



Dear Friends

Welcome! We know that there are quite a few new newsletter subscribers this year.

We expect to send out seven or eight newsletters over the year. Most people receive them by email although some like a copy by post. Either is fine with us, though the email copy costs us less so we would rather send it that way if convenient.

If you want to change the way you get the newsletter, send a note to liz@pinchgutopera.com.au or to Liz Nielsen PO Box 239 Westgate NSW 2048.

Over the year, we will tell the story of the opera, the composer and the people involved in the production. Our aim is to make you part of the company and to see how an opera production is created. Last year, Jennifer Bowen produced a radio documentary for ABC Radio National about our production of *Juditha Triumphans* called *Making Juditha*. You can still listen to this online on the Radio National website [here](#).

We like to hear what you think about us – send your comments, compliments, complaints and abuse to ken@pinchgutopera.com.au.

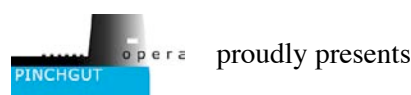
Change of Plans



Large opera companies usually need to plan their productions several years in advance. Pinchgut, on the other hand, is small, non-bureaucratic and fast on its feet so can make decisions quickly and take advantage of opportunities as they pop up.

So, we have decided that we will not, as announced, produce Cavalli's *L'Ormindo* this year but will do a larger scale work: *David and Jonathan*, by Marc-Antoine Charpentier. Since our 2005 production of Rameau's *Dardanus*, many people have suggested that we do more operas from the French baroque. We think that one of Pinchgut's aims is to

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Marc-Antoine Charpentier's *David and Jonathan*

City Recital Hall, Angel Place

Wednesday 3 December 7:30 pm
Saturday 6 December 7:30 pm
Sunday 7 December 5:00 pm
Monday 8 December 7:30 pm

The box office will open in July, with a two week priority booking period for newsletter subscribers.

help audiences discover works that are almost unknown in Australia. As far as we can find out, *David and Jonathan* has never been produced here.

Historically, Charpentier comes between Lully and Rameau. Much of his work was church music. He was *maitre de musique* at Sainte-Chapelle in Paris from 1698 until his death in 1704 and some of his greatest music was written for that church.

Probably Charpentier's best-known opera is *Medée*, which is performed fairly regularly in Europe by companies specialising in French baroque but, even there, *David and Jonathan* is rarely seen.

There is one recording, by William Christie and Les Arts Florissants on the Harmonia Mundi with Gerard Lesne singing David. We hope that that the usual specialist shops will have it in stock.

Antony Walker (returning from loan to Opera Australia for whom he conducted *Alcina* last year) will conduct our production. A young Swedish haute-contre Anders Dahlin will sing the role of David and Sara Macliver will sing Jonathan. Of course the Orchestra of the Antipodes and Cantillation will be with us again.



Over the next few months, our newsletter and website will tell more about the people involved in the production, the work and the composer.

For those of you disappointed about not seeing *L'Ormindo* this year, we expect to produce it in 2009.

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The Opera



Charpentier's opera is based on the Book of Samuel and roughly covers the period from the time David kills Goliath until Jonathan dies in the war against the Philistines.

Jonathan is the son of Saul, King of the Jews, and for those whose Old Testament is

rusty, David succeeds him and goes on to found Jerusalem.

On one level the opera is about the complex relationship between David and Jonathan and on another about Saul's fear of David and his premonition that David has been chosen to replace him. We will include a full synopsis in a later newsletter and post the libretto on the website.

The work had its first performance at the Collège Louis-le-Grand in Paris on 28th February 1688. Louis-le-Grand was a Jesuit school and the original cast would have been men and boys. It seems to have been performed as an interlude during a performance of a sacred drama about the life of Saul. It is, of course, in French (as usual, we will have English surtitles) and the libretto was written by François Bretonneau. As this stage, we cannot find out much about Bretonneau – he was a priest, no doubt Jesuit, but we do not know what else he wrote. Can any of you French scholars help us?

Wrapping Up Judy

This is a posting we made to the Pinchgut blog in January after the end of our production of *Juditha Triumphans*. As not everyone follows the blog, we thought it might be worth repeating here. We have also brought it up to date a bit.

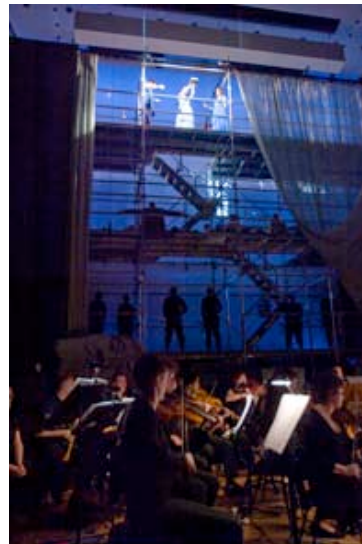
After closing night, there is still quite a lot to do. We aim to have everyone paid before Christmas. The City Recital Hall holds all box office money until the show finishes - they are liable to make refunds if we cancel - but they pay us promptly after that. Most of the cast and crew have given Liz their bank account details, tax numbers and such, so with Internet Banking, Liz is able to pay them within a couple of weeks. Lots of paperwork, but it's good to clear all our obligations quickly and musicians, in particular, do appreciate it.

Andrew has to decide which bits of the set to store and which bits to pass on for recycling. The floor is kept as it has been used - and repainted - for all productions since *Orfeo* in 2004. The turtle doves were returned to their owner. Incidentally, we now have an honorary Vet attached to the company. Hope Pitman, helped by John and the kids, looked after the birds with great care and attention. Maybe we'll need to use a tiger next year. OK, Hope?

Then came the job of analyzing the box office. The results, in bottoms and dollars, was a record for us. Over the four performances, we sold 3242 tickets - an increase of 13.5% on *Idomeneo* in 2006. *Dardanus* in 2005 had been our best selling production before this and Judy beat it by 6.46%. In money the results were even better. We increased ticket prices slightly for 2007 and there also seems to have been a mix improvement, i.e. people bought more of the higher priced A and B Reserve seats. So in money, sales in 2007 increased 30.6% over 2006.

We are very happy about this. Our aim has always been to make box office our major source of money. It is, after all, the best measure of whether audiences are happy with us.

We were also very glad to get a large number of emails and letters from those who enjoyed the show. Many were from people who have been with us from the start but quite a few were seeing their first opera. Modesty prevents us from quoting them. Oh, alright, just a couple:



"Saturday night was the first time my husband and I attended a Pinchgut Opera performance, and it certainly won't be the last. *Juditha Triumphans* was a fantastic experience. First, that glorious music (who can beat Vivaldi?) played impeccably, and second the wonderful voices of the cast. At the very beginning of

the performance, the hairs on my arms were on end. What a thrilling night."

"It was truly sensational --- one of my best nights ever in the theatre."

And one from an opera lover in the UK, listening to the ABC Classic FM broadcast on the internet:

"Amazing to be sitting here on a cold chilly morning listening to *Juditha* live from Sydney, Australia. Announced as a 'staged oratorio', I wonder when as such it would become an opera! This must be unique, to hear this work broadcast and live from the other side of the world. An experience that I am enjoying greatly. "

Enough boasting....

Liz has been analyzing post codes of ticket buyers. It seems that about 16.5% came from outside Sydney, including 25 from overseas, though probably this number is really higher, because we know of quite a few from overseas whose tickets were bought by family or friends here. The post code information is particularly useful when we decide where to advertise. One of my mentors in marketing many years ago taught me to "fish where the fish are". We will also look at timing of ticket buying to try to relate it to advertising and publicity.

All in all, a successful year and a very successful production for Pinchgut.

So what are all the *Juditha* people doing now?

It's always sad when - at the end of the production - our wonderful cast, orchestra and crew disperse until next year. But they all have busy and interesting lives, and although we don't have space to tell you what they are all doing here's what some of them are up to at the moment :



Attilio Cremonesi conducted Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* for the Monnaie Opera Theatre in Brussels in January, and will next conduct Mozart's *Così fan tutte* in Parma in Italy in March.

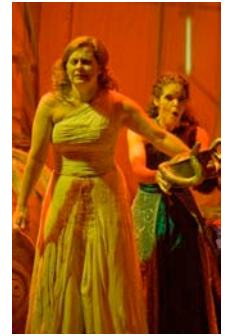
Director Mark Gaal went straight into running NIDA's summer school

after *Juditha*, and is delighted that one of the show's he directed last year for NIDA - *Aeschylus* - has been invited to the Tehran International Arts Festival this year.

Designer Hamish Peters has left for London where he will be living for the next while. Hamish is going to be working on *Rake's Progress* for Garsington Opera (directed by Olivia Fuchs who directed *Rusalka* for Opera Australia) where he will be assisting the designer Nikki Turner.



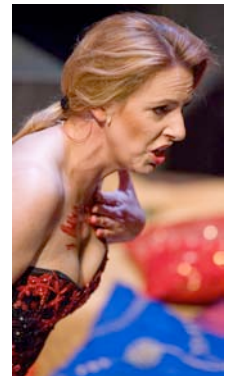
Sally-Anne Russell (Judith) went straight from *Juditha* down to Melbourne to sing in two different *Messiahs* - one with the Royal Philharmonic, and the other with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (with Antony Walker conducting). From there she went to the Mornington Peninsula Festival which began this year under the artistic direction of another Pinchgut regular - violinist Julia Fredersdorff.



David Walker (Holofernes) returned to the US, and went to Pittsburgh Opera (Antony's US opera company) to perform the Refugee in Jonathan Dove's *Flight*. And he's now in Paris about to open in the French premiere of the title role of *The Elephant Man*. Ken and Liz saw David perform this role for Minnesota Opera a couple of years ago with Antony conducting.



Fiona Campbell (Vagus) also went on to performances of *Messiah* after *Juditha* (it was that time of year of course). Since then she's sung a lieder recital at the Perth Concert Hall, and is getting ready to perform some Elvis Costello songs with the Brodsky Quartet at the Perth Festival!



Sara Macliver (Abra) also did the

Perth *Messiahs* with Fiona, and then had a much needed holiday with her family. She's done a concert in rural Western Australia with flautist Jane Rutter and is getting ready to go to the New Zealand to sing Mahler Symphony No. 4 and Villa-Lobos' *Bachianas Brasileiras* for the New Zealand International Arts Festival.



Anna Cerneaz, our marketing manager is in a new job for a year (but don't worry she's still working for Pinchgut). She's acting as the General Manager for Synergy Percussion and Taikoz while Michelle Kennedy is on maternity leave.

Renae Martin (Ozias) returned to the UK and to her studies. She is soon to start work with Glyndebourne Opera where she will be covering the roles of Hansel, Mercedes and Valletto in *Hansel and Gretel*, *Carmen* and *Coronation of Poppea* respectively.



Three members of Cantillation (who were the chorus



for *Juditha*) are singing in OzOpera's production of *Barber of Seville* this year. OzOpera is the touring arm of Opera Australia, and *Barber of*

Seville is a 50 minute production that will perform to schools all over NSW. We are delighted that Sarah Jones, Helen Sherman and Ashley Giles are taking part in this. David Greco has joined Opera Australia's chorus (but will be back with us this year) and Craig Everingham is singing with the OA chorus for the current performances of *La Bohème*.

Cantillation has just opened the Sydney Symphony's season with performances of Ravel's *Daphnis & Chloe* Suites 1 and 2. These are gorgeous pieces and lots of fun to sing. "Cantillation sang with ... glowing balance and purity of vowel" says the Sydney Morning Herald.



A number of Orchestra of the Antipodes went down to the Mornington Peninsula Festival including Julia Fredersdorff, Alice Evans, Nicole Forsyth and

Danny Yeadon. And more returned to the countries in which they live - Deb Fox (theorbo), Dominic Glynn (violin) and Owen Watkins (recorder, oboe and clarinet) to the US, James Holland (theorbo) and John Ma (viola) to the Netherlands (where they are both studying), Lisa Goldberg (bassoon) to Belgium, and Benjamin Bayl (assistant conductor and harpsichord) to the UK.

We're always delighted and humbled that so many fantastic players are willing to make the trip from

overseas and interstate to join us, and we look forward to seeing them soon.



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Major Sponsor - Herschel Asset Management

Herschel is with us again in 2008 - the fourth year of our partnership. Herschel is a privately held investment firm founded in 2001 and based in Melbourne. This has been a good partnership and we thank Herschel for their continuing support.

Money

Last year donations were a record. We received \$90 599 from a large number of supporters – Heroes of Pinchgut all.

Donations are of second most important source of income after box office and they are essential to our survival. To put it bluntly, without continuing help from those who believe in us enough to give us money, we could not continue.

Can you help? Donations over \$2 are tax deductible and receipts are issued for tax purposes. If you would like more information about Pinchgut, its finances or where the money goes, please email liz@pinchgutopera.com.au or phone Liz on 0407 916 802. If you are ready to make a donation, please send your cheque, payable to **Pinchgut Opera Public Fund** to PO Box 239 Westgate 2048.

Photos

The beautiful production photos we have used throughout this newsletter were taken at the general rehearsal by Simon Hodgson and Sarah Puttock.

Thanks for all your support last year, and we look forward to another terrific year with *David and Jonathan*.

Ken, Alison, Liz, Anna and Andrew.

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