gondwanavoices.com.au.

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.

Where Do They Get These Stories?



The plot of *Idomeneo* begins at the end of the Trojan War. Historians are undecided whether there ever was a full-scale war between Greece and Troy or whether it was a series of skirmishes. Some even doubt that Troy existed. If there was a war, they do not believe that it was caused by anything as simple as the abduction of Helen of Sparta by Paris of Troy. (However, this contributor had, in 1956, little trouble accepting that the film actress Rossana Podestà had a face that could have launched a thousand ships). And it almost certainly did not finish when the Greeks ended their siege of Troy by hiding in a wooden horse.

In the Greek myth, Idomeneus (using the Latin name) was one of the Greek generals in the Trojan War but he was not a major player in the events. In the *Iliad*, Homer writes that Idomeneus and the other Greek generals returned home safely after the war. Although the war lasted ten years, *The Iliad*, in twenty four books, covers only the last ten weeks.

But Virgil, the Roman poet of the *Aeneid*, improves on the story by reporting that on his way home, Idomeneus's ship was struck by a violent storm and Poseidon (the Greek Neptune) agrees to save him in return for a promise that Idomeneus will kill the first living person he meets on the shore. That person is Idomeneus's son, but Idomeneus fails to honour the bargain. Poseidon sends a plague to Crete and the people of Crete exile Idomeneus to Calabria in Italy.

Another development of the story comes in the French novel *Telemachus* by François de Fénelon published in 1699. It adds great drama between father and son. The son offers his life – he is ready to submit to death to appease the god. “Strike, my father; do not be afraid to find in me a son that is unworthy of you, who is afraid to die.” Idomeneus duly plunges the sword into the heart of the child.

The playwright Crébillon wrote a play in 1705 based on Fénelon's story. In what one writer has called a “justly forgotten” work, Crébillon gives the son the name Idamante and has him and his father competing for the honour of becoming victim. Idamante wins by killing himself.

The next step was an opera in French by Danchet and Campra called *Idoménée*. It was first performed in Paris in 1712. The work has been recorded by Les Arts Florissants but the recording seems to be unavailable at present. Danchet (the librettist) follows the main elements of Crébillon's plot but he adds a Trojan princess (Ilione) who Idamante falls in love with but who is also wooed by Idoménée. Electra is introduced as a spirit of vengeance. In the final Act Idoménée kills Idamante in a sudden rage provoked by Nemesis who is brought into the story by Electra.

In *Idomeneo* (the name changed for the Italian) Mozart's librettist Varesco follows much of Danchet's work fairly closely. He does, however, remove the competition between Idomeneo and Idamante for Ilia and, as demanded by the times, (and perhaps Mozart himself) produces a happy ending.

Ken Nielsen

These notes come from various sources: one of the best is *Escape from d-minor: The Story of Idomeneus from Fénelon to Mozart*, a chapter in *Children of Oedipus* by Martin Mueller (1980). Also the article by Daniel Hertz *The Genesis of Mozart's Idomeneo* in *The Musical Quarterly*, January 1969.

Last newsletter we quoted Karl Barth on Mozart. We had a call from Esther Janssen, a Pinchgut Hero, and a former general practitioner in Switzerland, now living in Sydney with her family, who all come to hear our productions. Esther's sister is a minister in the Reformed Church in Switzerland and studied under Barth. He was a very well known Swiss theologian and music lover. His wife was a violinist and they invited his students to their home to listen to music. Barth wrote a famous book on theology called “The Dogmatics”. Esther remembers going to hear him preach in Basel. She also remembers Barth saying that he thinks if he gets to heaven the angels would greet him with Mozart but the closer he gets to God it would be Bach.

Antony Walker is conducting Samuel Barber's *Vanessa* at Chautauqua Opera (NY) this week, and then next week he will be going to New York City Opera to start rehearsals for their production of Handel's *Semele*! He has a wonderful cast including Elizabeth Futral and Vivica Genaux, and some of our scores have gone off to assist Antony with this new production.

Our website has been updated. Drop in for a look at www.pinchgutopera.com.au.

News from Miriam Allan



We had exciting news from Miriam last week that she was singing at the Proms! Miriam has sung in three of our productions - *Semele*, *The Fairy Queen* and *Dardanus*. You may remember her as a rag doll in the Somnus scene in *Semele*, or a shepherdess with very recalcitrant sheep in *Fairy Queen*, or last year as one of the Dreams. Miriam has been doing some wonderful things of late - singing with Sir John Eliot Gardiner as a soloist in performances of Mozart's Mass in C Minor with the Monteverdi Choir in the USA and Europe, performances with Les Arts Florissants singing Monteverdi's Sixth Book of Madrigals in June and more performances on the C minor mass with the Monteverdi Choir in France and Spain. The Proms program was called *Great Venetians*, and featured music by Monteverdi, Giovanni Gabrieli, Cavalli and Rigatti amongst others. Miriam had two solos in the Rigatti *Dixit Dominus* and *Magnificat*. Miriam says that she's having a wonderful time, despite the heat. Here's a lovely picture, taken by Bridget Elliot, of Miriam rehearsing for *Dardanus* last year.

Thoughts on Mozart

We've asked some of the many very talented people who have worked and are working with us to tell us briefly what Mozart means to them. We're going to be including one or two of these thoughts in all the newsletters between now and when *Idomeneo* is on.

Here are the first couple :

What Mozart means to me: order within the chaos of the world. Harmony within its discords. Love - of men and women, no matter how flawed. Contemplation of the sublime. Terror of the abyss. The beauty of imperfect humanity shining through perfect music. Hope for the future.

Lindy Hume

Mozart's music will always have a special place in my heart. I first realised that I really wanted to be a musician when I heard a performance of his G minor Symphony No.40 on the radio played by the Israel Philharmonic under Zubin Mehta. I was about 13 and I still have the vinyl record. His music struck me immediately. I was too inexperienced then to understand what it was that captured my attention. I know now that it is his wonderful and often excruciatingly beautiful sequences of harmony together with delicately crafted melodies that are haunting, turbulent and sublime which continue to pull at my heartstrings.

Neal Peres Da Costa

Music course on the Classical Period

Annie Whealy will run a four week course on Music of the Classical Period, beginning the week of October 16th. There will be both a day and an evening class, each session lasting for two hours. Classes are limited to ten and held in Annie's apartment at Kirribilli. This course will make an ideal pre-cursor to your enjoyment of *Idomeneo*. Annie will also give a single lesson on *Idomeneo*, closer to the performance. Please enquire via email awhealy@bigpond.net.au or phone 8904 9150. The course is for anyone who is interested - no prior knowledge or musical expertise needed.

And that's it from us. Until next time. Best wishes from Ken, Alison, Liz, Anna and Andrew.

"The genius of *Idomeneo* is as complex and mysterious as any great masterpiece" Daniel Heartz

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