

PINCHGUT OPERA



Messiah

(Original Dublin Version, 1742)
Handel

*In a work that has become synonymous with Christmas
and the holiday season, this is a rare opportunity to discover
it afresh, as the original audience did almost 300 years ago.*

CITY RECITAL HALL, SYDNEY | 23 NOV–3 DEC



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PINCHGUT OPERA

Maid Made Boss

(La serva padrona)
Pergolesi

CITY RECITAL HALL, SYDNEY
SAT 13 SEP, 2PM | SUN 14 SEP, 5PM

SYNOPSIS

Tired of his maid Serpina's constant defiance, the weary bachelor Uberto resolves to restore order by marrying. He instructs his servant, Vespone, to seek out a suitable wife, but Serpina asserts herself as the only candidate. Their quarrel culminates in a dazzling duet of stubborn wills, ending the first scene.

Serpina then conspires with Vespone, disguised as a soldier, to force Uberto's hand. Confronted with the thought of losing her, Uberto's jealousy stirs and his feelings shift. By wit and determination, Serpina secures his affection, and the intermezzo concludes with wedding bells.

CAST



Celeste Lazarenko
Serpina



Morgan Pearce
Uberto



Gareth Davies
Vespone

CONDUCTOR

DIRECTOR

DESIGNER

LIGHTING DESIGNER

STAGE MANAGER

SURTITLES

SURTITLE OPERATOR

ASSISTANT COSTUME SUPERVISOR

LANGUAGE COACH

DRAMATURG

FOLLOW SPOT OPERATOR

FOLLOW SPOT OPERATOR

VIDEO TECHNICIAN

SET & RIGGING

SCENIC ART

Orchestra of the Antipodes

VIOLIN

VIOLIN

VIOLIN

VIOLIN

VIOLIN

VIOLA

CELLO

BASS

GUITAR / THEORBO

GUITAR / THEORBO / MANDOLIN

HARPSICHORD

Erin Helyard

Eugene Lynch

Lochie Odgers

Morgan Moroney

Claire Edmonds-Wilson

Natalie Shea

Jillian Halleron

Lily Mateljan

Alan Hicks

Aaron Ronalds

Thomas Howieson

Harry Smyth

Rose Mulcare

Byron Cleasby

Opera Australia

Matthew Greco

Simone Slattery

Caroline Hopson

Rafael Font

Ella Bennetts

Karina Schmitz

Anton Baba

Pippa MacMillan

George Wills

Simon Martyn-Ellis

Erin Helyard

Pitch: A=415, Temperament 1/8th comma meantone

Two-manual harpsichord supplied and prepared by Carey Beebe

Special Thanks

Tommie Andersson
Paul Odette, Stephen Stubbs,
and Robert Mealy from Boston
Early Music Festival
Carey Beebe
Natalie Shea

Liz Nielsen
Stephen Yates
Opera Australia: Rob Bristow,
Adam Christie, Bonnie Harris,
Carlos Johnson and Melita Tickle
Mark Rowley (Sydney Theatre
Company)

Cassidy McDermott-Smith
Dominic Lui
Luke Visentin
Dominique Purdue
Andrew Fraser
Emma Johnston and Mark Probert

Maid Made Boss

(La serva padrona)

Intermezzo in two parts by Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710–1736)

Libretto by Gennaro Antonio Federico (fl 1726–43) after a play by Jacopo Angello Nelli (1673–1767)

First performed Naples 1733.

Additional music

Sinfonia: Giovanni Battista Pergolesi, *Adriano in Siria* (Naples 1734)

Entr'acte: Evaristo Felice dall'Abaco (1675–1742), *Concerto in D major* Op. 6 No. 12 (1735)

Intro

La serva padrona ("Maid Made Boss") was first performed in Naples in 1733 between the acts of Pergolesi's serious opera *Il prigioniero superbo*. Pergolesi was only twenty-three. With a libretto by Gennaro Antonio Federico, based on a play by Jacopo Angello Nelli, the work was an instant hit and—highly unusual for the time—remained in repertory throughout the eighteenth century. For two decades it was performed without alteration in over sixty theatres across Europe, from Spain to St Petersburg, the only variation being occasional substitution of the final duet with one from Pergolesi's *Flaminio* (we present the original version).

By the 1750s, the Paris Opéra was in decline. In 1749, Louis XV ceded control of the company to the city, and in search of novelty its directors invited an Italian troupe led by Eustachio Bambini. On August 1, 1752, *La serva padrona* was staged between acts of Lully's *Acis et Galatée*. The effect was explosive: Pergolesi's freshness and realism clashed with the rigid formality of Lully's *tragédie*. Paris divided. Some dismissed it as vulgar; others hailed it as a revelation. Thus began the *Querelle des Bouffons* ("War of the Comic Actors").

The quarrel was about more than taste. France was in the midst of a political and religious crisis, and debates that could not be voiced openly, surfaced through music. To Rousseau, Grimm, and d'Holbach, Italian music symbolised Enlightenment values—expressive, natural, even democratic—while French tragédie represented hierarchy and aristocracy.

As musicologist Richard Taruskin observed, what made *La serva padrona* so powerful and ultimately so foundational for later opera was its "irony through contrast" in place of the "unity of affect" demanded by serious Baroque opera. In *La serva padrona* a character might sing a heartfelt phrase only to reveal moments later—in an aside—that the sentiment was false. This constant shifting of tone invited audiences to question appearances, truth, and authority itself.

Pergolesi never lived to witness the storm his intermezzo unleashed, but *La serva padrona* ultimately became a musical banner for change and innovation.

Erin Helyard © 2025

Sung in Italian with English surtitles.

This performance lasts approximately 70 minutes, without interval.

Maid Made Boss is being recorded by ABC Classic for future broadcast.

Any microphones you observe are for recording not amplification.

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we work and perform,
the Gadigal people of the Eora nation – the first storytellers and singers of songs.
We pay our respects to their elders past and present.