

Newsletter —

March 2010

PINCHGUT OPERA

Haydn's *Orfeo*



Thomas Hardy, 'Portrait of Joseph Haydn', 1791

This year's production has the long title in Italian 'L'anima del filosofo, ossia Orfeo ed Euridice'. In English that's 'The Philosopher's soul, or Orpheus and Euridice'. It is based on the myth of Orpheus as told in Ovid's Metamorphoses.

Euridice is in love with Orpheus and is kidnapped for sacrifice by a group of shepherds. Orpheus rescues her, but she is bitten by a snake, dies and is taken to the underworld. A distraught Orpheus goes after Euridice and with his voice and his lyre charms his way in. He is allowed to rescue Euridice but is warned not to look back at her as they leave. He cannot control himself, looks back and loses Euridice forever. Disconsolate, he takes poison offered by a group of Bacchantes (who are unhappy that after the death of Euridice he rejects the love of women) and dies.

Well, that's the outline. As told in the opera the story is more complicated than that. We will in later newsletters give a fuller synopsis and a translation of the libretto.

The Orpheus myth has been the basis of several operas: including Monteverdi in 1607 (which we produced in 2004), Peri in 1600 (this version had a happy ending, presumably because it was first performed at a wedding), Gluck in 1762 and in a completely different vein Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld*.

Haydn's version was commissioned soon after he arrived in London in 1791 and was to be performed at King's Theatre Haymarket. The libretto, by Carlo Francesco Badini, was (Haydn wrote in a letter) "entirely different to that of Gluck". Politics prevented the performance but Haydn had already been paid so he did not seem to be too upset.

As it turned out this was the last opera Haydn composed, though he lived another 18 years.

The work was forgotten and was not produced until 1951 when Erich Kleiber conducted a cast including Maria Callas at Teatro della Pergola in Florence.

When and Who

The dates are a little different than previous years, so make sure you mark your diaries now.

We will be presenting 4 performances on:

Thursday 2 December 7:30 PM
Saturday 4 December 7:30 PM
Sunday 5 December at 5:00 PM
Tuesday 7 December 7:30 PM

City Recital Hall Angel Place, Sydney

This will be the first ever Australian production of this work:

Principals:

Euridice, Genio: Elena Xanthoudakis (soprano)
Orfeo: Andrew Goodwin (tenor)

Conductor:

Antony Walker

Director:

Mark Gaal

Designers:

Alexandra Sommer & Brad Clark

Lighting Designer:

Bernie Tan-Hayes

Chorus:

Cantillation

Orchestra of the Antipodes on classical instruments with fortepiano Erin Helyard

Sung in Italian with English surtitles (libretto by Carlo Francesco Badini)

Box office opens July 2010

www.pinchgutopera.com.au

Saying goodbye to *L'Ormino*



Anna Fraser & Andrei Laptev in Pinchgut's *L'Ormino*, Dec 2009; Simon Hodgson Photography

Thank you to all the people who got in touch with us after our December 2009 production of *L'Ormino* to say how much they enjoyed it. We have passed on your messages to the whole company. Erin Helyard remarked how different it is to other parts of the world where you will hear if you do something wrong but rarely do you hear if people enjoyed a production.

We love comments like this from people who have never been to an opera before:- *Orchestra sounded wonderful - and it was beautiful to watch it moving, like a single organism - and fantastic singing too of course, particularly Erisbe and Sicle. First time I've seen Pinchgut, and I will definitely be back. It was such a special experience that frankly I'd come and see you lot do a production of the White Pages.*

We know many of our long time supporters have been to every performance. Our audience came from all over Sydney, regional NSW, every other state and overseas. From an audience member who travelled from Adelaide:- *"... L'Ormino was brilliant. The singers and orchestra were excellent as usual. Our tickets were organised by two Sydney friends who*

introduced us to Pinchgut three years ago and we have been coming to Sydney for an extended weekend ever since. On Saturday night we were surprised to see some other Adelaide friends in the audience as well. ... It's a pity you can't bring a production to Adelaide. I'm sure you'd get an audience from the early music lovers here! We are looking forward to the 2010 production already."

We have put some wonderful photos up on the web at www.pinchgutopera.com.au. And for now, here is one of soprano Anna Fraser & tenor Andrei Laptev. You can also read a selection of comments and reviews about *L'Ormino* at pinchgutopera.com.au/media

All of us non-creative people in the company thank the nine soloists, fourteen orchestra members and twenty-seven production people who made this such a success.

We are also proud of the fact that, despite the financially difficult year, we covered all our costs. To our donors who stayed with us and our audience who came to *L'Ormino* and all our friends who supported the fundraiser: you all made this possible and from every one of us at Pinchgut - "THANKS!"

A little more about some of the key people in 2010

We are delighted to announce some of our cast for this year.

Melbourne born soprano Elena Xanthoudakis takes the dual roles of Euridice and Genio. Now resident in the UK Elena is an international artist with roles for such companies as the Royal Opera House, English National Opera, Opera North, Scottish Opera, Opera de Québec and many others.

Born in Sydney and trained in St Petersburg tenor Andrew Goodwin is Orpheus. In Australia he has performed a few roles for Opera Australia, and has sung in recital for Musica Viva on a number of occasions, but most of his work is overseas, and he is a favoured artist with Russian orchestras and theatres.

This opera has a lot of work for a chorus and Cantillation will be with us again.

Our artistic director Antony Walker is back to conduct this year. Antony has had his usual jam-packed schedule and is currently conducting *Lucia di Lammermoor* for English National Opera. The Spectator said of this production "all the singing and the wonderfully incisive conducting of Antony Walker result in a Lucia in which there are almost no longueurs."

We're also very pleased that director Mark Gaal is back with us for 2010. Mark's last full show with us was Vivaldi's *Juditha Triumphans*, and he also helped us enormously with *L'Ormino* last year. Mark directed *Orfeo* for us in 2004, and has already commented on how different the two works are in every respect.

We'll be giving you more in depth information on all of our principals and creative team later on.

SARA MACLIVER AND FIONA CAMPBELL TOURING WITH THE ACO.

Two of Pinchgut regulars, Sara Macliver and Fiona Campbell, together with British singers Andrew Staples and Matthew Brooks, perform Bach choral music one-voice-per-part with the Australian Chamber Orchestra across Australia in April. Richard Tognetti, much-awarded for his recordings of Bach, has chosen one mass, one cantata and one motet from Bach's vast catalogue and will combine them with 20th century music inspired by Bach, including Shostakovich, Schoenberg and Pärt. For details and to book for this Easter tour, see aco.com.au/bachandbeyond. See competition to win tickets!

IRONWOOD PRESENTS HAYDN THE BOLD, HAYDN THE BEAUTIFUL.

Pinchgut regulars and Ironwood members Rachael Beesley and Julia Fredersdorff, violins; Nicole Forsyth, viola and Daniel Yeadon, cello will present Haydn's little heard Opus 20 quartets and his regal later Opus 77 quartets on gut stringed instruments. Also on the program is a beautiful miniature by Boccherini and a world premiere by Australian composer Damian Barbeler. The concerts will take place in Sydney (15 March at Customs House) and Melbourne (25 March at Fortyfivedownstairs, 45 Flinders Lane, Melbourne) Bookings: (02) 9389 8117 or ironwoodchamberensemble.com

OPERA AUSTRALIA'S *Bliss* - SPECIAL OFFER

Don't miss your chance to experience the world premiere of *Bliss*, a new Australian opera commissioned by Opera Australia, composed by Brett Dean with libretto by Amanda Holden and directed by Neil Armfield starring Peter Coleman-Wright as Harry Joy. Based on the novel by Peter Carey, *Bliss* defines a generation and abounds with dangerous ideas. Pinchgut newsletter readers receive a very special ticket price of \$50 in A and B Reserve for all performances of *Bliss* (12 - 30 March) at the Sydney Opera House*. For bookings call the Opera Australia box office on 02 9318 8200 and quote 'Pinchgut'. *based on best available seating, subject to availability, limit of 4 tickets per customer, book by March 5, booking fees may apply. To view performances dates visit www.opera-australia.org.au

SYDNEY CHAMBER CHOIR

Sydney Chamber Choir celebrates its 35th anniversary in 2010 with a sumptuous feast of exquisite music for the voice. For their first concert, will be joined by Ironwood, Australia's renowned historically informed ensemble. Together they will present a tribute to Estonian composer Arvo Pärt (celebrating his 75th birthday in 2010) with a performance of one of his most loved works, the Berlin Mass. Also on the program will be a movement from Haydn's *Seven Last Words* performed by Ironwood. 3 April 2010 (Easter Saturday) at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. Bookings www.sydneychamberchoir.org or call 1300 661 738.



Cantillation. Photo by Simon Hodgson Photography

We have quite a few new newsletter subscribers this year, so we thought we should for them tell the story of how Pinchgut came about. Those who have been around a while have heard it all before so they can bleep over this bit.

In 2000, a small group of musicians, arts administrators and music lovers were having coffee at Sydney Dance Cafe in Walsh Bay (highly recommended for coffee, sandwiches and salads) and they talked about opera. "Is there a way of doing opera in a way that puts the music first" someone asked "using the other elements - production, sets, lighting and costumes - to support the music but not get in the way?" It was agreed that it would need a space with a very good acoustic and probably much smaller than a conventional opera house.

Originally, it was not intended that we would concentrate on baroque opera.

We started there - with Handel's *Semele* - because we had some musicians who were very experienced in playing on period instruments in baroque and early classical style. We wanted to do stuff that Opera Australia and the state opera companies cannot do. We also wanted to give audiences the chance to hear young singers and musicians, many of whom live overseas but are happy to return to Australia to perform.

The original founding group was Alison Johnston, Anna McDonald, Erin Helyard,

Anna Cerneaz, Liz Nielsen and someone else whose name we have forgotten. Antony Walker had fairly recently moved to the US to be musical head of Washington Concert Opera but he was quickly brought on board and became with Erin, Artistic Director. (Just to finish the Pinchgut people - Andrew Johnston worked on our first show as production assistant and within a couple of years was our production manager and an integral part of the team. John Pitman has sung in every performance from *Dardanus* onwards with Cantillation, and joined the board a little more than a year ago).

The City Recital Hall Angel Place had opened a couple of years before and seemed perfect for what we wanted to do. The then management of the hall was not so enthusiastic "It's a recital hall" they said "and anyway chamber opera has never been successful in Sydney." The management has since changed and have become very helpful supporters of what we are doing. Andrew Andersons who led the design team at Peddle Thorp and Walker for Angel Place became a supporter and tells us he is proud that opera is being performed in his recital hall.

Opera Australia welcomed us and have been amazing with rehearsal space, props and costumes (as well as, occasionally, releasing singers).

Semele opened on 4 December 2002 to very good reviews and we were off and running.

What is everyone doing now?

One of the sad things for us is every year saying goodbye to everyone who made the production so successful. But we are then able to tell you what some of them are now up to:

Erin Helyard went back to Montréal at the end of December, and has been touring with *Il Furiosi*, one of Canada's most notable baroque ensembles. The academic year has started again (Erin is finishing his PhD at McGill University) and so Erin is very busy.

Fiona Campbell has just completed Symphony under the Stars in Perth with international soprano Barbara Bonney, and is now touring Korea with her. We'll next see Fiona back in Sydney in April when she'll be touring with Sara Macliver with the ACO (see competition).

Taryn Fiebig is always very busy as a principal artist with Opera Australia. Since we saw her she's sung Musetta in *La Bohème*, is currently in Massenet's *Manon* and is working on Brett Dean's *Bliss*.

Anna Fraser has been skiing in Japan! and is now back at The Song Company preparing for their March production of Gerard Brophy's *Gethsemane*. Natalie Shea, Cantillation regular (and star of surtitles, program and translations) is also singing with The Song Company for this.

Jane Sheldon has returned to Boston and the snow where she is auditioning for many programs and organisations. We're delighted to say that she's reached the final round of auditions for *Les Jardin des Voix* (Les Arts Florissants young artist program) and is off to Paris to sing for William Christie and Paul Agnew.

Julia Fredersdorff (violin) led a very successful third Peninsula Summer Music Festival that included many Pinchgut regulars including Laura Vaughan, Nicole Forsyth, Danny Yeadon, Neal Peres Da Costa and David Greco. Julia is currently in Sydney with the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra.

More updates in the next newsletter.

New General Manager

Many of you have met or spoken to Anna Cerneaz who has been our marketing manager (as well as many other things) since the beginning. The board of Pinchgut has now appointed Anna as general manager. She will remain responsible for marketing and publicity and will probably be the person most of you will be in touch with when you want to talk to Pinchgut.

We are fortunate to have a small group of very talented people in our organisation. As you know, Antony Walker and Erin Helyard are our artistic directors, Alison Johnston is artistic administrator and Andrew Johnston is production manager. We are proud of them all.

Recording

For a good recording of Haydn's *L'anima del filosofo* we recommend the 1997 Christopher Hogwood, Academy of Ancient Music CD set with Cecilia Bartoli and Uwe Heilmann as the doomed lovers. Enquire at your local good CD store, or try Fish Music, King Street, Sydney. Only a couple of recordings have been made of this master work, including one with Richard Bonyngue and Joan Sutherland. However, the Bartoli is the only one currently being produced and is the best by a long way.

Competition

The Australian Chamber Orchestra has offered two free tickets to a lucky Pinchgut newsletter reader to Bach and Beyond at the Sydney Opera House performance on Sunday 18th March 2.30pm. Simply answer this question:

Who were the roles of Orpheus and Euridice composed for in Haydn's *L'anima del filosofo*?

Send your answers to Anna Cerneaz by 12 March 2010
e: anna@pinchgutopera.com.au
or 02 9389 8117.

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

Radisson Plaza Hotel with us again



We are delighted to announce that the Radisson Plaza Hotel Sydney have chosen to partner us again, right through our 2010 season. A patron of the arts, the hotel also works with a number of other musical organisations. This year will be an exciting time at the hotel with a number of changes to take place, more details to follow. We look forward to another terrific year with the hotel.

Calendar

Thursday 2 December 2010
Performance #1 – 7:30pm

Saturday 4 December 2010
Performance #2 – 7:30pm

Sunday 5 December 2010 at 5pm
Performance #3 – 5:00pm

Tuesday 7 December 2010
Performance #4 – 7:30pm

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