

# THE MELBA

MAGAZINE OF MELBA OPERA TRUST

Edition 16 Autumn 2017

THE BUSINESS OF BEING AN OPERA SINGER

MAKING MENTORING POSSIBLE:  
THE REILLY & LOGIE-SMITH MENTOR ENDOWMENT

SCHOLARS IN PERFORMANCE



Caption: Scholars Daniel Carison, Bronwyn Douglass & Zoe Drummond in performance

*Melba*

CONTENTS —

- PAGE 2-3**
- Note from the General Manager
  - A Fearless New Lead: Roz Zalewski-Ruskin
  - About Melba Opera Trust
  - Meet the Cast
  - Your Melbas

- PAGE 4-5**
- A Grand Reception
  - Look After Yourself

- PAGE 6**
- Making Mentoring Possible: The Reilly & Logie-Smith Mentor Endowment

- PAGE 7**
- Thoughts On A Legacy: Rob Logie-Smith AM
  - Coming Soon To The Mentor Program

- PAGE 8**
- Keys to Opera

- PAGE 9**
- On a Stage Near You
  - The Art of Business

- PAGE 10**
- What's in a Gig?
  - Insights from a Mentor

- PAGE 11**
- Letter From Abroad – Nathan Lay

- PAGE 12**
- Nights at the Opera
  - Supporters of the Melba Opera Trust

**Melba Opera Trust Board**  
Roz Zalewski-Ruskin, Chair  
Kate Shelmerdine, Deputy Chair  
Dmitry Danilovich, Treasurer  
Chris Arnold  
Peter Reilly  
Robert G Logie-Smith AM  
Peter Garnick, Managing Director & Company Secretary

**Melba Opera Trust**  
ABN 96 424 419 725  
L8, 440 Collins Street, Melbourne VIC 3000  
T: (03) 9944 2100 F: (03) 9867 3364  
www.melbaoperatrust.com.au

Design by Charles Lin Design  
www.charleslin.com.au

Copy and editing by Megan Steller and Dr Jillian Graham

Images by Victoria Cadisch, Jodie Hutchinson, David Mackay, Martin Maras, Danièle Martinie, Les O'Rourke, Peter Smith and Richard Hubert Smith

To unsubscribe in relation to receiving this publication, please contact Melba Opera Trust.



This newsletter is printed on Sovereign Offset derived from well-managed forests and other controlled sources certified against Forest Stewardship Council® standards, a non-profit organisation devoted to encouraging the responsible management of the world's forests.

NOTE FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER —



Amy Black

It's a pleasure to have recommenced my role with Melba Opera Trust and I thank everyone for their warm 'welcome home'. I thoroughly appreciated the precious time spent with my now 21 month old daughter, Charlotte; however I certainly missed the music and it's been a joy

re-uniting with the Melba community. It's been a busy start to the year! We launched our scholarship program with a series of events hosted at three of Australia's most distinguished settings. In February, a very special afternoon

at Coombe with our Patron The Hon. Saffron Foster. In March our Patrons-in-Chief, the Governor of Victoria and Mr Howard, hosted a morning reception at Government House, Melbourne. And in April, we commenced this year's Sydney activities with a reception at Kirribilli

A FEARLESS NEW LEAD: ROZ ZALEWSKI-RUSKIN



Roz Zalewski-Ruskin

**Roz Zalewski-Ruskin joined the Melba Board in 2010 and was appointed Deputy Chair in 2011. When former Chairman Rob Logie-Smith AM stepped down in November 2016, Melba Opera Trust welcomed Roz to the role. We spoke to her about her interest in young people, her love of opera, and what she hopes to bring to her role as Chair.**

Roz is a retired barrister and solicitor, and holds qualifications in professional ethics and human rights. She is currently completing a Diploma in Business Governance with the Institute of Company Directors Australia. During her professional life, she worked for many years with asylum seekers and refugees. After retiring in 2010, she was a volunteer solicitor with the

Asylum Seekers Resource Centre for five years, and is currently on leave from that role. She has previously been a member of the International Commission of Jurists, and of the International Humanitarian Law Committee of the Red Cross. Until recently, Roz was Chair of the Board of The Ownership Project, a not-for-profit printmaking studio and gallery space in Fitzroy that works with

newly-arrived migrant, refugee and Indigenous Australian communities. Between 2004 and 2013, she was a member of the Board of Western Chances, a scholarship fund set up to assist young disadvantaged people in Melbourne's west. Roz feels very strongly that young people deserve every opportunity to achieve their full potential, and that education is the key. She points



ABOUT MELBA OPERA TRUST —

Melba Opera Trust is Australia's premier scholarship program for promising young opera singers. Driven by Dame Nellie Melba's conviction "a beautiful voice is not enough", the program nurtures artistic development alongside business training, mentoring and performance experience. We are the next step for singers preparing to become professionals on the world stage.

Inspiring Excellence – Realising Potential – Forging Careers



**Zoe Drummond (Soprano)**  
Dame Nellie Melba Scholarship Patrick & Vivian Gordon Award

During my three years with the Trust, I have realised how right Dame Nellie Melba was when she said that 'a beautiful voice is not enough'. To work in this field, you are expected to sing and perform well, but you also need to be able to handle your own contracts, negotiations, promotion, image, finances and personal connections. Earlier this year I was in Victorian Opera's production of *Sleeping Beauty*, which was a terrific show with the most spectacular puppets! I've now moved on to another project, covering the lead role in Opera Australia's *Two Weddings, One Bride*. It has been wonderful being at rehearsals with such established and talented performers singing operetta favourites by Strauss, Offenbach, Lehár and others.



**Damian Arnold (Tenor)**  
Eleanor Blakemore Opera Society Scholarship

I have recently been in Tel Aviv performing with the Israeli Opera Studio, an opportunity that came my way thanks to the IFAC Handa Australian Singing Competition, in which I was a finalist in 2015. I worked with distinguished coaches from The Metropolitan Opera and Deutsche Oper Berlin, preparing the role of Pelléas from Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*. I'm also looking forward to working with Stuart Skelton soon in Melba Opera Trust's Mentor Program. As a young singer, it is always incredibly exciting to have the chance to work with a world-class performer, especially one who is in their prime and performing in the world's best opera houses. And it's a bonus when that performer happens to have the same voice type as you!



**Bronwyn Douglass (Mezzo Soprano)**  
Amelia Joscelyne Memorial Scholarship

Our first Mentor Block in Sydney this year was an absolute highlight for me. I had such a wonderful time learning from Neil Semer and Daria Masiero, and it was particularly special performing at Kirribilli House in our Sydney 'Meet the Scholars' event. I am currently performing the role of Olga in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* for Co-Opera, a touring company based in Adelaide. This has been a great experience, because Olga is a very colourful character! We've performed across Australia in a variety of venues – from the Atheneum in the heart of Melbourne to Merimbula and Ballarat. I'm also thrilled to be preparing for some work with the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs and Bravo Cruises at the end of the year.

House, courtesy of the Prime Minister of Australia.

Scholars have already participated in three Mentor Blocks with another on the horizon. In the past, sessions have always been based in Melbourne; however in April we

delivered our first Mentor Block in Sydney. We have been encouraged by the growing enthusiasm we have received from our Sydney community and we look forward to our next Sydney-based sessions in July.

We are also exceptionally proud to announce the Reilly & Logie-Smith Mentor Endowment. This remarkable gesture from Board Director, Peter Reilly, directly acknowledges the foresight and vision of our retired Chair, Rob Logie-Smith AM, and significantly supports our objective

to fund the Mentor Program in perpetuity. The Reilly & Logie-Smith Mentor Endowment is a contributory fund, providing an opportunity for donors to direct their giving to the Mentor Program, whilst at the same time honouring Rob's legacy. On behalf of today's and tomorrow's

scholars, we offer Peter Reilly and Linton Soderholm our deepest gratitude.

I hope you enjoy this edition of The Melba.

**Amy Black**  
General Manager

out, however, that demonstrating an interest and giving encouragement are also important. Her involvement with numerous young people from primary school to post-graduate levels has given her an insight into how motivated and resilient young people really are. She believes that "those who are passionate about what they do, and are constantly looking to develop, are the ones who go the furthest".

Not surprisingly, another love of Roz's is opera:

"Opera tells a story like no other dramatic platform. The experience is always captivating for me. I get transported by the music, and the stories of strong characters

always evoke a strong emotional response. Opera feeds my soul. The young people I meet through Melba inspire me by their passion, intelligence, determination and sophistication. They are embarking on a professional journey at a time when their peers are more interested in pop music and action movies. I would love to see more young people attend opera performances in Australia, and feel that there is insufficient early education (in schools) about classical music and opera."

The connection with Melba goes back quite a few years for Roz. Her father-in-law Alfred Ruskin served as Chairman of Melba Conservatorium's

Council from 1972-1996. Alfred and his wife Pamela were tireless supporters of the arts, and especially of the Conservatorium, believing that music studies enriched lives. They particularly appreciated the nurturing atmosphere and care given to Melba students. Roz and husband Jeremy carry forward this legacy, which started with their decision to make a substantial donation to the Melba Conservatorium in 2004, and along with a syndicate of supporters, they have been funding the Ruskin Opera Award to the present day.

Roz's devotion to opera and commitment to young people combine to create her continuing engagement with and respect for

Melba Opera Trust's program:

"People often don't understand that more goes into opera-singing than just a great voice. It's also about work ethic, attitude and approach. Then you can do anything! It's crucial to work on expanding skills at the early stage of any musician's career, which is the priority of the Melba program. It is also important to consider the definition of success in an industry where 'making it' is not easily defined. I was attracted to the breadth of study made available by Melba Opera Trust to singers and pianists, because success is the sum of a lot of experiences – there is no one path. I have watched several young singers take their first steps

into professional careers, some as singers, and others following alternative paths with the skills developed during their rigorous classical training. I am particularly proud of this."

Roz is excited about the challenges that will face her during her time as Chair. As befits her nature and interests, many of her priorities lie with the continued development of the Mentor Program. With her professional background, she is also interested in best-practice governance. On a more personal note, her position as Chair provides another opportunity to remain deeply engaged with opera: "I couldn't imagine my life without it", she says.



Chris Arnold

## MEET THE CAST

In February this year, Melba Opera Trust was delighted to welcome Chris Arnold to the Board of Directors, and as Chair of the new Governance Committee.

Chris brings to Melba Opera Trust a wealth of valuable experience in the corporate, government and not-for-profit sectors. His six CEO roles have included hospitals, law firms, and a

financial services and accounting firm. This is supplemented by consulting experience in governance, structuring, strategy and business planning and mentoring. He has also held many board roles in the philanthropic sector, including six years at Philanthropy Australia, eight years with Australian Communities Foundation, and more recently as global chairman with the Human Variome Project International Ltd. He is currently part-time Executive

Director of the Skin & Cancer Foundation and part-time business advisor.

Music has always been part of Chris's life. He trained initially as a boy soprano, sang in the choir at St Paul's Cathedral, and went on to study music theory and piano at secondary school. His early exposure obviously planted a seed that has been growing ever since:

"I love a great deal of classical

music, and opera is certainly a genre I enjoy. My wife, Margot Costanza (Vice-Chair, 3MBS Fine Music), and I have had an interest in the local opera scene for a long time. We have also travelled overseas to hear some of the best singers in the world, so it was a great pleasure to join the Board of Melba Opera Trust.

Melba Opera Trust has a fantastic, unique program, and I'm thrilled to be part of it."



**Daniel Carison (Bass Baritone)**  
**Paulette Bisley Opera Scholarship**  
**Ruskin Opera Award**

In 2017, I'm spending a great deal of time finessing my German language skills – particularly in speech and conversation. I have been focusing on the German language for a few years now, and I'm hoping to further enhance my knowledge with a view to relocating to Germany permanently within the next couple of years. I've always been attracted to the idea of living in Germany, and given its status as the 'number one' country for opera, cultivating strong language skills will be essential to developing a career there. I am also studying French and Italian. Languages are full of similarities, differences and endless nuances. I've found it particularly useful working on languages concurrently, because it allows you to constantly compare and reaffirm what you know.



**Samuel Piper (Baritone)**  
**John & Elizabeth Wright-Smith Scholarship**

One of the most exciting things for me so far as a Melba scholar has been performing at some beautiful venues. The opportunity to sing at Coombe Cottage in Melba's very own music room was particularly special, and something I will not forget soon. There was a great atmosphere and a real sense of acknowledgement of the history of that space. I'm starting to work as a freelance singer, and am fortunate to have been offered some great opportunities this year. One of these is to perform with Opera Queensland in a new show called *Mozart Airborne*. My first professional engagement was with Opera Queensland as a chorister several years ago, and I'm very happy to have the chance to join them again for this production.



**Cleo Lee-McGowan (Soprano)**  
**Joseph Sambrook Opera Scholarship**

As Melba scholars, we have been so spoilt with the mentors we have worked with over the last couple of months. I have loved working with the wonderful singing teacher, Neil Semer, who helped me access new and exciting parts of my voice. I also thoroughly enjoyed working on public speaking with Judith Field, as I believe this is an area of weakness for me. I could go on! To be a successful performer it is essential to be able to manage every aspect of your music career. Without the knowledge of the business side, performers put themselves at a huge disadvantage. As Melba herself said, having a beautiful voice is not enough – you need those other skills to help you to be heard.



**Georgia Hall (Soprano)**  
**Harold Blair Opera Scholarship**  
**Mel & Nina Waters Award**

The most special moment for me so far this year was performing Richard Strauss's song 'Heimliche Aufforderung' in Dame Nellie Melba's very own concert room, overlooking the rose garden at Coombe Cottage. I'm greatly looking forward to working with Yvonne Kenny AM as part of the Mentor Program. I can't wait to participate in her masterclass and to have a private coaching session with her. She is a singer whom I've greatly admired since I was a little girl. I've been lucky enough over the past three and a half years to have significant support from Opera Hunter in my home city of Newcastle. This year I am doing my sixth production with the company, taking on the role of Donna Anna in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.



**Jonathan Wilson (Repetiteur)**  
**Margaret Schofield Opera Scholarship**

I am especially excited about the Melba Opera Trust masterclass later in the year with visiting conductor Johannes Fritzscht focusing on musical interpretation. In my private sessions, I am hoping to hone my skills in playing orchestral reductions of operatic repertoire – an essential skill for a repetiteur. I am also currently learning Italian. I've already studied French (through living in Montreal for three and a half years) and German (three years at University), so for me Italian was the weakest of the four main operatic languages. I currently have a weekly private lesson of 90 minutes with my Italian teacher. We concentrate mainly on grammar and listening; however, one of my main conditions in studying with her is that we communicate in Italian all the time!

# A GRAND RECEPTION

**The highlight of a new year at Melba Opera Trust is meeting our new scholars and introducing them to the Melba community. We did this in grand fashion with three remarkable occasions at three of Australia's most historic locations.**

## Coombe, The Melba Estate

As important as it is for us to 'meet the scholars', it is just as important for the scholars to meet Melba!

In the words of Dame Nellie herself: "My voice has been raised not only in song, but to make the big world outside, through me, understand something of the spirit of my beloved country."

Nowhere in Australia is this spirit more keenly felt than in Melba's beloved Yarra Valley, and most poignantly at her home, Coombe Cottage. For our Melba Scholars, a pilgrimage to Melba's memorial in Lilydale and to her home in Coldstream has become a rite of passage. This year the occasion was particularly meaningful, as it aligned with a visit from Melba's great-great granddaughter and our Patron, The Hon. Saffron Foster.

Scholars travelled to Melba's memorial in Lilydale to learn more about their namesake from John Brown, representative of the Lilydale

Historical Society. The rest of the day was spent at Coombe – the Melba Estate, where scholars were treated to a personal tour of the garden, the gallery and the Melba Wing of the cottage. The Melba Wing, virtually unchanged since her death, was a source of inspiration for the young singers. The gallery evokes Nellie's innovative approach to her career – the walls are lined with her records, with one corner featuring the recitals she performed to support those less fortunate.

For the singers, the greatest thrill was to perform in the same room where Nellie sang. They were given this precious opportunity thanks to

Saffron and her daughter Meg, who hosted an intimate soirée for Melba Opera Trust supporters in Melba's music room.

Following the performance, guests and scholars enjoyed refreshments on the verandah and admired the Estate's beautiful gardens. This was a wonderful way to launch 2017, and we offer our warmest appreciation to Saffron, and to Coombe – the Melba Estate.

## Government House, Melbourne

In late March, Melba Opera Trust's Patrons-in-Chief, the Governor of Victoria The Hon. Linda Dessau AM and Mr Howard, formally launched this year's scholarship program with a beautiful morning reception at Government House. Such a wonderful gesture is not without precedent – Dame Nellie Melba performed at Government House on several occasions for her own Patron, Lady Loch. It is fitting that Dame Nellie Melba continues to preside over the State Dining Room through the commanding portrait of her by Rupert Bunny.

As guests were being welcomed into the State Drawing Room, scholars enjoyed a quiet moment with the Governor and Mr Howard in the Governor's private residence. Discussing the challenges and rewards of pursuing an operatic career, the scholars appreciated the personal interest and support shown by our Patrons-In-Chief. "The Hon. Linda Dessau AM and Mr Howard were so welcoming and encouraging. They seemed genuinely excited to be giving us the opportunity to walk in Dame Nellie Melba's footsteps", said scholar Bronwyn Douglass.

Scholars joined the Official Party as they entered the State Room, and following a warm welcome from the Governor and our Chair, Ms Roz Zalewski-Ruskin, scholars delighted their audience with a musical program, from light-hearted operetta to the most poignant of operatic arias.



Scholars Daniel Carison and Zoe Drummond photographed at Government House Melbourne by Martin Maras

## LOOK AFTER YOURSELF

**Amidst the glamour of suits, gowns and grand receptions, the day-to-day life of a professional musician can be tricky to manage. Competition, injury and anxiety are all contestants in the mental game.**

At Melba Opera Trust, we recognise the importance of creating well-rounded artists who are equipped with a variety of strategies for managing the inevitable pressures they'll face as they progress in the industry. To investigate how young singers and pianists can look after their mental health, we spoke with Nicky McCartney,

who consults with musicians on time management, productivity and looking after themselves. Her experience providing life coaching to performers, CEOs, managers and professionals means she has a broad understanding of how best to approach life in the opera fast-lane.

"When performers are working overseas, it's very likely they'll experience loneliness in some form – whether it be through being away from family and friends, or being in an unfamiliar environment. I believe it's incredibly important for young singers to develop an internal structure around the things that are meaningful to them beyond music. These should be enjoyable but also portable, so when moving around

for work, they can take their own self-contained environment with them. It's about creating a routine and a structure that helps them settle on arrival somewhere new. Little things help: going for a run in the morning or cooking a favourite food. I also talk a lot to young singers about juggling relationships, which can cause a lot of anguish for performers. In both instances, I talk about trying to balance rational and emotional responses to problems, and using negotiation skills to help deal with the decisions the industry presents. The competitiveness of the opera world can have a hideous effect on performers' mental health, so I often teach singers about setting aside non-productive

comparisons. This takes a lot of balance between being true to your own self while remaining responsive to the wider world."

Melba Opera Trust Alumna Lauren Fagan is experiencing success in Europe following time spent as a Jette Parker young artist at the Royal Opera House in London:

"The most important thing is keeping a healthy balance between work and the other aspects of life. It's very easy for singing to take over when you're trying to juggle several different roles, concerts and auditions."

For Lauren, exercise and personal networks are particularly useful:

"Exercise is an excellent means to relieve stress and remove tension. It's the way I cope with feelings that overwhelm. It's also important that I speak to family as often as possible, so I don't feel so far away. I'll also often make myself head out to visit friends if I need a break, because when I get back into it, I'm normally in a much better place to continue working. I think it's important for us as young singers to develop a network of people around us – friends, family, teachers and coaches – who we can turn to when in need of support and advice. As singers, we must make ourselves very open to criticism and feedback to improve our art, but our voice is completely

As has become tradition at ‘Meet the Scholars’ events, one of the scholars addressed guests on behalf of their colleagues. Returning recipient Zoe Drummond thanked the Melba community and reflected on her time with Melba Opera Trust:

“It is a wonderful thing to have people on your side in life – to give you advice, cheer you on, guide your way. For three consecutive years, I have had the unwavering support of this amazingly unique organisation, Melba Opera Trust. In such a fierce industry, I feel so fortunate to have been taken under Nellie Melba’s wing. With a Melba scholarship, I have the time, resources, energy and direction to really fine-tune my own singing business.

Though for me, what makes Melba so particularly special is the people. The team in the Melba Opera Trust office are kind, patient and efficient – forever moulding the program with our best interests at heart. The mentors we meet are the best in their fields, always passionate, informed and willing to go above and beyond to help. The patrons and supporters will always put a smile on your face. They are warm, enthusiastic, and genuinely interested in our developmental paths. And of course, our fellow scholars. Each of us is on our own journey, bringing new attributes to the table each year. We learn from one another, inspire one another, and from what I can see, these will be lifelong friendships.

Ultimately, we have all been brought together by a communal love of music and admiration for the complicated beast that is opera. All thanks to Dame Nellie’s phenomenal foresight, the relationships we create knit together to form a strong web of support, from which a successful, confident and accomplished young artist can grow.”

**Kirribilli House, Sydney**

A fortnight later, Melba Opera Trust introduced the 2017 Scholars to our Sydney supporters at our ‘Meet the Scholars’ event at Kirribilli House.

Under the Prime Minister’s Official Establishments Charity Events Program, the Trust was selected as one of only 15 events this year to be hosted at Kirribilli House and the Lodge.

Against a backdrop of expansive gardens and a stunning view, Sydney supporters were greeted with refreshments on the verandah as the sun set over the harbour. The historic house came alive as our scholars, together with Artistic Advisor Sharolyn Kimmorley AM on piano, performed a superb musical program reflective of that given at Government House in Melbourne. For scholar Daniel Carison, “it was enthralling to be able to perform in a building that is so rich with history”.

Following the performance, guests returned to the verandah to enjoy more of De Bortoli’s ‘La Bohème’ range of wines, including the cuvée blanc, which had been launched only three days prior – an appropriate debut for our event partner’s latest addition to this range!

Amy Black, General Manager of Melba Opera Trust, noted that the event at Kirribilli House provided an important opportunity for the Trust to further raise its Sydney profile and supporter base:

“We have been working hard over the past few years to involve Sydney audiences in our activities. This objective is particularly relevant this year, since it’s the first time that the majority of our recipients hail from New South Wales. We offer our sincere thanks to the Prime Minister and Mrs Turnbull for their generous gesture of support in enabling Melba Opera Trust to launch our scholarship year at Kirribilli House.”

The event marked a rewarding finale to our trifecta of scholar functions, capped off by an unexpected display of fireworks courtesy of our friends at Opera Australia and the Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour season!



The scholars in performance at Government House



With Patrons-In-Chief at Government House



With Patron The Hon. Saffron Foster at Coombe



In performance at Government House



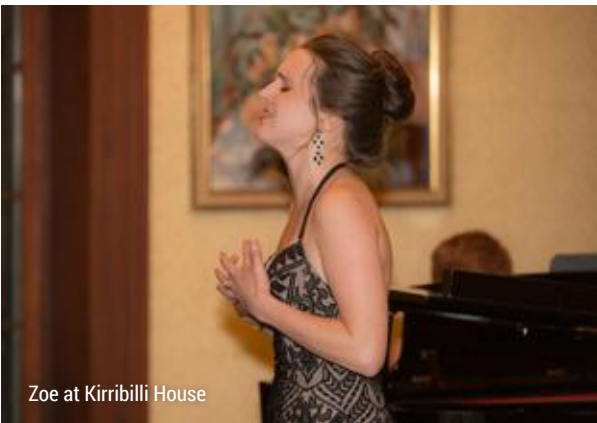
Kirribilli House before the performance



Brownyn performs at Kirribilli House



Daniel at Kirribilli House



Zoe at Kirribilli House

linked to our state of being. If we’re not in a mentally healthy state, there is no way we can sing to the best of our ability.”

Fellow alumna Fiona Jopson echoes Lauren’s thoughts:

“Your network is your lifeline, especially when you need to ask for help, advice or talk about things that are worrying you. For me this is extremely important. My family is my biggest support. I know that I can call them anytime day or night and they will be there, especially when I am away from home most of the year.”

Fiona also stresses the importance of keeping lines of communication

open when it comes to discussing mental health:

“Anxiety and depression are very prevalent amongst performers, because we’re constantly trying to pursue perfection in our craft. We care so much about what we do that the greatest pressure can come from ourselves. Over the years, I have found that if my mind and emotions aren’t in check, or I’m putting unrealistic expectations on myself, both my voice and my performance suffer greatly. It’s good to spend time doing things for yourself like meditation, exercise and breathing exercises. Balance is the key!”



Lauren Fagan photographed at the Saville Club in London by Victoria Cadisch



# MAKING MENTORING POSSIBLE: THE REILLY & LOGIE-SMITH MENTOR ENDOWMENT

Peter Reilly discusses the Mentor Program with coordinator Bruce Raggatt. Image by Danièle Martinie

**It takes a village to raise an opera singer, or so the saying (almost) goes, and this approach underpins Melba Opera Trust's Mentor Program. The sentiment resonates with Board Director, Peter Reilly, particularly as we launch his exciting initiative – the Reilly & Logie-Smith Mentor Endowment. We spoke with Peter about his passion for supporting developing artists and his hopes for the future of the Mentor Program.**

If we continue the adage, it can be said that our village chief for over a decade has been Rob Logie-Smith AM, recently retired Chair. As Melba Opera Trust prepared to farewell Rob late last year, fellow Director Peter Reilly was planning a surprise of his own to mark the milestone.

Peter warmly greeted guests at his home, Astolat, and spoke about the enormous impact that Rob's leadership has had on the Melba program over the last 10 years, supported steadfastly by his wife Sue. To acknowledge their inspiring contribution, Peter announced his \$500,000 pledge to endow a fund in appreciation for Rob and Sue's legacy. The endowment would be aligned to the Mentor Program, an aspect of Melba Opera Trust's training that Rob and Peter have championed since its inception in 2010.

Designed as a contributory fund, Peter hopes that others in the Melba community will be inspired to demonstrate their own appreciation for the achievements made by Rob and Sue by making donations to this Endowment. Peter also sees

the fund as a vehicle for donors who are interested in supporting the Mentor Program specifically, and the opportunities it provides to each Melba scholar.

Peter's business acumen influences his philanthropic activities. A generous arts patron over several decades, he supports organisations that operate on sound business as well as artistic principles. Peter's confidence in the effectiveness of Melba Opera Trust's model was fundamental in his decision to make this significant commitment.

The Mentor Program – the only one of its kind in Australia – is the linchpin of Melba Opera Trust, Peter thinks. He believes that its unique structure and the resources it provides the singers are the secret ingredients to the program's success:

"The key to the program is that it goes beyond singing. It supports the whole singer and helps them to develop, not only professionally but also personally. The scholars are provided with training in operatic skills, as well as business principles

and strategies to maintain their health and wellbeing."

Peter's own long and successful business career in finance, health care and the wine industry underpins his appreciation for the importance of developing the full range of skills:

"An opera singer's life requires so much more than simply being on stage. Anyone involved in business understands that you need to work on ALL aspects of a career to be successful."

The ethos the program has nurtured over its eight years of existence is something Peter is particularly proud of – a community of singers, mentors and supporters all committed to helping the scholars achieve their potential:

"The scholars receive profound input from experts to whom they wouldn't otherwise have access. When you observe these mentors at work, it is obvious they are inspired themselves, and they impart their knowledge with passion and empathy. These mentors have travelled the journey and can fully appreciate the challenges our scholars will face. Their confidence in the program is clearly demonstrated by their return year after year.

The mentors also understand the benefits of longer-term mentor/scholar relationships, and continue to be approachable and supportive

of our scholars beyond their sessions. This offers enormous value for a young artist who is relying on contacts to build their career. It's rewarding when you learn, for example, that after a Melba masterclass with Maestro Guillaume Tourniaire, Daniel Carison was offered an audition with Maestro Tourniaire, which led to Daniel's international debut earlier in the year as Papageno in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* with the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra.

I think there is also strength in the shared engagement that occurs through the Mentor Program. Many opera singers speak of this career as a lonely road. The Melba program balances independent work on career development with group learning in the Mentor Program. This model builds collegiality and encourages healthy industry relationships. It's a self-perpetuating structure where the mentors and scholars learn to look after one another. I really believe today's scholars are tomorrow's mentors."

Peter recognises that the shared engagement extends beyond the scholar/mentor relationships. Supporters are regularly invited to observe mentor activities, so that they can experience first-hand the impact of their support on the progress of the scholars:

"The rewards of observing a mentor session are significant. It's

inspiring to witness the expertise of the mentor and the efforts of the scholar. You can't help but feel involved and engaged; you can see what it really takes to be an aspiring opera singer and exactly where your support is going."

As a Director, Peter has seen the Mentor Program evolve and grow, especially over the last five years. He applauds Rob for the profound impact he has had on this journey, from believing in the efficacy of the approach to encouraging and investing in its continued development.

Finally, Peter acknowledges that the achievements of our alumni are the strongest testament to the quality of our program. He quickly adds that crucial to sustaining this success – the *raison d'être* of Melba Opera Trust – is building a corpus to fund the organisation's activities into perpetuity. Peter's benefaction reflects a deep desire to help ensure the Mentor Program Endowment reaches the \$4 million goal. The Reilly & Logie-Smith Mentor Endowment is our second named fund dedicated to this end, and Peter hopes there will be others to follow.

**If you would like to support the Reilly & Logie-Smith Mentor Endowment, please contact Amy Black on (03) 9944 2100 or [ablack@melbaoperatrust.com.au](mailto:ablack@melbaoperatrust.com.au)**



Alumna Siobhan Stagg with Yvonne Kenny AM



Bronwyn Douglass with Dame Kiri Te Kanawa



Alumnus Nicholas Tolputt with Jonathan Grieves-Smith



Alumnus Michael Petrucci with Deborah Humble



Merlyn Quaife AO with alumnus Christian Gillett

## THOUGHTS ON A LEGACY: ROB LOGIE-SMITH AM

The key factor behind Melba Opera Trust's success has been the team work involving all the Melba people, from directors and management to benefactors and supporters.

Everyone works together to sustain Melba's philosophy that 'a beautiful voice is not enough', and to help these talented young scholars achieve success in the highly competitive opera world. We do this by offering them development opportunities and mentoring through several core programs. Alongside robust and thorough strategic planning from the Board, the insight and capability of our Artistic Advisor, Sharolyn Kimmorley AM, has been critical since Melba Opera Trust's inception. It has been extremely gratifying to be a part of this focused and lean organisation, which is completely independent of government and tertiary funding.

I am particularly proud of the Mentor Program, in which we have acknowledged international industry leaders work with our scholars. The program covers a broad spectrum of ideas and activities – from artistic and vocal development to business, marketing, finance and communication, as well as managing stress and dealing with the pressures that come from being essentially a 'one-person-business'. The achievements of our alumni reflect the effectiveness of this approach.

There is something special about Australian performers – they're resilient and hardworking, and most importantly, willing to listen and learn. Melba Opera Trust performers have a maturity that is a consequence of having to act like professionals from the 'get go'. I think participation in the Mentor Program does reduce the stress involved in pursuing a demanding career, because it provides a level of preparation that doesn't happen anywhere else. We're focused on helping the scholars to establish their own connections and drive their own development.

The journey for me as Chair has been amazing and rewarding. I love watching the scholars' progress through Melba Opera Trust's program, and seeing them achieve their dreams, both locally and internationally. When Peter Reilly announced the Reilly & Logie-Smith Mentor Endowment, my wife Sue and I were stunned and humbled – we were honestly caught by surprise! We remain overwhelmed by Peter's generosity, and are so grateful for this recognition of our commitment to Melba Opera Trust.

**Melba Opera Trust offers its sincere thanks to Rob Logie-Smith AM for his years of service. If you would like to support the Reilly & Logie-Smith Mentor Endowment, please contact Amy Black on (03) 9944 2100 or [ablack@melbaoperatrust.com.au](mailto:ablack@melbaoperatrust.com.au)**



Robert G Logie-Smith AM

## COMING SOON TO THE MENTOR PROGRAM



Masterclass with Australian Heldentenor, Stuart Skelton



Industry Lunch with Sir Andrew Davis, Chief Conductor of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and Principal Conductor of the Lyric Opera of Chicago



Masterclass with celebrated Australian soprano Yvonne Kenny AM



German Repertoire masterclass with international conductor, Johannes Fritzsche

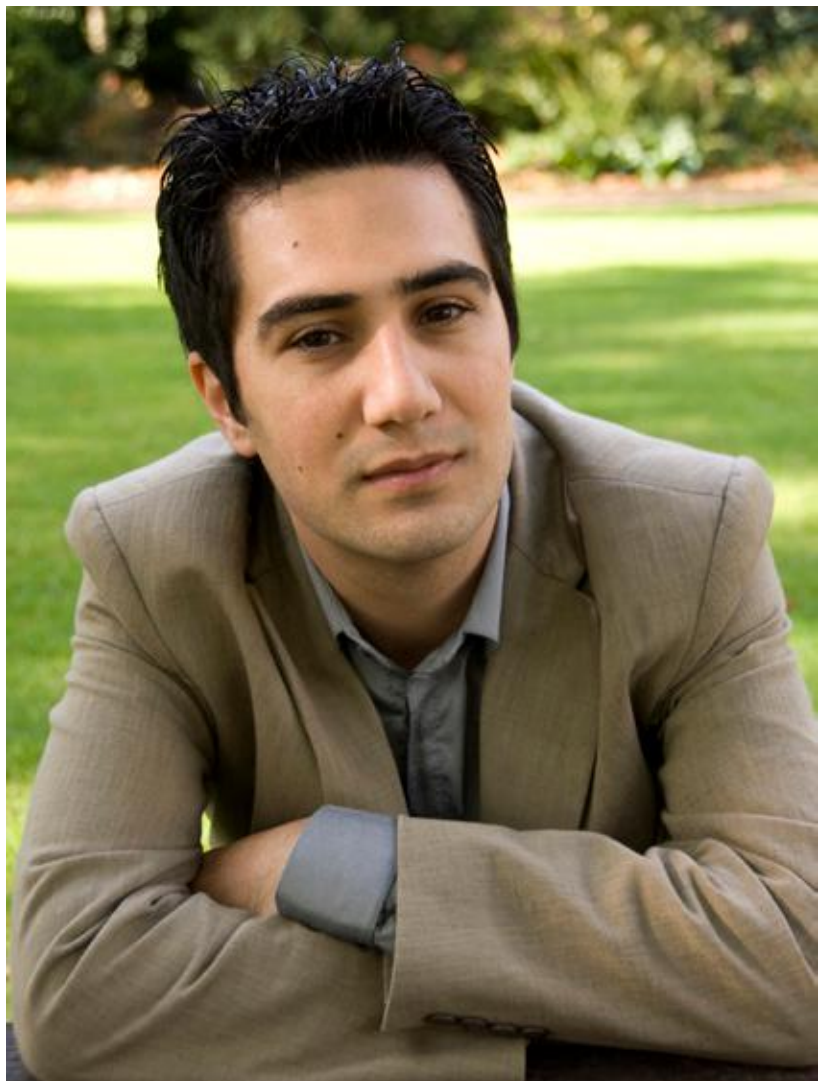


Masterclass with renowned Australian soprano, Emma Matthews

The 2017 Mentor Program is made possible by: Reilly & Logie-Smith Mentor Endowment, John and Elizabeth Wright-Smith, Lady Southey AC, Hamer Family Fund, Tallis Foundation, Stuart Leslie Foundation.



# KEYS TO OPERA



**Inaugural Melba Opera Trust Repetiteur Scholar in 2013, Amir Farid, has recently relocated to New York to work with renowned repetiteurs and to further his solo career. We caught up with him about his art, and about life after Melba.**

**Since your year as the inaugural repetiteur scholar, what have you been up to?**

Since my time as a Melba Opera Trust scholar, I have continued my career in Australia as an all-round pianist. My solo highlights include a recital at the prestigious Al-Hashemi Ballroom in Kuwait. As a chamber musician, I still perform and record with the Benaud Trio, and perform at festivals such as Mona Foma and Musica Viva. As a vocal accompanist, I've done a recital with the ever-popular tenor Ian Bostridge, and with recently-discovered British rising star, baritone James Newby.

Most challenging of all is my recent relocation with my wife Annabelle to New York City. It's a place we absolutely adore, and we're keen to 'give it a go!' Still early days of course, but most recently I had the honour of recording for the Steinway Spirio catalogue in preparation for an upcoming Australian launch of the revolutionary new piano, and I am also looking forward to my Carnegie Hall debut in May.

Another particularly exciting opportunity I've had was meeting renowned repetiteur Brian Zeger, Artistic Director at Juilliard's Marcus Institute for Vocal Arts. Brian has appeared in concert with singers such as Susan Graham, Denyce

Graves and Deborah Voight, and has collaborated with Kathleen Battle and Marilyn Horne, among others. It's a thrill to have met somebody so important in the field.

**Can you tell me what it was like to move from being a solo pianist to working in a collaborative way with instrumentalists and singers? Were there challenges? Technical differences?**

I had the good fortune to experience collaborative pianism from a relatively young age; therefore I didn't really think of them as fundamentally separate disciplines. Of course as I grew older, I came to realise that solo and collaborative playing can, in fact, be worlds apart, and sometimes this does require switching hats. Failure to do so can expose undesirable aspects of one's playing. Throughout my career, the issues that have been most often discussed during the rehearsal process with collaborators are balance and tempo. In working with others, it has always been a challenge for me to acquire a sixth sense for these aspects of my playing – not to mention the subjective nature of these things. Of course, this is why we have rehearsals, but in the real world that luxury is not always there!

Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for pianists to lack chamber music experience, and it can really show in their solo playing. The challenge of collaborative musicianship is the necessity to have an ear attuned to what is going on beyond your own music-making, with the flexibility to react, enhance and complement accordingly. It is all too easy to drill into one's system one way of playing, which usually results in performing in a robotic fashion with little spontaneity and flexibility. Yes, there are key technical differences between solo and collaborative playing, but I find it impractical to think of it that way (I have explored that road!!). At the end of the day, it is a matter of instinct, and trusting your ears, body, mind and heart to provide the correct technique for any given situation. This simply cannot be taught – it must be acquired through first-hand experience.

**What draws you to opera and music for the voice?**

Admittedly, opera is a genre for which I have only recently discovered a deep admiration. In New York, I have been going to the Metropolitan Opera frequently, and am loving the experience of hearing and seeing the best of the best. I guess what draws me to opera above all is the music – this is a genre that has given the greatest of composers the opportunity to reveal some of their most innovative and towering work – Mozart, Puccini, Strauss, Berg and Wagner, to name a few. When it comes to art song, the blend of poetry and music has always been a fascinating concept for me. Like opera, art song has been such a powerful medium of expression for noted composers: Schubert, Wolf, Duparc, Schumann and others. I find it thrilling to study the poetry alone, and then to try to trace the steps of the composer when they ultimately set the same words to music. For me, art song is one of the purest forms of musical expression I have experienced as a pianist.

**What is your process of learning new repertoire?**

I can't say I have a single process for learning. It is usually on a case-by-case basis for me, depending on various factors. For example, if I am asked to prepare a concerto to be performed in one year's time, I will take a different learning approach compared to learning an opera reduction for rehearsals

commencing in a week. In the latter case, I would learn the opera score with reference to a recording (assuming there is one), whereas for a concerto I will likely apply a longer-term learning approach, breaking down the technical, pianistic aspects of the score. But what is common in all my learning of repertoire is to discover the correct 'feel' and 'concept' for the music as early as possible to ensure the correct paths are taken in the longer run. I am also a huge believer in slow practice, and practising without pedal. Thinking orchestrally is something I apply quite frequently in all my learning. This is something my Melba Opera Trust mentor, Sharolyn Kimmorley AM, strongly encourages me to do. Ultimately, I need to remind myself constantly that practice makes permanent! But as long as I have a firm concept of the final result I am aiming for, and as long as I remain disciplined and consistent with my practice and score-studying, the learning process usually takes care of itself.

**How does your understanding of the voice affect your solo repertoire? Has it changed since you began accompanying?**

In a word, yes. I remember when I was young, a prominent Australian pianist who specialised in the keyboard repertoire of Mozart told us in a masterclass that you simply cannot play Mozart's piano sonatas without knowing his operas. It took me some time to understand what he meant, but eventually I decided to take singing lessons, primarily to aid my piano-playing. For me the changes in my playing were profound, especially in terms of phrasing and general singing style. Above all, it made me aware of giving space to musical lines, akin to what a singer must do out of the necessity to breathe. Understanding this concept is one of the most important aspects of being a good accompanist, especially for voice, wind and brass.

**If you could share some pieces of advice with young pianists hoping to get started in accompaniment and repetiteur work, what would they be?**

Just do it! Not only is it good for your overall musicianship, it is also fun to work with others! If you are currently at a school or tertiary institution, there are bound to be instrumentalists and singers of a similar age to you, and one thing all instrumentalists and singers ultimately and frequently need is a pianist. Offer to play for them, or at least have a jam session. Sight-read some music together (also good for you!). Put on some casual performances – soirées, practice run-throughs, anything. The important thing is that you are doing it, and that you enjoy it. As long as you are doing it, you will develop the skills – one thing will always lead to another.

I recall when Bryn Terfel was in Melbourne a few years ago and spoke to Melba Opera Trust scholars. He referred to his student days, when he would want to run through things with a pianist, so he would find one and grab them, go to a practice room, and bash through some repertoire. Everybody benefits from it, even the great Bryn!!

In terms of employment, let instrumental and vocal teachers know about you; let your peers know about you. Look for accompanist databases you can sign up for. Noticeboards at schools and institutions are also effective. If you are active and reliable, the word will spread. Word of mouth is a powerful tool!



## ON A STAGE NEAR YOU

Melba Opera Trust scholars and alumni continue to make waves internationally.

From local opera houses here in Australia to roles in touring productions across Europe, if you're planning a trip, chances are you'll catch one of our own on a stage near you. Here is a selection of recent worldwide highlights from the extended Melba family.

### Covent Garden, London

1. Emily Edmonds as Kate Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*.
2. Sophie Yelland in chorus at Royal Opera House.

### United Kingdom

3. Samuel Sakker as Mario Cavaradossi for the English Touring Company in *Tosca*.

### Poland

4. Alexandra Flood at Opera Krakowska.

### Somewhere in the Mediterranean

5. Lauren Fagan and Sharolyn Kimmorley AM on the Mediterranean Opera and Music Cruise with Renaissance Tours.

### Wales

6. Lauren Fagan as Musetta in *La Bohème* at Welsh National Opera.
7. Nathan Lay studying at Welsh International Academy of Voice.

### Lyon, France

8. Brenton Spiteri at Opéra de Lyon.

### Modena, Italy

9. Robert Barbaro at the Pavarotti Theatre.

### Bolzano, Italy

10. Alexandra Flood is in *West Side Story* as Maria in Bolzano.

### Berlin, Germany

11. Siobhan Stagg and Samuel Dale Johnson at the Deutsche Oper Berlin.

### Australia

12. Nicholas Tolputt in Barrie Kosky's *Saul* for the Adelaide Festival (Adelaide).

13. Stacey Alleaume as Violetta in Opera Australia's *La Traviata* (Sydney).

14. Zoe Drummond, Shakira Tsindos, Timothy Newton and Jacqueline Porter in Victorian Opera's *Sleeping Beauty* (Melbourne).

### Malaysia

15. Daniel Carison as Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte* with the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra.

Samuel Sakker in English Touring Opera's production of *Tosca*. Photo by Richard Hubert Smith

### United States

16. Rebecca Gulinello studying at Academy of Vocal Arts, Philadelphia.
17. Morgan Balfour studying at San Francisco Conservatory of Music.
18. Janet Todd at Manhattan School of Music.

## THE ART OF BUSINESS

Creating a successful and sustainable career in the industry requires knowledge of a broad range of business and development skills. We asked current scholar Daniel Carison and alumnus Jeremy Kleeman to reflect on what they have learnt about the non-singing aspects of their craft.

### Jeremy, on Mindfulness and Balancing the Business of Singing

I have been singing freelance for just over six years, and my experience has been that the balance between singing and running a business is a nuanced one. If we look at opera-singing as a business, it follows that the product we are selling is our

ability to deliver a classically-sung performance. In the early stages of a career, the main priority ought to be investing in improving our product – upskilling in all the obvious ways, but also looking left-field. Something I'm finding very useful at the moment is mindfulness meditation. Not only does it help with relaxation, but it also offers insights into some of my bigger questions – Why do I sing? Why do I perform? What does a successful career really mean to me? – a perspective that is very useful when it comes to the next step: selling our product.

Here, I believe it is useful to think of the music industry as a community of people who share a common passion for incredible music. When we associate with, perform with, and audition for others in the industry with the intention of sharing that love for music, rather than 'building the network', I find we are more likely to foster genuine relationships and – as an added bonus – build our network. On a similar note, sometimes lucrative offers are made that involve singing repertoire that is simply not appropriate for us. The paradox is that in rejecting

these offers and letting the making of great music be the goal, not only do we set ourselves up to make better music, but we increase the likelihood of making more money in the long run. (But beware the flip-side: remember your worth and do not let others take advantage of your love for music.) In the end, as professional artists, we obviously need to focus on making good music, but also on running a successful business. Finding this balance can be challenging, but a good pointer in the right direction is regularly asking ourselves: Am I currently acting out of my love for singing or out of my fear of not being a success?

### Daniel, on Social Media and Networking

While the repertoire or the science behind great singing may not have changed a great deal in recent times, the classical music industry has undergone a significant transformation. Now, more than ever, I believe it is important for musicians and singers to think of themselves not only as developing artists, but as developing businesses. We must consider ourselves as

businesses that are constantly curating every single facet of the brand to ensure that a marketable product is being produced. In simple terms, musicians must take responsibility for their own presence in the industry, as they would take responsibility for their practice and development on any given instrument. After all, no-one else is going to do it for you!

I strongly believe it is imperative for singers, pianists, and frankly all artists, to be developing their business skills. We must spend a lot of time in the rehearsal room, and because of that it is easy for these other skills to fall by the wayside. But unfortunately, even the greatest musician in the world will not be successful if they fail to promote themselves and their business. This rings especially true for musicians who are yet to obtain management, and are responsible not only for handling their media presence and making themselves known, but also for dealing with other responsibilities such as negotiating contracts, interviews, booking gigs, arranging auditions, updating media content – the list goes on.

As far as networking is concerned, being able to build and foster strong relationships is an invaluable asset to any musician. They must also demonstrate that they are worth the investment. From an artistic point of view, the process isn't so different. When an artist auditions for an orchestra or opera company, they are demonstrating that they constitute a worthy investment, and that with the right support, they will produce great results. Being able to network well is a lot like being able to negotiate opening and closing doors – the better you become at establishing and maintaining vital relationships, the more doors will open for you.

Daniel Carison as Papageno in Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra's *The Magic Flute*

# WHAT'S IN A GIG?

There is more to delivering a freelance performance than meets the eye, but our Melba Artists performance program ensures our scholars are well prepared. Alumna Shakira Tsindos provides an insight into the process:

## 1. The call

The first step to performing at a private event is 'getting the call'. It sounds quite simple, but to make sure you are front of mind relies on clients knowing and trusting you as a performer. This all comes down to promotion, marketing and industry relationships (not to mention a proven track record!)

## 2. Programming

With Melba, the call will come from Melba Artists Manager, Jo Beaumont, with repertoire programming provided by Artistic Advisor Sharolyn Kimmorley AM. Program choice is one of the most important considerations for the event. The music can determine how well an audience will engage with the performance, and this is often based on their exposure to opera. Sometimes the flavour of the performance also informs the repertoire. A recent performance I gave was at Coombe – the Melba Estate, so we selected some signature pieces from Melba's own repertoire.

## 3. The Rehearsal

The next step is to organise a rehearsal with the associate artists. As some events have a short lead time, it's very important to plan an efficient rehearsal, which relies on having our repertoire fully prepared.

This is also our chance to work out the potential for error within our musical program, and to spend some time practising those trickier musical moments. If the program includes an ensemble piece (a duet or trio) that requires staging, movement and interaction with each other, then we must devote some of this rehearsal time to discussing our plan of action and to practising these movements.

## 4. Performance Ready

The occasion typically informs what we should wear, from floor-length evening gowns to elegant afternoon dresses. During a styling session last year, Suzanne Dekyvere advised that we should always be one dress level above the guests – i.e., if the audience is wearing lounge suit, then we should present 'black tie'.

I like to start a performance day being active, preferably with a yoga class. It ensures that my body and mind are focused for the day ahead, without exhausting me before the performance. This carries through to what I eat: healthy nourishing foods that release energy slowly.

On the day of a performance, I take my time to warm up with vocal exercises and scales. Then I like to sing through all the programmed music to ensure that the pieces are secure in my voice. To avoid vocal fatigue, I'm always careful not to over-sing on this day.

Then comes the fun: hair and make-up. Now these are the moments when I feel my male colleagues really do have the upper hand! Fortunately, I enjoy the routine and I think I have it down to a fine art, accomplishing both in the record time of one hour. Then comes the supply check-list: dress, shoes, copy of the music, as well as make-up kit, hair straightener and hairspray for final touches at the venue.

Time to go! Punctuality and reliability are extremely important in this industry. I always allow plenty of time to get there, and importantly, to compose myself before the performance.

## 5. Arriving at the Venue

We're often called at least two hours before a performance for a sound check. That may appear to be a long time, but guests frequently arrive much earlier than the scheduled start, so the sound check/rehearsal needs to be finished. It's often the first time we have performed at the venue, so we also have to familiarise ourselves with the acoustics and performance space. If I am singing any interactive pieces, such as the sensual 'Habanera' from Bizet's *Carmen*, I like to walk around the space (as I would in the performance) to see if I still have a connection with the pianist.

With the sound check completed, we disappear to the artists' 'Green Room', a dedicated space set aside for performers to ready themselves, change into formal wear, relax and get in the zone. Some quiet time allows me and my associate artists to discuss our entries, exits and introductions!



## 6. The Performance

Time to put our preparation into practice! Within the first 30 seconds, we can gauge how receptive the audience is, and if there is any way we can tailor the performance to help them feel more comfortable. This could be as simple as clearly introducing and describing each piece (we usually perform in Italian, French or German), or it could be interacting more closely with the audience by moving around the room.

We may also need to adjust our performance if the acoustic in the room has changed now that it has an audience. Of course, sometimes we can't really alter anything – and that is when we must rely on technique and performance skills! Finally, after conversations with a few audience members, the excitement of the performance begins to subside, and it's time to head home for some rest. After all, we often have to do it all again tomorrow!

If you would like Melba Artists to perform for your next occasion, visit: [www.melbaoperatrust.com.au/book-our-singers](http://www.melbaoperatrust.com.au/book-our-singers) or call (03) 9944 2100.



# INSIGHTS FROM A MENTOR

**A critical aspect of the Melba Opera Trust program is encouraging our scholars to have meaningful and candid industry conversations with our Mentors. Georgia Hall seized the opportunity to learn all she could from Italian soprano Daria Masiero through an insightful interview.**

**At what point in your training did you know you would be singing roles like Tosca and Turandot?**

Tosca has been my dream since I was a child, and as soon as I felt it was the right time to sing it, I started to learn the role. My actual debut came about 10 years into my career – you need stage experience AND life experience if you want to sing a role like Tosca. For Turandot, I didn't know whether I was ready to take it on. It was Opera Australia's Artistic Director Lyndon Terracini who encouraged me to sing it in Sydney. After long chats with my teacher and agent, and some significant study, I decided to accept the offer.

**Were there any arias or roles that helped you on your way to singing more dramatic repertoire, and how did you know you were ready for this?**

I always wanted to sing dramatic repertoire, but I forced myself to sing lighter repertoire when I was young, to help preserve my voice for as long as possible (and this is what I suggest to my students all the time!) After 10 years of professional singing, I began to learn some more dramatic/lyric roles, and when I felt I could sing them easily, I knew it was the right time to start performing them. Your voice is your body, and as you mature, you will naturally feel the need to sing more dramatic roles that allow you to grow further.

**I saw your incredible performance in the role of Turandot in Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour last year. I was so impressed that as you were being lowered down from the tower, the shaky platform didn't seem to affect your singing at all! How do you deal with challenging staging or set situations like this?**

I have to be courageous and professional! Turandot was a particularly challenging situation,

because you don't often have to sing outside the theatre on top of a tower! When I'm singing, I try and be completely involved in the character, and after years of experience, I now have the ability to isolate myself from everything around me.

**I often find myself picking up other people's coughs and colds when flying. How do you keep yourself healthy when travelling?**

I try very hard not to be a slave to my job, and I think that's become the secret to remaining healthy, both mentally and physically.

**Do you have any advice for young opera singers who are interested in performing in Italy?**

My advice is to come to Italy when you know a little bit of Italian, and when your vocal technique is almost right – that's when you'll get the most out of it. Then you could try some of the important competitions and masterclasses there.

**Tell us about one of your favourite moments as a singer.**

Overall, the best moment is when you receive the applause from the audience after a performance! This makes up for all the sacrifices, the hardships, the difficulties of study and the distance from family. A really 'magic moment' for me though, was when, as a really young singer, I had the opportunity to perform with José Carreras and Plácido Domingo.

**Now that you are an Australian resident, is there something you can't wait to do when you go to Italy after a long period away?**

I know this will make you smile! As soon as I arrive home I always eat Prosciutto Crudo di Parma! I miss it so much when I am in Australia. Also, if I don't have to get straight back into work, I love to spend time with my family and friends.



# LETTER FROM ABROAD: NATHAN LAY

THURSDAY, APRIL 27 2017

**Early in 2016, I was very fortunate to win the Australian International Opera Award, which has allowed me to travel to Cardiff, Wales to work with the highly acclaimed international tenor, Dennis O'Neill CBE at the Wales International Academy of Voice. Three other Melba alumni have been awarded this prize in the past - Siobhan Stagg, Panayiota Kalatzis and Matthew Reardon.**

As I write, I'm actually sitting in a café enjoying a tasty Melbourne coffee - something I have sorely missed whilst being overseas! I have been in Australia for a few weeks leading up to Anzac Day to promote a new album I am heavily featured on titled 'Remembrance'. Conveniently, this three-week period I've been in Australia lined up perfectly with the Academy's mid-term break. Thankfully, I haven't missed out on anything! I'll be heading back to the UK tomorrow to finish off the final couple of months of the course, which will ultimately award me with an M.A. in Advanced Vocal Studies.

'Remembrance' has been in the pipeline for over a year now, so it has been hard to keep a lid on it! It is the very first album to be released on the new domestic Sony Masterworks label through Sony Music Australia, and has been a mammoth effort to get over the line. I perform 10 songs on the album that are primarily from the World War 1 era, but I also had the chance to record the more recent, and very famous Eric Bogle song 'And The Band Played Waltzing Matilda'. It was a really enjoyable experience to record an album consisting of various styles of music, as it allowed me to explore another side of my voice, whilst still staying true to my roots. Versatility is certainly becoming a more and more important trait in order to sustain a professional singing career.

Once I arrive back in the UK in a couple of days, I'll be commencing my final term, and my 7th month at the Wales International Academy of Voice - time is really flying! It has been a very busy and rewarding time, with many wonderful opportunities. My wife Alex relocated to the UK with me, and it has been great to share this experience with her.

The course began on the 3rd of October, but we arrived in London on the 27th of September to allow some time to get organised. After landing at Heathrow, Alex and I got on the train and went straight to Cardiff. We had booked an Airbnb for the first couple of weeks to provide us some time to look around for a place of our own. It was about a 25 minute walk from WIAV, so did the trick for the time being. After about a week of looking at different places, we decided on an apartment that is right in the centre of Cardiff, and only a 5 minute walk to WIAV. It couldn't really be more convenient, and we are very comfortable and happy there.

Day 1 at WIAV was a masterclass with Dennis. Everyone in this year's intake had to perform a piece of their choice, and the masterclass ran from 10am - 5pm with a 1 hour break for lunch. It was a great way for everyone to break the ice and get to know each other.

A normal week at WIAV consists of one or two lessons with Dennis, one

lesson with Nuccia Focile (a resident teacher at WIAV, and a beautiful soprano from Italy), a coaching with the Head of Music Jane Samuel, and occasional coachings with guests. Some of the regular guests I have coached with so far include Gareth Jones (a conductor who occasionally works for WNO), Joyce Fieldsend (a coach I've worked with before, who is based in Venice), French coach Pierre Maurice Barlier, and German coach Jacqueline Pischorn. I've also had the opportunity to work with a Russian coach for the first time. This has been very useful, as there are many great Russian songs and arias for the baritone voice.

I am thoroughly enjoying my lessons with Dennis. He is a fantastic teacher, and an excellent vocal technician. He has a great way of diagnosing the cause of any vocal weaknesses you may be experiencing, and is always full of ideas as to how to overcome them.

Each term, WIAV invites a few people to come and take masterclasses over the course of a couple of days. This is great, because you often get the chance to work with them twice, which helps to solidify things that you were working on the previous day. In term 1 we had Welsh mezzo Della Jones come in. She was fantastic, and everyone liked working with her so much that we requested she come back to the Academy to give us some private lessons. The same thing happened after we had a masterclass with Susan Bullock, and the Academy had her come back in to work with us individually as well. It's great that WIAV are able to cater to our needs in this way.

WIAV have offered me a considerable number of external gigs, which has been a wonderful way to see some beautiful venues, and to meet other people in the industry. One of these engagements was in Swansea, which is about a 1 hour drive from Cardiff.

Jane Samuel - the Head of Music - drove me, a mezzo, and a soprano up to Swansea to do the concert, which was a part of the Swansea Festival. It was my first professional concert in Wales, so quite a memorable day. The concert was held in Brangwyn Hall, which was stunning.

As a part of the course, WIAV organises performance opportunities for us. One of these concerts was held at beautiful church in London - St. Paul's Covent Garden. We performed ensembles and arias as a part of the church's lunchtime concert series.

London is only a couple of hours on the train from Cardiff, so I've been on quite a number of trips. The Tait Memorial Trust is based in London, and I recently performed in a concert for them at the beautiful Leighton House. Part of my AIOA scholarship is funded by the Tait Trust, so it was great to have the opportunity to meet everyone, and to meet some other Australians based in London. Also in London, I've had some lessons with Raymond Connell, and seen a few shows. To name a couple, I saw *The Nose* at The Royal Opera House, and the hugely popular musical *The Book of Mormon*.

In November, Fiona Jopson came to Cardiff from London to visit all of us Aussies at WIAV - there are 5 Aussies here believe it or not! We all went to Cardiff's Winter Wonderland, and rode on the ferris wheel and dodgem cars. It was great to catch up with her!

2017 started with a concert on New Year's Day with Head of Music Jane Samuel, and Shanul Sharma. We performed a great set of popular opera, through to music theatre, and we had a large audience of a few hundred people in attendance. A great way to start the year!

In January, I went to see the Australian guitar legend, Tommy Emmanuel at St David's Hall in

Cardiff (where the Singer of the World competition is held). He has been an idol of mine since I was very young, and I had the opportunity to meet him after the show!

Every term, Dame Kiri Te Kanawa comes in for a masterclass. She and Dennis are very close, and Kiri is a great supporter of WIAV. I've also had the privilege of coaching privately with Richard Bonyng, which was a great experience. I participated in a masterclass with him a few years ago in Melbourne, but it was great to work with him one-on-one on this occasion.

Once I finish up my final term of the course in mid-June, I'll be heading to Italy for a couple of weeks before making my way home to Australia. The Acclaim Awards have awarded me an Ambassadorial Scholarship, and I'm looking forward to working with some wonderful Italian teachers and coaches.

A week after I return to Melbourne, I'll be travelling to Sydney for a couple of months to start production rehearsals of Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* with Sydney Chamber Opera. I'm playing the role of Tarquinius, which will be quite a dark role to take on. I'm very excited about it, and am looking forward to working with some wonderful Australian artists.

I am very grateful to Melba Opera Trust for the scholarship I received in 2011. This support really helped me kick start my career as a professional singer.

I'll see you all in a few months!

Best wishes,

Nathan

**Nathan was the inaugural recipient of the John and Elizabeth Wright-Smith Scholarship in 2011.**



# NIGHTS AT THE OPERA

Following the success of *Nellie In Her Own Write*, Melba Opera Trust once again approached eminent Australian pianist (and writer extraordinaire), Stephen McIntyre AM, to commission another production.

*Nights at the Opera* provides Melba Artists audiences with an evening of informative entertainment featuring quirky anecdotes and operatic performance.

*Nellie In Her Own Write*, which highlighted some of the best and lesser-known moments of Dame Nellie Melba's life, inspired Stephen to expand that idea to the broader world of opera. Through a series of introductions to popular arias, Stephen narrates familiar, unfamiliar, and often amusing tales about performances, singing and staging. "The programs the singers take part in across the year cover a lot of different repertoire", says Stephen, "so I have tried to write a broad range of introductions to suit all

kinds choices of songs and arias." The research itself "was great fun" for Stephen, and uncovered an array of gems. To avoid giving away any of the performance treats, we asked Stephen to offer a story that hasn't yet made it into a program:

"One of my personal favourites happened some years ago in a performance of Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*. In the farmyard scene, there were several real chooks who usually stayed well upstage where the food was. On this occasion, however, the food had been

forgotten and the chooks came and took over the front of the stage searching for something to eat, completely stealing the limelight from the singers. One even ended up on top of a horn player in the orchestral pit!"

Melba Artists' new show has already had several outings, first at the stunning Beleura House and Garden in Mornington, then at 'Opera in the Arena' in the Yarra Valley – the biannual event of benefactors John and Liz Wright-Smith – and most

recently for Bayside Council as part of their 'Resonance' Concert Series.

A performance at the Melbourne Recital Centre on 18 July this year will provide a further opportunity for the Melba community to attend this enjoyable production and to catch up with some alumni. Current scholar Daniel Carison will be joined by now internationally-based singers Morgan Balfour and Matthew Reardon. We hope to see you there!

More information available at [www.melbaoperatrust.com.au](http://www.melbaoperatrust.com.au)

## SUPPORTERS OF MELBA OPERA TRUST

### PATRONS-IN-CHIEF

The Hon. Linda Dessau AM, Governor of Victoria & His Honour Judge Anthony Howard

### FOUNDING PATRONS

Mary-Jane Joscelyne  
The late Pamela, Lady Vestey

### HONORARY PATRON

The Hon. Saffron Foster

### IMPRESARIO (\$500,000 and above)

Joseph Sambrook & Mary-Jane Gething  
John & Elizabeth Wright-Smith

### PATRON (\$250,000 – \$499,999)

Warwick & Paulette Bisley

### GRAND CIRCLE (\$100,000 – \$249,999)

Diana Gibson AO  
Roz Zalewski & Jeremy Ruskin QC

### DRESS CIRCLE (\$50,000 – \$99,999)

Charles Allen AO & Jocelyn Allen  
Janet Calvert-Jones AO & John Calvert-Jones AM  
Joseph Diflo  
The late Lady April Hamer  
Peter Laver AM & Anne Laver  
Peter Reilly & Linton Soderholm  
Andrew Sisson

### GALLERY CIRCLE (\$25,000 – \$49,999)

Louise Gourlay OAM  
Peter Griffin AM & Terry Swann  
Peter Hansen OAM & Neroli Hansen  
Ian & Dale Johnson  
Anonymous (1)

### BALCONY CIRCLE (\$10,000 – \$24,999)

The late Betty Amsden AO  
James & Judith Beattie  
Peter & Jan Clark  
Ernest Dawes OBE & Nola Dawes  
Val Diamond & John Funder AC  
Rose Downer & John Downer AM  
Frank & Judith Firkin  
Nance Grant AM MBE & Ian Harris  
Hans & Petra Henkell  
David Jones  
Robert G Logie-Smith AM & Sue Logie-Smith  
Patricia McKenzie  
Rosie McLeish & the late Dr Jack McLeish  
The Hon. Justice John & Judith Middleton  
Tom & Ruth O'Dea  
Lady Potter AC DLJ  
Kate & Stephen Sheldermine  
Lady Southey AC  
Jennifer & David Sutherland  
Michael Wheelahan SC & Cathryn Wheelahan

### MAESTRO CIRCLE (\$5,000 – \$9,999)

Jim Allen OAM  
Judy Allen  
Chris Arnold and Margot Costanzo  
The late John Bate OAM & Liz Bate  
Dr Dianne & Lino Bresciani, Youth Music Foundation of Australia  
Elizabeth Brown  
Sandy Clark & Marie McDonald  
Catherine & Mark Clisby  
Ann Cole  
David Curtain QC & Sally Curtain  
Jane Douglass AM  
The late Lorraine Elliot AM & John Kiely  
Dr Helen Ferguson  
Catherine Freeman  
Peter & Elizabeth Goodman  
The Hon. Peter Heerey AM QC & Sally Heerey  
Gill & Giles Hunt  
Mary-Jane Joscelyne  
Anne & Dr Milan Kantor  
Judge Kathryn Kings  
Dr Peter A Kingsbury  
Elizabeth Lithgow  
Mary-Ruth & Peter McLennan  
Susan Morgan  
The late Dame Elisabeth Murdoch AC DBE  
Graeme Parncutt  
The late Nancy Peterson and daughter, Dale  
Michael Robinson AO & Judith Robinson  
Margot & Warwick Ross  
Aubrey Schrader  
Mr Phillip and Mrs Sue Schudmak  
Graham Sellars-Jones  
Richard Stanley QC & Sue Stanley  
Gillian Storey  
Dr Michael Troy  
Prof Mel & Nina Waters  
Paul Worthington  
Anonymous (1)

### MELBA CIRCLE (\$1,000 – \$4,999)

C A Alston  
Dr Patricia Armstrong-Grant OBE  
Philip Bacon AM  
The Hon. Justice David Beach & Marea Beach  
Judy & Michael Begg  
Marc Besen AC & Eva Besen AO  
Ann Blainey  
Caroline Brain  
Sarah Brenan  
Prof Henry & Jenny Burger  
The Hon. Justice David Byrne & Jenni Harris  
Adrienne & the late Ross Cameron  
Loreen & John S Chambers  
Mrs Elizabeth Chernov

Janet & John Clark AM  
Jillian Cobcroft  
Kevin & Margaret Collecutt  
Jim Cousins AO & Libby Cousins  
Caroline & Glenn Crane  
Mr John Craven  
Michael J Crouch AO & Shaneen Crouch  
Rosie & the late Dr Peter Cunningham  
Arthur Day AM & Hilary Day  
Joan Darling  
Ros & John Dowling  
Catherine Elder  
David Elder  
Terry & Linda Elliott  
Jack & Vivien Fajgenbaum  
William J Forrest AM  
The Hon. Saffron Foster  
Peter Garnick  
Fleur Gibbs  
John & Jo Grigg  
Anne & Dr Ms K H Grinberg  
Elisabeth Guinness  
Hugh Hallard  
Alastair Hamer  
Christopher Hamer  
Julia Hamer  
Dr Anne Hamilton  
Margaret & Trevor Holborow  
Dr Sam & Margaret Howes  
Darvell Hutchinson AM & Mrs Barbara Hutchinson  
Chrissy Hughes  
Alison Hyams  
Phillip D Isaacs OAM & Susie Gibbons  
Cynthia Jackson AM  
Barry & Prue Johnson  
Lewis & Paula Johnson  
William MP Jones  
Mr & Mrs George & Grace Kass  
Bryan Keon-Cohen AM QC & June Keon-Cohen  
Suzanne Kirkham  
Anthony Knight OAM & Beverley Knight  
Peter Kolliner OAM & Barbara Kolliner  
Lynne Landy & John Landy AC MBE  
Joy Laurence  
The late Barbara Lewis  
John & Erin Lidgerwood  
Julie & Athol Lidgett  
Janet Limb  
Dr Bruce & Dianne Livett  
Colin Lovitt QC  
Noreen Maher  
Peter Mander & Walter van Nieuwkuyk  
Suzanne Maple-Brown  
David & Jane Martin

The late John McArdle QC  
Denys & Ingeborg McCullough  
Ian McDonald  
Ann & the late Ian McFarling  
Dr Sue McNicol QC  
Ross McPherson  
Fiona Menzies  
Dr Bryan & Debora Mendelson  
James Mighell SC  
Margaret & Patrick Mills  
Diane & Tim Morris  
Dr Kenneth Muirden AO & Lesley Muirden  
Margaret Nevett  
Geoffrey Norris  
Stephen O'Meara & Kate Galvin  
Sarah Patterson  
Joan Pigdon  
Roger & Catherine Poole  
Joy Potter  
Clare & David Pullar  
Tony & Elizabeth Rayward  
Kenneth R Reed AM  
Alexander & Rosemary Roche  
Elizabeth & Tom Romanowski  
Margaret S Ross AM  
The late Pamela Ruskin  
Mr Nick Ruskin & Ms Annette Shiell  
Dr David Scott AM & Dr Lyndal Scott  
Judge Melanie Sloss SC  
Prof Richard Smallwood AO & Carol Smallwood  
Smedley Family  
John E Smith  
Russell & Margaret Smith  
John & Jo Strutt  
Hugh & Elizabeth Taylor  
Rob & Kyrenia Thomas  
Rob & Ruth Thomas  
Dr George Tippet  
Sylvia Urbach  
Helen Woods & Lewis Rowell  
Barbara Yeoh AM  
Anonymous (8)

### FRIENDS CIRCLE (All gifts up to \$999)

Melba Opera Trust also appreciates the generosity of over 200 supporters in our Friends Circle.

### MELBA'S WILL BEQUEST CIRCLE

Dr Patricia Armstrong-Grant OBE  
Michael Bertram  
Mary Ryllis Clark  
Garry A Fehring  
Mary-Jane Joscelyne  
Ann McFarling  
John E Smith  
Anonymous (1)

### Philanthropic Partners



- Opus 50 Charitable Trust
- Cochrane Schofield Fund
- Gwenda & John Lloyd Memorial Scholarship Fund
- The Ian Potter Foundation

### Mentor Program made possible by:



- John and Elizabeth Wright-Smith
- Reilly & Logie Smith Mentor Endowment
- Lady Southey AC
- Hamer Family Fund
- Tallis Foundation
- Stuart Leslie Foundation

### Professional Partners



### Events & Accommodation Partners



Recognised support as of May 2017