

THE MELBA

MAGAZINE OF MELBA OPERA TRUST

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MELBA ARTISTS: BEYOND THE STAGE
SPORT AND OPERA: THE PARALLELS
WELCOMING AN INTERNATIONAL AWARD

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About Melba Opera Trust

Melba Opera Trust delivers Australia’s premier opera development program, built on Dame Nellie Melba’s philosophy that ‘a beautiful voice is not enough’. Launched by a bequest in Melba’s will and continued today by a community of dedicated donors, the Melba Program prepares a new generation of exceptional Australian artists for opera’s world stage.

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Melba Opera Trust acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work and we pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

Note from the Chief Executive Officer

Welcome to the Winter Edition of *The Melba*. This bi-annual publication provides the opportunity to share artist and alumni insights, to showcase the Melba community and to shine a spotlight on different aspects of our day-to-day activities.

Melba’s ethos is to bring together exceptional young artists, world class professionals and visionary supporters to prepare a new generation of Australian opera singers and répétiteurs for success on the global stage. It’s a recurring theme in the articles to follow, and I remain ever grateful for the village that helps to make Melba’s work possible.

Our niche approach is to provide high quality, tailored education to a small number of extremely talented artists who we believe have the potential to pursue a thriving career in opera.

It seems to be working. Over thirteen years we have provided scholarships to 61 talented artists and, after completing the Melba Program, 90% are now performing professionally around Australia and internationally. A further 6% are working in aligned industries such as teaching, arts management and speech pathology.

These results reaffirm for me that Melba is meeting a very real need in the journey of young opera singers and répétiteurs in this country and – most importantly – our artists are succeeding in their chosen fields. That’s an achievement we can all feel proud of.

It’s been a busy start to 2023, balancing our program schedule with an office move and transitioning the Alastair Jackson International Opera Award. We’re also very excited to be preparing

for our inaugural international study tour, made possible through a very generous grant from the Prior Family Foundation.

The tour has been designed as an immersive and experiential four-week learning program and has been offered to artists in their second year of the Melba Program: Tom Nicholson, Samantha Hargreaves, James Emerson and Natalie Grimmatt.

We begin in London on 20 July with a week of structured workshops, coaching, seminars and performances involving The Royal Opera, Glyndebourne Festival and Opera Holland Park. From there the artists will travel to their European destinations of choice for intensive language study, coaching and audition preparation.

Serendipitously, the tour coincides with several alumni performances in the UK including Siobhan Stagg as Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro* (The Royal Opera), Lauren Fagan as Helena, Samuel Dale Johnson as Demetrius and Cleo Lee-McGowan covering Tytania in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, as well as Jade Moffat as Sister Mathilde and Georgia Melville as Sister Claire in *Dialogues of the Carmelites* (both part of the Glyndebourne Festival), to name a few. Current artists will be taking every opportunity to cheer on their fellow Melba colleagues and we’re looking forward to hosting our second London-based alumni event.

You can imagine the impact this tour will have on the artists: the connections, the international experience, the pathways and the skill development are invaluable. It brings into focus how extraordinary gifts of philanthropy have the power to enrich a life and, in this case, an artform.



Amy Black, Chief Executive Officer

As with most small arts-education providers, philanthropy is critical to the delivery of our annual Melba Program. Investing in any elite training is expensive, and every donation that we receive, no matter the size, helps us to offer life-changing opportunities to our artists. We also apply a longer-term lens to philanthropy, building a capital endowment which will eventually sustain the activity into the future through perpetual scholarships, program endowments and generous bequests.

Through her bequest, Dame Nellie Melba bestowed upon us a responsibility to establish a scholarship ‘in the hope that another Melba may arise’. We are now in the business of helping young, talented people realise their potential and achieve their goals.

We invite you to join us by supporting this year’s program with a tax-deductible donation. If you have already made a gift, *thank you* for the impact your donation is having on our 2023 Melba Artists.

I hope you enjoy this edition of *The Melba*.



A dedication to Ann Catriona McFarling (Annie)

This edition of *The Melba* is dedicated to our friend Annie McFarling.

Annie was an important and much loved member of the Melba community. Her spirit, humour, generosity and courage made an enormous impact on the lives of many, not only those who were honoured by her scholarship, but on all who crossed her path. We send our heartfelt condolences to her family and friends.

Annie is pictured here with the current recipient of the Annie McFarling Opera Scholarship, Oliver Heuzenroeder. Past recipients include Fleuranne Brockway, Tessa Hayward, Rebecca Hart, Katherine Allen and Nathan Breeze.

Bright future for a coveted award



Far left: Georgia Melville
Image: Eve Wilson
Left: Alastair Jackson receives letter of appreciation from Royal College of Music
Right L–R: William Cowan, Kate Shelmardine and Alastair Jackson

The Alastair Jackson International Opera Award, one of the most coveted opera scholarships in Australia, is now under the auspices of Melba Opera Trust.

Announced late last year, the transition is the result of months of cooperation between the management and boards of both organisations, and the future is looking bright.

‘This Award is an important and complementary extension to the work we are undertaking through the Melba Program, and we’re delighted to be able to perpetuate this opportunity for Australian and New Zealand artists’, says Melba Chair Kate Shelmardine.

The Award has a long and successful history, having funded the musical development of more than 40 recipients, with the most recent recipient being Sydney soprano Georgia Melville. Georgia, also an alumna of the Melba Program, will join the Royal College of Music Opera Studio in September this year.

Valued at over \$90,000 annually, the scholarship will fund her two years of study at the college, providing full tuition along with travel and living expenses.

‘Joining the Royal College of Music Opera Studio is the best possible preparation for a career in opera, and I look forward to making the most of this life-changing opportunity’, says Georgia.

The financial future of the Award has been secured through the visionary philanthropy of Dr Alastair Jackson AM, who has pledged annual funding and an extraordinary \$3 million bequest, which will ensure the Award continues in perpetuity.

Dr Jackson says, ‘The Royal College of Music Opera Studio has some of the world’s greatest singers as coaches and

mentors. As well as vocal technique and performance, they recognise and develop the singers’ individuality. An incredibly high percentage of their graduates go on to establish fine careers.’

He continues, ‘I’m very impressed with Georgia Melville and predict a great future for her.’

Georgia’s time in the Melba Program prepared her for an operatic career that is already beginning to flourish. She will soon perform in her first season at the Glyndebourne Festival, in the chorus of *The Elixir of Love* and Barrie Kosky’s production of *Dialogues of the Carmelites*.

Auditions for the next recipient of this auspicious Award will take place in

2024. ‘We’re looking forward to working closely with the Royal College of Music’, says Amy Black. ‘Sharolyn and I will be meeting with Head of Vocal & Opera, Nicholas Sears, and his team in London later this year. It’s an exciting evolution for Melba, the Award and the Royal College of Music.’

Melba takes this opportunity to thank and congratulate William Cowan AM and the Board of AIOA for their commitment and dedication to this Award over the past four decades.

‘We are honoured to be able to carry forward such an important pathway for young artists’, says Amy. ‘And we’re especially looking forward to welcoming the AJIOA community to its next event in November.’



Top row L-R Jane Hansen AO, Kate Shelmardine, Andrew Sisson AO; Annie McFarling, Lady Southey AC, Siobhan Stagg; Oliver Heuzenroeder, Michael Cummings (Ryman Healthcare); Warwick Bisley, James Emerson, Paulette Bisley
Bottom L-R Jeremy Ruskin KC, Nina Korbe, Roz Zalewski OAM; Prof. Mary-Jane Gething AO, Tom Nicholson; Samantha Hargreaves and Stacey Yang with Opera Society Committee members – Judith Hooper, Karl Lindberg, Peter O’Donnell, Valma Allaway OAM; The Hon. Saffron Foster, Samantha Hargreaves.

Launching the year

In March we introduced our 2023 Melba Artists to program patrons and partners with a small reception at our new home in the Melbourne Opera Centre.

Guests heard organisational updates and alumni news from Melba Chair Kate Shelmardine and CEO Amy Black. Artistic Manager & Artist Advisor Sharolyn Kimmorley AM introduced each artist and gave attendees an insight into the person behind the voice.

The evening continued with tours of the rehearsal spaces, lively banter being shared between artists and supporters, and welcome refreshments, thanks to our event partner Coombe Yarra Valley.

2023 Melba Artists: beyond the stage



James Emerson

BARITONE

*John & Elizabeth Wright-Smith
Scholarship
Paulette Bisley Opera Scholarship*

James Emerson is a returning Melba Artist, and eagle-eyed readers may have noticed an important distinction in his performance biography: a change from bass-baritone to baritone. ‘Over the years’, he explains, ‘I’ve had teachers tell me: you’re a bass-baritone, you’re a baby bass, you’re a Heldentenor, and so on. Many different opinions and different repertoire. But now, after working with Melba, I’ve

figured out that I’m actually a baritone – with low notes.’

After a year with Melba, he says, ‘I don’t really recognise myself anymore. The Melba Program has been the best thing ever to happen to me; it’s helped me transition from that ‘post-university’ mindset to a young professional artist mindset.’ He rattles off the experiences: learning stagecraft, mastering authenticity in language, business skills, etiquette, even learning to dance a waltz, ‘something I’ve never really done properly before’. Along the way, he’s loved meeting the donors and the Melba community. ‘I’ve always been about the audience, and being able to engage

with so many people is wonderful: they love music and they love supporting us.’

September will see James moving to London to study at the Royal College of Music. He actually received offers for three of the main colleges, which made for a difficult decision. ‘I felt like an athlete receiving offers and having to pick the team you want to play for ... it was life-changing.’ The prospect of working with voice teacher Russell Smythe was the deciding factor – that and the location. ‘Royal College told me at the audition that I was in, and I remember walking out and seeing the Royal Albert Hall and thinking, yeah, this is the one.’



Natalie Grimmett

SOPRANO

Amelia Joscelyne Memorial Scholarship

Natalie Grimmett can sing to you in German about love and death and murder, but (she jokes) she couldn’t ask you where to find the bathroom. She learnt the main languages of opera – Italian, German and French – predominantly through her study of singing. One of the benefits of the Melba Program, in which this is her second year, has been the chance to work on conversational languages and diction: ‘It goes so much deeper than anything in my university days.’ And

now French has become a special focus as she prepares for postgraduate study at McGill University in Montreal.

‘I wanted to go somewhere where I could work on one of my languages. And I thought Montreal, being French-speaking, would be good for me. The University itself is English-speaking, so I won’t have to write essays in French.’ Natalie was first introduced to the North American system through a semester’s study in Canada in 2019, and she found it suited her. ‘They’re quite hard on you and very detailed. And it’s very competitive – there are lots of really good singers coming out of those schools.’

She also loves 19th century French repertoire, and this year Sharolyn Kimmorley has introduced her to Ambroise Thomas’ *Hamlet*, after programming a duet from the opera for Natalie and Oliver Heuzenroeder to sing. ‘I’ve always loved that kind of repertoire, so I was excited to have a chance to sing it with Melba, especially since it’s in that high, very light coloratura where I feel most at home.’

Reflecting on nearly 18 months in the Melba Program, she points to the effect it’s had on her artistic and personal development. ‘I feel so much more confident and other people are noticing it as well.’



Samantha Hargreaves

SOPRANO

*Dame Nellie Melba Scholarship
Patrick & Vivian Gordon Award
Eleanor Blakemore Opera Society
Scholarship*

Samantha Hargreaves talks to us after a night out at the football, and it’s clear that, for her, singing is a physical, almost athletic, endeavour. She talks about her warm-ups and dancing to Taylor Swift before any sort of performance or practice session: ‘I’m always dancing because you need to open up the whole body.’ And returning for a second year in the Melba Program, she’s noticed: ‘My

voice is much stronger than I thought it was. I always used to be worried about over-singing, going over the vocal threshold for the day, but I’ve learnt that you have to sing a lot to build stamina. You wouldn’t think that singing is an athletic thing, but it really, really is.’

There are benefits to being a returning Melba Artist. Working with a new group of peers creates a different dynamic, and some modules make more sense the second time around. Last year I found the Alexander Technique workshop with Jenny Thirtle difficult, she explains. ‘I came in expecting to be good because I’d had my dance training and I thought I had great posture. But I didn’t

understand what she was trying to do and it felt a bit uncomfortable. However, coming into it again this year, I was very open, and we unlocked something in my neck, and suddenly my high G was there! She made us aware of tiny little things that actually wouldn’t matter if we weren’t elite-level singers, but because it takes the tiniest muscles to change things, it matters for us.’

In September Samantha will begin her postgraduate studies in London at Guildhall School of Music and Drama. And recently she appeared in the world premiere of Andrée Greenwell and Christine Evans’ new opera *Three Marys* – her Sydney Opera House debut.



Oliver Heuzenroeder

BARITONE

*Annie McFarling Opera Scholarship
Ryman Healthcare Opera Scholarship*

Oliver Heuzenroeder’s childhood music education included a huge amount of choral singing. As a member of Lyn Williams AM’s Gondwana Choirs, he benefited from impressive aural training and ‘learning to listen’. He was also fortunate to grow up surrounded by classical music (his mother is cellist Fenella Gill). But even with that deeply musical background, it can be tricky, he says, to know what the next steps should be, especially when you finish

university. ‘Melba has been the perfect opportunity to make sure I’m ready for study overseas [at the Royal Academy of Music]’, he says, ‘as well as giving me the tools for long-term career success.’ And where university can often be a ‘one-size-fits-all’ experience, Melba’s program, with just six singers this year, can focus on individual needs.

This tailored approach seems to be a theme that all of the artists value highly. ‘One of the things we’ve been working on is going from that ‘university sound’ to being our own artist – not just listening to how other singers interpret music but putting your own take on it and being original.’

‘The ‘more than a voice’ philosophy of the Melba Program has also brought unexpected insights. One of the first modules covered public speaking, something with which Oliver hadn’t had much experience. ‘I’d assumed that people were either good at it or not, and it was so useful to learn skills and to get up and introduce our pieces in a concert.’



Nina Korbe

SOPRANO

*Harold Blair Opera Scholarship
Ruskin Opera Scholarship*

For Nina Korbe, her time in the Melba Program has been hugely consolidating after her postgraduate studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London. Nina’s international studies sparked a particular interest in learning Russian and Czech. ‘Because of my voice type’, she explains, ‘I’d have coaches in London recommending repertoire that I just couldn’t do because I’d never studied the languages. At first, I arrogantly assumed that I’d just look at the IPA

[International Phonetic Alphabet], but then I didn’t even understand the IPA – it was a rude awakening. So this year I’m learning Russian through the UQ Institute of Languages.’

She looks forward to roles such as Tatyana (*Eugene Onegin*) and especially Jenůfa. ‘That role is an actress’s dream.’ She’s always loved the theatrical side of singing. ‘But what I particularly love about performing is the character work: diving into the psychology of a character, whether it’s in a song or an opera.’

In the short term, Nina plans to stay in Australia and is building a busy performance schedule with Opera Queensland and touring with

Queensland Youth Orchestra (QYO) as an artist-in-residence.

As a proud Koa, Kuku Yalanji (Wakka Wakka) woman, Nina also feels an intense calling to work within the arts to strengthen the relationship with First Nations peoples. She is involved in developing the Reconciliation Action Plan for the QYO and will tour with Opera Queensland to Winton (Koa lands, her original ancestral lands) as part of the Festival of Outback Opera. These concerts will be Nina’s first time on her lands. ‘I am being escorted by two of the Koa Elders, Uncle Michael Mace and Uncle Lance O’Chin, for my first time on country. It’s going to be pretty special!’



Tom Nicholson

BARITONE

Joseph Sambrook Opera Scholarship

Most opera singers listen to recordings, but Tom Nicholson has a particular enthusiasm that he shares with his teacher, tenor Glenn Winslade: ‘We’ve both got a real interest in old singers.’ He mentions Dame Nellie Melba, of course, who made recordings from 1895 until the 1920s. ‘The technology has changed, but there’s still a lot we can glean from those recordings – the way they sang the text or interpreted the music – even if we can’t get a sense of what the voices really sounded like.’

He continues dropping names: the prolific Enrico Caruso, Titta Ruffo, Maria Callas, Apollo Granforte, Ettore Bastianini, Leonard Warren ... ‘I know what qualities I want in my singing because I analyse a lot of recordings, and Glenn does the same.’

Returning to Melba for a second year, Tom’s directing his energies to preparing for his next goal: postgraduate study in Germany. ‘Singing German Lieder is what really drew me into classical singing, and I want to experience that tradition at its source. But I also think Germany is a hub for opera right now, and I want to be there to experience the history and culture of opera.’

For Tom, the prospect of living in Europe and spending time in the countries where the languages of opera are spoken is essential to his development. ‘It’s possible to sound like a native speaker when we sing, while not knowing how to speak the language at all – in the way that European pop stars sing in English phonetically. But if you can actually speak the language, then you add a level of nuance and meaning to your performance, and you can draw more out of the texts.’



Stacey Yang

REPETITEUR

*Margaret Schofield Opera Scholarship
Max & Jill Schultz Opera Society Scholarship*

Performers often come to opera via unexpected paths, but the journey of pianist and organist Stacey Yang, is especially ‘messy’. She refers repeatedly to her luck, but her story is equally one of hard work and determination. Arriving in Australia from China during her final year of high school – ‘I was on my own and I didn’t even speak functional English’ – she completed degrees in medical science and nursing in order to qualify

as a skilled immigrant. Despite having studied piano since childhood, she was in her mid-20s before she could pursue a musical career.

Ultimately her background – especially as an organist – has given her distinct advantages as an opera répétiteur. She talks about the parallels between the church and the opera stage: each involves narrative, theatre and emotion. And the liturgical organist gains experience in conducting, programming and direction that most pianists never have. Stacey also set about learning singing as a lockdown project in 2020-21. ‘I’m very happy I did that. It’s increased my understanding when I work with singers – I can really feel for them.’

‘I’m grateful and very lucky to be part of the Melba Program’, she says. ‘It gives us a truly professional setting to help us develop.’ She hopes, by the end of it, to have developed her repertoire and her confidence in working with singers, and to be ‘ready to audition for the top opera companies in the country’.

‘I’m very lucky’, she says again, this time about the chance to be mentored by Sharolyn Kimmorley. ‘In my musical journey I’ve met probably one or two very important people, allies, whose kindness, encouragement, expertise and honest assessments have supported me. It’s very rare to find a mentor who can give you all of this.’

The art of performance in 10 steps

A performance comes together as the result of tremendous hard work, with a huge cast of characters contributing behind the scenes. And it's the process of preparation that informs every activity in the Melba Program. We take you through the process.

1. Programming.

The most important thing, says Artistic Manager & Advisor Sharolyn Kimmorley AM, is to find the right repertoire. It has to be engaging and sufficiently challenging but not overwhelming for the singers. 'I look for music that will allow them to be free to perform and to be vocally comfortable.' And, of course, it has to be interesting for the audience.

Sharolyn also provides a model for the artists, who will ultimately have to program their own recitals and make decisions about roles. She fosters curiosity about the repertoire, rather than always depending on teachers, and encourages them 'to acknowledge and understand their strengths and weaknesses. Young singers often want to run before they can walk – they're all in a hurry, and there's a lot of pressure on young singers now to reach a certain level very quickly.'

2. Preparation.

'I don't believe in learning something today for tomorrow', says Sharolyn. Preparing for a performance is a long and detailed process, beginning with the artists' own preparation, listening to recordings (but not too much!) and becoming familiar with the music and the texts.

3. Language.

The singer communicates through words as well as music, and those words are often not in English. This is where specialist language coaches such as Teresa Desmarchelier enter the picture, guiding artists through the process of translating and interpreting texts, and working on diction.



4. Continued preparation.

After a preliminary run-through, the artists continue with their personal preparation, which includes memorisation, so they can be ready to work with a director. Vocal teachers and coaches play their part, and Sharolyn likes to nurture a happy relationship with the teachers.

5. Staging and direction.

Even a song recital is, in many ways, a theatrical occasion with narrative and drama; the artists must think about how they will communicate physically to express themselves in front of an audience. This is why a director like Stuart Maunder AM works with them on text, character and motivation. 'I try to give them the imprimatur to be vulnerable in rehearsal', says Stuart, 'to 'fail' if you like, so that when they're actually performing, they feel confident and prepared. It's highly compressed, because it's a song or a duet, not the building up of character over a whole show – a kind of shorthand introduction to working with a director. We analyse what might be needed for a piece to succeed. Finding a simple movement to bring a particular moment alive, or – which is the hardest thing to teach – finding stillness, the ability to make the audience focus right in on your soul.'

6. The mental game.

Psychological and emotional preparation is a whole topic in itself! See page 9 for insights from performance psychologist Dr Andrew Waterson.



7. Presentation.

There was a time when a musician might give an entire performance without uttering a (spoken) word. Fortunately, those times are past. But, says conductor and broadcaster Graham Abbott, 'we've all experienced concerts in which artists have undermined themselves with introductions that are rambling or boring, making it necessary for them to work all the more to regain their audience's attention when they sing.'

To that end, Graham presents a masterclass on concert introductions in tandem with public speaking teacher Judith Field. He focuses on the content, while Judith addresses technique. The premise, says Graham, 'is that spoken introductions are as much a part of the performance as the singing, and they should be prepared and executed just as professionally.'

8. Media.

As with presentation, a musician in the 21st century should assume they'll be interacting with mainstream and social media, promoting their performances and often providing behind-the-scenes insights that once might have remained hidden. In a second workshop, Graham provides media training, specifically in relation to being interviewed: 'We look at the different media (print, radio, television), and discuss the possibilities of conflicting agendas as well as the need to focus on the aim of the interview.'



9. What to wear?

While there are some who regard opera as a purely 'musical' artform, the truth is that most audiences 'listen with their eyes'. In an opera production the costume is a given, but, for a recital, artists have to consider their personal presentation: clothes, hair and makeup.

10. And on with the show ...

The artists have prepared as much as they can over the course of months. Now it's time to warm up the voice and body, to get into the right physical and mental space, and manage stamina as they take to the stage. The hard work and the teams of supporters are invisible, but the music and the performance will shine.

The Performance Program is the outcome of the learning within the Melba Program. Performances provide real-world experience as freelance artists, whilst also helping to build performance confidence.

To feature Melba Artists at your next event, please contact Sharolyn Kimmorley on 03 9944 2100.

A 360° artist

In conversation with Siobhan Stagg

Image: Todd Rosenberg



Interviewing Siobhan Stagg is like witnessing a masterclass in itself – so thoughtful, eloquent, gracious and engaged, all at 8.30 in the morning, Berlin time.

Germany has been Siobhan's home base for nearly a decade now, and maintaining a connection with Australia through annual visits has been important. So, after the COVID-enforced hiatus of the past few years, her most recent visit to Sydney and Melbourne in February–March was something of a special homecoming. Making an international career work across two hemispheres requires an excellent agent, and Siobhan says she's been lucky to find one who's 'on the same page in terms of long-term goals, work ethic and core values'. This, of course, prompts a question – a big one at this hour of the day! – about her core values.

Siobhan responds by talking about her team: 'I like to be surrounded by people who are always looking at the big picture and the long-term trajectory. They have to be able to zoom in on the small details but at the same time ensure your career is heading in the right direction in terms of impact, including community impact. That's why the arts are important – not just to serve my own love of music but because I believe in the impact that a rich cultural ecosystem has on society.'

Later, she adds education as another theme that's central to her core values, and her recent Australian visit also included a Melbourne Symphony Orchestra masterclass with Melba Artists. A public masterclass differs from private coaching in that 'the singers are performing for an audience, and so is the teacher in a way'. She wanted to get away from the idea of one 'master' passing on lessons: 'I said, let's look at 'master' not as a noun but as a *verb* – we're all on this quest to master our craft as musicians and storytellers. And then the atmosphere

becomes more collaborative, more exploratory, which opens doors to discovery, because one of the most important objectives of education is to allow people to discover things for themselves.'

Siobhan herself likes to maintain a student mindset: 'I don't ever want to feel like I've graduated and need to stop learning.' In a similar vein, her association with Melba Opera Trust didn't end with the conclusion of her scholarship in 2012. As an alumna, mentor and now board member, she's been able to observe the evolution of the Melba Program. The core mission has stayed the same; also unchanged is the program's distinctive bespoke nature. 'It looks at each singer and where their growth areas might be. The program is then tailored to those needs, so we end up with well-rounded, 360° artists making their own contributions to the cultural ecosystem.'

What *has* changed is the scale: 'When I started, there were only two scholars.' Another enormous step has been the recent move to the Melbourne Opera Centre [see page 11], with the chance to deliver the program on site instead of everyone hopping on trams to travel to different venues. Even more important will be the location itself, she says. 'We're all influenced by the physical space we're in. So, to be in the building where the end goal is, to be rubbing shoulders with the people who work for the national opera company, can only be a good thing.'

Another kind of rubbing shoulders takes place in the Melba board room. The first of the alumni to join the board, Siobhan's presence as a director means that a performing artist is contributing expertise and insight to

Melba's governance. 'I see governance and performing as complementary', she says. 'I've always known that it takes people with skill sets on all fronts to make something beautiful happen. And while I have the deepest impact and influence telling stories and connecting with audiences as a singer on stage, it became especially apparent during COVID that there are often big gaps between those of us on the stage and those behind the scenes. I realised there's space for more robust discussion, and I could be a conduit to make that happen.'

This realisation led Siobhan to a course through the Australian Institute of Company Directors, mentoring, and fundraising for initiatives such as Nicole Car's Freelance Artist Relief Australia and Arts Centre Melbourne's Arts Wellbeing Collective.

Wellbeing ... another theme close to Siobhan's heart. If you follow her Instagram account – and you should (@siobhanstagg) – you'll see a mix of costume shots, rehearsal candids, media regrams, program and sheet music covers, gorgeous concert halls in Sydney, Hamburg, Cleveland ... everything you might expect of a top-flight opera singer. But then you'll scroll past a photo of a running bib, or a post about 'Rest, recovery, downtime ...'

'You have to invest time in your wellbeing', she says, 'taking care of nutrition, staying active and practising mindfulness. And the chief gatekeeper of all these is sleep. We often don't appreciate the importance of sleep hygiene. And it can be tricky, since opera performances often finish late at night, and it's very easy then to stay up a few more hours because you're so hyped.'

In Berlin, a typical schedule might involve performing at one opera house while rehearsing a new production for another, with resulting early starts for rehearsals after a performance the

night before. Siobhan has developed her own solution, based on the idea of completing the stress cycle. (Her reading list includes *Burnout* by the Nagoski sisters.) 'I ride my bike to the Staatsoper, so that after the show I can hop on my bike and ride home. By doing that, I'll return to a normal state much quicker, and I'm then able to get a good night's sleep and wake up recharged. So everyone has their own little tricks, but it's definitely worth finding out what works for you and allows you to bounce back and be at your best every day.' She also points out that the sheer variety of activity and pace of freelance life is something to be embraced: 'the diversity in my career is restorative in its own way'.

*The diversity in my
career is restorative in
its own way*

Finally the conversation turns to a recent honour: receiving the keys to the city of Mildura, where she grew up. 'The timing was really beautiful', she says, 'because I'm starting a scholarship of three encouragement awards in the Mildura Eisteddfod this year. Too often we imagine philanthropists as being retirees, and I wanted to show that people who are still in the main part of their professional lives can begin to think philanthropically and witness the fruits of those gestures.' This, she says, is another lovely thing about Melba: 'It's been so nice to reconnect with the different generations as they come through and to find this constant stream of alumni crossing my path wherever I am around the world. It's one of the most joyous parts of this job.'

Siobhan held the Amelia Joscelyne Memorial Scholarship between 2009-2012.

The Mentor Program in focus

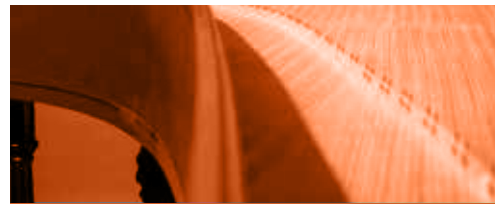
Over the year artists work with the best in their field covering a broad variety of areas.
We share some key take-aways from the artists' perspectives.



Connecting with the industry is a staple in the program. Artists met with Kip Williams, Artistic Director of Sydney Theatre Company

Oliver

“ It was fascinating. He provided insights into a director's process when devising a production and the expectations of character development that we as the artists should bring to the table. A key take-away for me was to focus on other characters more than our own. After all, they provide the stimulus for our character to react. Kip's advice was to 'find the thought, think the thought, and then think quicker'.



Erin Helyard, Artistic Director of Pinchgut Opera, workshopped the art of baroque and classical ornamentation

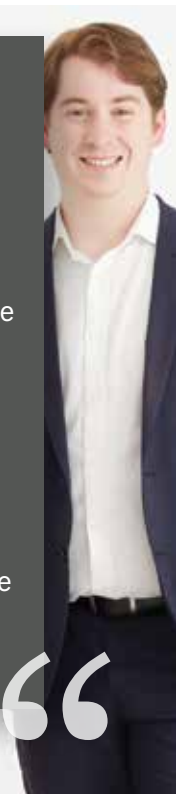
Tom

“ Gaining insight from a current industry leader in historical performance practice has allowed me to fully realise how much flexibility there is in preparing my own ornaments and makes me excited to exercise this new creative muscle with my repertoire.

Using the breath and the body for storytelling with Lois Redman

James

It's been transformative for me. Lois was able to help me clearly understand the importance of breath and how to apply it correctly during our performances. I will use these skills for the rest of my career.



Caring for our instrument — Vocal health with Dr Debbie Phyland

Natalie

It seems like every week there's a new fad for hypochondriac singers, so it was fantastic to pick an expert's brain. Debbie helped to sort out the facts from the fiction when it comes to vocal health.

“

Public speaking and concert introductions — making it part of the performance — with Graham Abbott and Judith Field

Stacey

“ I have found the industry doesn't place much importance on public speaking for repetiteurs. The sessions with Graham and Judith have really boosted my confidence when addressing audiences, emphasising the importance of connecting with them.



Psychological foundations for optimal performance with Dr Andrew Waterson helped artists to understand anxiety, manage it and overcome it to perform at their best

Nina

“ It was a fantastic opportunity to assess our own personal approaches to dealing with the psychological demands of our work and the industry. I personally found that most of my anxiety when performing presents after the performance rather than during, which offered me the chance to assemble strategies to combat this tendency.

The art of fundraising and writing grants with Steven Richardson

James

“ I have learnt an enormous amount about how to create and launch a fundraising campaign and how to write grants in a clear and concise manner. It is crucial that we as artists are aware of what our goals, aims and challenges are, and to recognise the importance of building a supportive team who want to help guide us with our studies and our musical journey.

Strategies and techniques for emotional wellbeing with Monica O'Brien.

Samantha

Our sessions with Monica have emphasised the importance of being consistent with strategies for emotional wellbeing, especially during intense rehearsal periods, as well as in times of rest. Personally, I find joy in journalling, long walks and visualising my desired performance outcomes.



Language diction with Teresa Desmarchelier

Natalie

“ I've been perfecting my French diction through working on the role of Ophélie from Thomas' *Hamlet* with Teresa. In particular, working to find a happy balance between clarity of diction and beauty of voice in and around her dastardly and florid high coloratura passages!

Support the Melba Program

The program nurtures our artists with their artistic development alongside business training, mentoring and performance experience.

To make a tax-deductible donation contact Catherine McElhone, Philanthropy Manager, on (03) 9944 2100 or visit melbaoperatrust.com.au/support



Mind over music

We spoke to performance psychologist Dr Andrew Waterson about the surprising – and not so surprising – parallels between elite performance in sport and opera.

It's a common story among musicians: wrangling their way out of high school sport by signing up for the school musical or some such stratagem. You'd be forgiven for thinking that music and sport were completely incompatible. But those responsible for training the next generation of opera singers, as well as the artists themselves, are finding many useful parallels between elite performance in sport and opera, and the differences between the two can be illuminating.

As part of its goal to nurture well-rounded individuals, Melba Opera Trust has been working with performance psychologist Andrew Waterson who runs workshops covering aspects of wellbeing, mental preparation, and managing the stresses and pressures of elite performance. His own career has focused on sport – he worked with golfers for his doctorate and he's the Club Psychologist for AFL team Hawthorn – and he brings a decade of experience with high-performing athletes to his work with the Melba Artists.

In his seminars, Andrew uses a balance of theory and practical exercises to explore topics such as performance anxiety, including debunking some of the myths around anxiety; the neuroscience of performing and the way the brain responds to challenges and threats; mindfulness meditation; dealing with rejection and critique; managing different types of professional relationships; and emotional regulation.

'The first thing to know,' he says, 'is that the way we frame the word 'anxiety' is important. We're taught from a young age to make value judgements. For example, 'smiling good, crying bad', and yet if you're at a funeral, then crying is both important and appropriate. It's about context. Similarly, with performance anxiety, rather than saying 'anxiety is bad', I teach an acceptance-based approach. Because feeling stress, pressure, anxiety is actually part of our performance. It can motivate us, it can even help performance. So, instead of trying to get rid of it, we want to change the relationship we have with anxiety.'

This approach emphasises a key difference between singing and a high-cardio sport like football: 'When a footballer is feeling anxiety, that usually manifests itself in increased energy to the bigger muscles, increased heart rate and blood flow, and, when the siren goes, those things are really helpful. But if your breathing is out of control when you're singing, that changes your instrument.' As a result, Waterson teaches the artists a variation of the acceptance-based approach. 'Yes, we're still accepting the cognitive experience of anxiety, but we also need to manage the physical manifestations of emotions with strategies like box breathing.' And he's observed that the artists arrive with a good basis for stress management through their advanced breathing skills. In that respect, they're far more skilled in the management of their bodies than most athletes.



Dr Andrew Waterson

When asked for other things that opera and sport have in common, Waterson's response is surprising: 'Money'. In football, he explains, you might have one player earning an annual salary, while another is earning a per match payment. Not dissimilar to a fest contract – a salaried contract in a German opera house – versus a freelance per performance fee structure. For the latter, playing matches/the number of performances becomes incredibly important because they're living pay cheque to pay cheque. 'If I don't know where my next contracts are coming from, I need to perform to secure my next contract', Waterson explains. Meanwhile, the salaried player/performer may be experiencing their own pressure: 'if I'm being paid all this money, then I've got to perform, and in a very competitive landscape'.

Waterson also identifies other similarities inherent in any elite training platform: how to manage criticism and opinions from the team around you. The Melba Program introduces artists to the professional relationships that will accompany them throughout their careers. More than any other musician, singers rely on a support team: singing teachers, vocal coaches and repetiteurs, language coaches, movement teachers, managers, the list goes on. But with that team comes an often overwhelming level of critique and sometimes conflicting opinions.

Waterson sees a parallel with footballers, who might similarly have 20 teammates, six coaches, physios and doctors, as well as club leadership, not to mention family, partners and fans. 'I help the artists balance the weight they place on different people's opinions.' Knowing when someone's expertise gives validity to their criticism is a part of that. 'My opinion of a singer's performance shouldn't matter,' he says. 'I'm an average punter. But if they want my view on how they used their mental skills to perform, then my opinion is relevant, because I'm an expert there.'

The conversation turns to the subject of self-critique. 'We internalise voices so quickly', says Waterson, 'including negative feedback from others, not

'The first thing to know', he says, 'is that the way we frame the word 'anxiety' is important'

to mention our critique of ourselves. Any high-level performance is an emotionally taxing process that could involve hundreds, maybe thousands, of decisions. So, if we add self-critique on top of that, we're diluting our focus and reducing the amount of cognitive space we have for actually performing.'

This in turn is related to learning and fast brain versus slow brain: 'We need to use our slow brain for skill acquisition, but then we build those skills into an automatic mode and use our fast brain to execute them.' Allowing a running commentary, or overthinking, during performance means 'you're effectively using your slow brain to execute what is a fast-brain activity'. This also affects the way we frame errors when learning: making predictions and observing the results. 'That's how our brain changes and learns', he says, 'and so mistakes are a really vital part of learning.' At the same time, a common trait for all performers is a fear of making mistakes, or at least making mistakes in front of others. 'And that makes us conservative. Whereas we need to embrace mistakes and understand that's when our brain changes and that's how we grow.'

Ultimately, says Andrew, there are more similarities than differences between opera and sport. But when pressed for one final difference, he mentions that the Melba Artists all self-reflect well. In a context where it would be normal to feel worried about embarrassing themselves in front of their peers, he's noticed they're extremely open and share much more than many athletes. 'I do think they get quite a lot out of the sessions because they reflect deeply on why they think the way they do and why they are the way they are.'



A life in the spotlight

Celebrated soprano Nance Grant AM MBE shares a long history with Melba as a board director of the Melba Conservatorium, a valuable annual supporter of the Melba Program since its inception and now as a resident in the Ryman Healthcare Nellie Melba Retirement Village.

Nance is pictured at her residence, the Nellie Melba Retirement Village. Image provided by Ryman Healthcare.



We sat down with Nance to learn more about her stellar career, insights on the next generation of opera singers and her own experiences as a young artist.

Before retiring from the stage in 1991, Nance Grant AM MBE enjoyed a decades-long career as a professional soprano. Awarded her AM in 2013 for ‘significant service to the performing arts, particularly opera’, she understands firsthand how important mentorship, training and support are to nurturing the next generation of opera singers.

Nance started out in musical comedy, concerts and oratorios. She was Principal Soprano for the ABC for 35 years, a role that included several television performances – and yet she never expected to have a career in opera.

This changed when she caught the attention of renowned English conductor Sir Edward Downes CBE. In 1970 he became Music Director of The Australian Opera Company, which later evolved into what is now Opera Australia. When he asked Nance to audition for him in Sydney, her first impression was not favourable: ‘This gentleman said, ‘Come along, princess, come down to my office’, she recalls. ‘And off he went. And I said to the pianist, ‘Who does he think he’s calling princess?’’

As it turned out, Downes was addressing Nance by her new role: after watching her audition, he had decided to cast her as the Marschallin, Princess Marie Thérèse von Werdenberg in *Der Rosenkavalier*.

This introduction set the stage for a ten-year mentorship that guided the soprano’s career in an exciting new direction. ‘It was a really happy association’, says Nance. When she explained that she could not accept a full-time company position, as it would take her away from family in Melbourne,

Downes created a guest artist role to ensure she could perform in Australian Opera performances.

‘He would come to me after the season and say, ‘Nance, we’ve had a great season. I’m going to have a really good role for you for next year.’ And I’d say, ‘What role?’ And he said, ‘Well, you’ll see.’’

Downes recognised the importance of casting Nance in parts that suited her voice as it changed over the years. Rather than pressure her into roles for which her vocal development was not ready – a situation that has ruined the

Do everything that you possibly can; you don’t know who’s going to be in the audience to listen to you. It might be just the opportunity for you

careers of other singers – he ‘must have heard something in my voice’ to understand which parts would bring out her best performances.

This mentorship was crucial to Nance’s professional growth, and her connection with Downes was a defining part of her career.

When it came to formal tuition and coaching, however, she received few opportunities in her early years. Instead, Nance established herself by accepting the performance contracts that came her way. Now she is glad to see young artists benefiting from the resources and training she did not have.

‘I feel it covers everything that a singer needs and more’, she says of the Melba Program. ‘When I started, I had nothing. These days, it’s very different.’

Nance notes the importance of nurturing a voice so that ‘it comes from within’, but she is also struck by the program’s focus on professional abilities beyond musicianship – such as people skills, interview confidence, and contract negotiation. ‘They’ll be ready’, she says of artists who develop these skills, noting that performers who have travelled overseas are making a name for Australian music on an international level.

Nance’s own career was based in Australia, yet she never lacked international expertise. She worked with

Still, Nance recalls her experiences as ‘so much fun’. She worked with wonderful singers and internationally famous conductors, and performed major roles in a wide range of operas. ‘Every role I sang became a favourite at the time’, she says, although she does hold a particular fondness for the Marschallin.

Nance was also present for iconic moments in the shaping of Australian opera, although during those moments she did not see them as history in the making: ‘It was another job!’ One such occasion was when she performed at the opening of the Sydney Opera House in 1973 – one of three Royal Command Performances in which she sang for Queen Elizabeth II.

‘That was absolutely wonderful’, she recalls. Sydney Harbour was full of noise, the celebrating crowds wild with excitement that the Opera House was opening at last. ‘Usually, I have to have a sleep every afternoon before a performance. I couldn’t even sleep, it was so noisy! And when we got to the Opera House, people were everywhere, and they were all yelling and screaming ... I’ve never ever seen an atmosphere like that.’

A career so full of rich memories demands to be chronicled, and Nance will share her story in an upcoming autobiography, *A Life of Curtain Calls*, to be released this year.

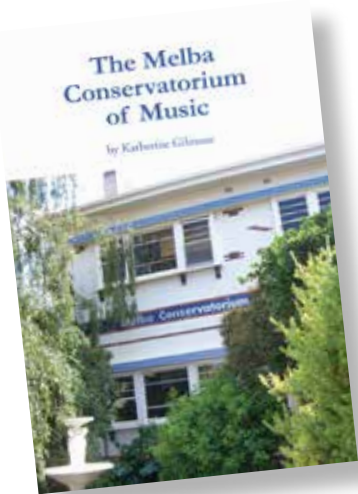
Thinking back on those curtain calls, Nance has this advice for artists beginning their own careers: take every chance to perform. ‘Do everything that you possibly can; you don’t know who’s going to be in the audience to listen to you. It might be just the opportunity for you.’

over 100 different conductors across the course of her career, more than 70 of whom were from overseas, and studied with Professor Clemens Kaiser-Breme in Germany after receiving the Bayreuth Opera Award in 1975.

Although she ‘fell into a career’, Nance’s job was by no means easy. Working on the range of contracts she was offered, she often had limited rehearsal time and learnt the roles herself at home. Supporting these efforts was her husband, Ian Harris, who has been a steady presence throughout Nance’s career.

Being a guest artist for Australian Opera gave her an unusual degree of time for her family, but it also meant she did not receive the coaching and support of a full-time company performer. Being prepared for her roles required adaptability and self-driven practice.

Paying homage to the past



On 24 March Kay Gilmour launched her book *The Melba Conservatorium of Music* at The Victorian Artists Society in Melbourne. The former home of the Conservatorium, it was a fitting place to celebrate and remember an institution that nurtured the careers of countless musicians – many under the guidance of Dame Nellie Melba herself.

The book launch was a reunion for Conservatorium staff, with what Kay described as a ‘wonderful camaraderie’ and sense of reconnection. ‘It was this one last opportunity to send off the Melba, to celebrate it, to remember it.’

Melba Opera Trust CEO Amy Black, who convened the formalities, also noted that the launch had the atmosphere of a ‘fondly reminiscent’ reunion filled with ‘deep respect’.

The Melba Conservatorium of Music outlines the history of a small but

So often our past informs our future and we are fortunate to have a long and celebrated history that extends back to the Melba Conservatorium of Music, our predecessor. We recently had the opportunity to celebrate our unique history by attending a very special, and historically significant, book launch.

beloved institution that ran for over 100 years. After closing down at the end of 2008, it re-launched in 2009 as Melba Opera Trust with the same company structure. Many of the scholarships Melba offers today were established at the Conservatorium, and it was where the Melba community began.

‘It was a wonderful place, it really was’, says Kay. ‘Both to work in and, I think, what it offered to the students.’

Kay lectured at the Conservatorium for almost 20 years, during which time she discovered that ‘this little place that had such a lovely feel to work in also had a rich history’. Her fascination with that history led her to write a thesis, which eventually evolved into this book, and she says it was an ‘absolutely fascinating’ experience to write about a place with which she had a personal and professional connection.

‘When you’re doing a thesis, you tend to get caught up in the nitty gritty’, says Kay. While developing the book for publication, she took a step back to examine ‘how important this tiny Conservatorium was in the broader

picture of Australia’ and realised that, ‘for such a small place, it actually had a very large impact’.

Kay’s book celebrates the legacy of an institution that cared for its students while striving for high standards of musical education. She hopes that readers will ‘see it as a very nurturing place; I hope they see it as a place that was available and accessible for people to come to. But I hope they also see it as a place that achieved the highest standards. It provided opportunities to reach the top if you wanted to reach the top.’

Amy Black, who obtained her BMus Performance (Voice) at the Conservatorium, recognises the importance of continuing the Conservatorium’s ethos in Melba Opera Trust today. ‘My time at the Melba, as a student and staff member, are some of my most precious memories. It was the philosophy and the learnings that were nurtured in me during those years that were fundamental to the evolution, the structure and the principles we follow in the Melba Program.’



Amy explains that the program ‘is about artistic excellence, but it’s also about all of those complementary skills that makes people into who they are: the personal development, the professional, the skills. It’s not about applying a cookie-cutter approach to all the artists. It’s actually seeing them as individuals and helping them to bring out the best in themselves for their journey, much as it was in the Conservatorium days.’

The Melba Conservatorium of Music is the first book to record the history of this unique institution, which was home to a variety of stories across more than a century of education. Congratulating Kay at the book launch, Amy thanked her ‘for ensuring that the precious history of such an important Melbourne cultural institution has now been so expertly preserved’.

To purchase a copy of *The Melba Conservatorium of Music* by Katherine Gilmour, please contact Kay at melba@gilmours.net.au

A new home leads to a new partnership

As the saying goes, when one door closes, a window opens ... and so it has been in Melba’s search for a new home.

The transformation of the Melbourne Arts Precinct has been major news for many arts organisations and audiences alike. For Melba, and for other arts organisations located in the triangular building at 77 Southbank Boulevard (Musica Viva, Short Black Opera and Orchestra Victoria), it meant searching for new offices, with the building set to be demolished as part of the re-development.

‘At the time, Melba was working closely with Musica Viva with a plan to move forward together and share operational resourcing’, says Melba CEO Amy Black. ‘We had heard of availability at the Opera Centre and so we collectively approached Opera Australia to explore what might be possible.’

The idea was enthusiastically met by Fiona Allan, CEO of Opera Australia, who was looking to foster greater engagement with smaller arts organisations in Melbourne and Sydney.

Amy also explains that industry alignment was a motivating factor. ‘Melba’s core business is to train and develop Australia’s most promising young opera singers so that they are internationally competitive and ready to take the stage. Collaboration with Opera Australia, the national opera company, makes sense.’

‘This partnership will bring different young artists in front of us, who we may not have known’, says Fiona Allan, ‘which is a huge benefit, because not only are we trying to nurture talent, we also want to discover talent.’

So what does the partnership look like in practice?

Melba, Musica Viva and Opera Australia now share the bright new offices in the Opera Centre at Southbank. For Opera Australia, the space has become a hub for like-minded organisations. ‘The Melbourne Opera Centre has

more space than we actually need on a day-to-day basis’, explains Fiona. When OA doesn’t have a production running in Melbourne, ‘we have five or six staff members rattling around in a very large office’. At the same time, the subsidised tenancy fits with OA’s desire to support smaller organisations with in-kind resources.

‘We’re extremely grateful to have this support from Opera Australia. It represents a new era for Melba Opera Trust’, explains Amy. The new tenancy means that, for the first time in Melba’s history, the organisation will be able to deliver the majority of its artistic activity under the same roof as its administrative headquarters. It also provides unprecedented access to warm-up studios and pianos for the artists, who are often in Melbourne for their week-long modules with limited options for their personal practice.

Then there is the intangible – but invaluable – benefit to Melba Artists of being able to ‘share the corridors with the same people whose careers they want to emulate’, says Amy. ‘It’s



physically connecting these young people with the industry, not to mention having excellent facilities that mirror the world-class mentors that we welcome in our program.’

Ultimately there’s strategic potential for co-operation between Melba’s programs and the work that Opera Australia does for its young artists. ‘That part of it is still to be explored’, says Allan, ‘but it fits with our desire to be a more collaborative and supportive organisation, working closely across our sector on all levels. So this partnership fits into that ambition well.’ And as Amy observes, ‘we’re industry colleagues – if we can share resources, especially in this economic climate, and work together to make our dollars go further, then that’s a win for everyone.’

OPERA AUSTRALIA

A letter from abroad

In this regular feature, we ask Melba alumni to write to us from around the world. This edition profiles mezzo-soprano Xenia Puskarz Thomas, recipient of the Amelia Joscelyne Memorial Scholarship in 2019.

Greetings Melba community – Herzliche Grüße aus München!

It is a real treat to be able to share a little of what I’ve been up to since I left the Melba Program. I am currently based in Munich, Germany, as part of the Bayerische Staatsoper Opera Studio. It’s an excellent, albeit super busy Young Artist Program where the Opera Studio members get a jam-packed trifecta of opportunities: studio performances in and around Germany, small to medium-sized role debuts in the mainstage productions, along with necessary vocal training and study.

At the moment I am preparing roles for two shows that will run concurrently in May: Monteverdi’s *The Return of Ulysees*, as Melanto and Minerva, and Dvořák’s *Rusalka* as Kitchen boy. As you can probably tell, they’re vastly different styles of music and very different productions as well. I am slightly terrified of this huge week and a half where each night alternates between the two shows, but I just have to prepare as much as I can and trust myself – Eeek!

Coming to Germany and experiencing just how quickly an opera is put together has been a bit of a revelation. Many German houses, like the Bayerische Staatsoper, put on at least one new opera each week by bringing back old productions with extremely tight preparation schedules. Usually a month before opening night we are sent a video recording of the show to study. Then a week before the show we meet with a revival director who maps out exactly what will happen on stage, where the set will be, where to move and how to sing your role. After one run-through in a rehearsal room and a Sitzprobe with the orchestra, you see the set, the costumes, the chorus, lighting, props, the entire stage layout and perform the staging with the orchestra for the first time only in the actual performance.

To say the whole experience is a bit of a whirlwind is an understatement, but I know it will get easier with each production I do here in the house. I have another year in this studio with some exciting roles to debut ahead: Mercédès in *Carmen*, Second Lady in *The Magic Flute*, Flora in *La traviata*

and the title role in *The Cunning Vixen*, amongst others.

Beyond the performance side, moving to Munich has enabled my exploration of a delightful culture and way of living. Munich is a stark contrast to New York, where I was living the year before. In a way, Munich feels similar to my hometown of Brisbane. There is a restrained simplicity, gemütlichkeit and people enjoy their home life more than always going out. The city is determined to preserve its local focus and its discreet, sophisticated attitude toward living. It has been a refreshing change from the madness I tolerated while living in New York, although I do miss the unexpected chaos and its serendipitous opportunities for new experiences every now and then.

Beyond the two years in the program, there begins my great big adventure into the unknown and freelancing. So, to everyone back home in Australia, soak up the sunshine and give everyone a hug from me.

Missing you all dearly. Love

Xenia

Image: Anna Kučera

Thank You

We are deeply grateful for the philanthropic support that helps us to deliver world-class training today and to build an endowment for tomorrow. Together, we are providing a precious pathway for Australia’s next generation of opera greats.

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