



Dear Friends,

You'll be sorry if you miss out! (And so will we).

Have you bought your *Idomeneo* tickets yet? Do you have any friends who you think would enjoy the show? We are not too proud to beg. The box office is our major source of revenue. And the number of people who come is the best indication of whether we are doing the right thing. If you see any Pinchgut people walking around over the next few weeks with their hands behind their back, it is because we all have fingers crossed hoping for 4 full houses this year. That would be a great 5th birthday celebration for our company and all our musicians would be over the moon. So, if you haven't bought your tickets, may we suggest that you do so very soon?

And, as for your friends, if you think that they need a bit more persuasion, we are repeating our Pinchgut Virgin Refund Offer this year. That means that if someone has not been to one of our productions before and does not enjoy *Idomeneo* we will refund the price of their tickets. And if you really do want us to go on bended knees and beg, we will do that do. Bookings at City Recital Hall Box Office 8256 2222 or online at www.cityrecitalhall.com.

Box Office 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



Antony Walker and Pittsburgh Opera

We are absolutely delighted to announce that Antony has just been appointed Music Director of Pittsburgh Opera in the US. This is a significant step forward in Antony's career and he's very excited about it all. He will conduct at least two of their four-five productions a year, and next year will conduct Britten's *Billy Budd* and Mozart's *Magic Flute* for the company. Antony will still continue as one of our Artistic Directors, and also as Music Director of Washington Concert Opera. He's going to be very busy! There's more info on Antony's website at www.antonywalker.com/news.htm.

Erin Helyard and the Violons du Roy

Meantime, our other Artistic Director has just been asked by Bernard Labadie to be guest conductor (from the keyboard) for the Québécois string ensemble Violons du Roy for a program in December, which is very exciting. It's a series of 8 concerts around Québec city. He'll be working with a very fine soprano called Hélène Guilmette whose prior engagement is with Paul Dyer and the Brandenburg orchestra!



Would you like us to send the newsletter to a friend? Drop us a line or give us a call.

Special Weekend package for \$219 for subscribers



Pinchgut Opera is delighted to have the support of Swissôtel. This deluxe hotel is located atop Myer on Market Street next to Pitt Street Mall, boasting easy access to some of the best dining, shopping and entertainment Sydney has to offer. Pinchgut newsletter subscribers can take advantage of the special weekend package of just \$219* per night in a Swiss Deluxe room with full buffet breakfast for two, plus complimentary parking. Valid till 11 December 2006. For reservations please call 1800 334 888 and mention "Opera Weekend Package" or email res.sydney@swissotel.com. *Rate of \$219 per night valid Fri – Sun. Subject to availability. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer. Terms and Conditions apply.

Mozart and his *Idomeneo* orchestra

The time in which Mozart wrote *Idomeneo* was the happiest of his life – so he told Constanze. He had actively sought out this commission. In a letter home to his father from a career-seeking visit in 1777 to Munich, he wrote “I should draw up a contract with Count Seeau (intendant of the court opera) along the following lines: to compose every year four German operas, some *buffe*, some *serie*, with a benefit night, as is the custom here....with my help the German national theatre would certainly be a success. When I heard the German Singspiel I was simply itching to compose.”

In addition, he had visited the Munich court many times, starting from his first tour out of Salzburg, aged 6, twice more as a child prodigy, and in 1774-5 when his *opera buffa* *La Finta Giardiniera* was performed during the carnival season. As well as having many appreciative friends and important contacts there, he also knew a number of first-class musicians in Mannheim. This was the home of the renowned Palatine orchestra which in 1778 had grown to 90 players, among which were a large amount of virtuosi and composers. I will talk about the Mannheim orchestra, because the two courts were amalgamated in 1778 and many of the excellent Mannheim players were therefore in Munich at the time of *Idomeneo*'s composition and performance.

For 35 years from 1742, Carl Theodor was the elector of Mannheim. He was one of the great patrons of science, commerce and above all of the arts, playing several instruments himself. He engaged the remarkable violinist and composer Johann Stamitz during 1741-57 to lead the orchestra – who subjected the string players to a rigorous training, as well as developing his compositional style and contributing to what was subsequently known as the ‘Mannheim school.’ This string-playing hothouse produced many of the great violinists of their time, including Ignaz Fränzl, Karl Joseph and Johann Baptist Toeschi, Jakob and Wilhelm Cramer, Stamitz's sons, and Christian Cannabich – Mozart's leader for *Idomeneo*.

Burney wrote of this orchestra in 1772: “There are more solo players and good composers in this that perhaps in any other orchestra in Europe: it is an army of generals, equally fit to plan a battle as to fight it.” The string players were unusually united in that they were trained uniformly by Stamitz and later Cannabich, who succeeded Stamitz as musical director and was admired by Mozart for his conducting skills. They were known for their precision of attack, the ability to reflect the smallest dynamic nuance, and their uniform bowing. The composer Schubart wrote of Cannabich “He has invented a totally new bowing technique and possesses the gift of holding the largest orchestra together by nothing more than the nod of his head and the movement of his elbows. He is really the creator of the smooth tone characteristic of the Palatine orchestra. He is the inventor of all the magical devices that are now admired by the whole of Europe. ...No orchestra in the world has ever excelled the Mannheim. Its *forte* is a thunderclap, its *crescendo* a cataract, its *diminuendo* a crystal stream babbling away into the distance, its *piano* a breath of spring. The wind instruments are everything that they should be: they raise and carry or fill and inspire the storm of the strings.”



The wind players were also exceptional artists, and most of the ‘stars’ of the wind section were in the *Idomeneo* orchestra too. The flute player was Johann Baptist Wendling. He was a composer as well as a virtuoso flautist, and he actually gave musical instruction to Carl Theodor. He composed many concertos and chamber works for his instrument, which were published in Paris, London and Amsterdam, and made a number of tours of Europe. In 1778 he performed at the *Concert Spirituel* in Paris with Mozart. His wife was the singer Dorothea Wendling, one of the most celebrated singers of her day, and for whom Mozart wrote the part of Ilia in *Idomeneo*. His violinist (and sometime ballet conductor) brother, Franz



Wendling, also married a singer – Elisabeth Augusta Wendling – and she was Mozart's first Elettra. (The pictures above are of Dorothea and Elizabeth).

The second part of the wind quartet was the oboist Friedrich Ramm, who also drew from Mozart the wonderful oboe quartet at this time, and who had performed Mozart's oboe concerto five times in the last year. He had also encountered Mozart in Paris in 1778 at the *Concert Spirituel*, as had the bassoonist Georg Wenzel Ritter.

The current fashion in Paris at that time was personified by the composer Jean-Joseph Cambini and his *symphonie concertante*. Mozart wrote to his father about the *symphonie concertante* he wished to write for them and the travelling horn virtuoso Giovanni Punto. In the end the four performed together, but in a work by Cambini – possibly simply that Mozart lost the battle! It's thought that the work Mozart wrote for them was the inspiration for, and possibly contributed musical material to, Ilia's aria ‘*Se il padre perdei*’ with obbligato parts for the four wind instruments that Mozart wrote for Dorothea Wendling – quite a gift for the musical couple and their friends.

In addition, the clarinet player in Munich was Anton Stadler – whom Mozart later wrote the clarinet concerto for – and the whole group of wind players was later blessed with the *Gran Partita*.

Clearly, Mozart went to town in his orchestral writing for *Idomeneo*. There was a wonderful convergence between his freedom to write for this virtuoso orchestra, and his longings to develop opera seria to a new dramatic level – one where every subtle nuance of mood and action is described in musical terms. His good friend Friedrich Melchior von Grimm, the writer, who had suggested the *Idomeneo* and similarly themed *Jeptha* stories for operatic setting, had written “What I want to see painted in the tragedy of *Idomeneo* is that dark spirit of uncertainty, of fluctuation, of sinister interpretations, of disquiet and of anguish, that torments people and from which profits the priest”.

This is the most orchestrally conceived of all Mozart’s operas, and his opera seria approach was greatly enhanced by the addition of orchestral effects derived from French *tragédie-lyrique*. In the same year, the 81-year-old Rameau was directing his last great *tragédies lyrique* – *Abaris our les Boreades* in Paris. According to Mozart’s pupil Joseph Frank, he “was always busy studying French operatic scores”, and when asked why, he answered “not for their melodies, but for their dramatic effects”. It is assumed that Mozart saw Rameau’s opera scores when in Paris.

Even the limitations of the his singers (for instance, the 24-year-old castrato Vincenzo dal Prato who had to be coached note by note by Mozart) meant that it fell to the orchestra to deliver the sureness of dramatic effect Mozart wanted.

One vivid instance of this is the rendition of the Oracle. Leopold Mozart, who was liaising with the librettist Varesco in Salzburg as his son composed the score, wrote this suggestion “I imagine you will choose low wind instruments to accompany the subterranean voice. How would it be if, after the *slight* subterranean rumble, the instruments *sustained, or rather began to sustain*, their notes, softly, and then made a *crescendo such as might inspire terror*, and during the *decrescendo the voice would begin to sing*? And there might be a terrifying *crescendo at each phrase uttered by the voice*”.

It was quite usual for Leopold and his son to work closely in this way, and Mozart scored this passage for just three trombones and two horns. As it was the only passage the trombones were used for, he had quite a battle with Seeau, the opera intendent, to stretch the budget for two minutes of music – he wanted the effect saved for just this moment. Unfortunately Seeau’s overstretched budget spoke louder - the first performance substituted horns and clarinets instead. (We are fortunate, despite our company’s name, to be delivering Mozart’s trombones in our 2006 Pinchgut performance).

The interest and excitement amongst instrumentalists who wanted to be in this production, some of whom are flying themselves back to Australia from their international careers, attests to the joy and satisfaction we all experience when rehearsing and performing in fine detail an opera of this quality.

Anna McDonald, who will lead Orchestra of the Antipodes in the production of *Idomeneo*.

Mark’s Year

Mark Tucker has arrived. He decided that it would be good to have some time to enjoy Sydney before rehearsals start. We asked him what he has been doing this year:

The past year has seen me involved in the rediscovery and staging of two Vivaldi operas, (*L’Andromeda Liberata* and *L’Atenaide*) with the Venice Baroque Orchestra, two Galuppi operas (*Il Re Pastore* in Moscow and *L’Olimpiade* for la Fenice in Venice) and a newly discovered Cavalli opera *L’Ipermestra* for the Holland Ancient Music Festival in Utrecht.

Leaving the baroque for the early romantic, I took on Manuel Garcia’s one-man opera *El Poeta Calculista*. Garcia was the virtuosic tenor who created some of the major roles in Rossini’s early operas. *El Poeta* was composed as a showcase for himself and it includes a duet for coloratura soprano and tenor in which he (& I) sang alternately each voice in ever increasing agility and range (tenor bottom A to soprano high B natural!!!).



On my return from Sydney I will be giving the first Moscow performance of a new work by the Russian minimalist composer Vladimir Martynov (*Dances for Guido d’Arezzo*): I have most of it in manuscript but the ending is to be rewritten for my voice. Lastly, I will be singing Elgar’s *Dream of Gerontius* in Spain before returning probably home on Christmas Eve; I intend to open a few bottles of that lovely Australian wine I will have taken back from Sydney!

We did not ask what he liked about Sydney, but he answered anyway:

I have very much been looking forward to returning to Sydney and to Pinchgut Opera. The combination of stimulating, challenging work and a relaxed environment are really ideal for producing the best results. The day will start with

workout at the gym or a swim, followed by breakfast (those wonderful fresh mangos!) and then by the ferry journey from Neutral Bay to Circular Quay. How could one fail to be in a good mood for the rehearsal?

Pinchgut Blog

As we mentioned a few newsletters ago, there will soon be a weblog containing contributions from many of those involved in Pinchgut's *Idomeneo*. We want to give you a feeling for the excitement of an opera production being created. There will also be photos of rehearsals. The blog will be online from 6 November with, we hope, daily entries up to closing night on 10 December. There is room in the blog for comments and questions. See you online at <http://pinchgutopera.typepad.com/>

There are a few events coming up involving Pinchgut or people who work with us. Highly recommended.

Pinchgut at the Powerhouse

We have formed a relationship with the Powerhouse Museum which, as you might not know, has an excellent collection of musical instruments. To raise funds to buy a double bass made in 1856 by John Devereux, who was probably Australia's first maker of stringed instruments, Pinchgut and the Powerhouse will present a concert at the Museum on Sunday 19 November at 3:00 pm. Kees Boersma a good friend of Pinchgut and Principal double bass with the Sydney Symphony and Kirsty McMahon, his co-guardian of their brace of beautiful bass instruments as well as mother of his two boisterous boys (and principal double bass in Australian Brandenburg Orchestra and our orchestra), will play, with harpsichordist Chris Berenson. \$40 tickets include Museum admission, the performance and afternoon tea. Proceeds go towards purchase of the Devereux bass. Bookings: 02 9217 0600. The collection is at www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database.

More Lovely Mozart

The Ironwood Ensemble, lead by Rachael Beesley and comprising a fine group of players, most of whom are also in our orchestra, are presenting a Mozart Festival at Sydney Conservatorium, Recital Hall West, on Friday 15 December 7:00 pm, Saturday 16 December 7:00 pm and Sunday 17 December 6:00 pm. There will be three programmes of one hour each, including arrangements of the sublime Sinfonia Concertante, for string sextet and the Quintet for Clarinet and Strings, for string quintet. And as a special treat for the opera lovers, a new version of excerpts from Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. Bookings: City Recital Hall ph: 02 8256 2222 (M-F 9-5pm) www.cityrecitalhall.com. Enquiries: 0419 484 323.

Next Year

Gee, you are an inquisitive lot. Following the hint we gave in the last newsletter about next year's production, we have been flooded with guesses and requests for more hints. Details will be in the *Idomeneo* program and on the website around opening night. Meanwhile, another couple of hints: the work contains a rare heroic role for a woman (sung by a mezzo soprano) and in the original performance all the soloists were women, but we will use three mezzos, a soprano and a counter tenor.

Music with a View - A masterclass on *Idomeneo* – the mind and musical soul of Mozart

Annie Whealy will conduct a 2 hour master class on *Idomeneo* exploring the musical structure of the opera, the orchestra and the opera's place in opera history. This is an informal class for those interested in getting that little bit extra from a beautiful opera, - a glass of wine, a light refreshment and a beautiful view of the opera house as well! There will be both morning and evening classes on Tuesday 28th & Thursday 30th November. Contact Annie on awhealy@bigpond.net.au or 8904 9150.

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

"Designing an opera by Mozart is like doing something for God — it's a labor of love." Maurice Sendak

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