

THE MELBA

MAGAZINE OF MELBA OPERA TRUST

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MELBA LAUNCHES ALUMNI GRANT PROGRAM
ABLAZE: TIRIKI ONUS' FILMMAKING DEBUT
ANNOUNCING THE 2021 DAME HEATHER BEGG MEMORIAL 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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Cover image

Melba alumni Lauren Fagan as Leïla and
Samuel Dale Johnson as Zurga in
The Pearlfishers for The Royal Opera.
Image: Clive Barda.

*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.*

From the Chief Executive Officer

2021 has been another challenging year, testing both the agility and resilience of Melba Opera Trust. As with many of our industry colleagues, our programming has been planned, unplanned, rescheduled and postponed more than we could have imagined. We have persevered and, whilst we have sadly missed seeing our community, our ongoing support for the artists has been constant and intensive.

Disruptions have not prevented us from delivering the same scope of program that we delivered pre-COVID. Melba Artists benefitted from 79 sessions in the Mentor Program, with 60% of those provided face-to-face. Audiences enjoyed 15 performances (with more scheduled) and our artists remain deeply involved in their tailored artistic development, focusing on languages, repertoire, coaching and more.

Key to our continuity has been swift thinking by the management team, relocating around border closures, utilising technology, and working together to deliver activity with very short lead times. I am grateful to staff for working tirelessly to achieve such a satisfying outcome for the artists.

It has also been a time of change for the Melba board. Earlier in the year we farewelled Roz Zalewski after more than a decade of service to the board (see page 3). I take this opportunity to welcome warmly Kate Shelmerdine as the new Chair of Melba Opera Trust.

The Melba Program continues to deliver outstanding results. It’s now our great responsibility to ensure that this important work can be financially sustained for future generations.

The Melba ethos is to deliver a world-class program today, whilst building an endowment to support

Your gift is your legacy

It began with our namesake Dame Nellie Melba: a generous bequest left by Australia’s most famous opera singer so that ‘another Melba’ may arise. This gift has sustained the continued development of opera talent in Australia for almost a century, and it is thanks to the generosity of a growing circle of lifelong opera lovers that we continue to deliver this world-renowned program today.

Taking Dame Nellie’s lead, Melba’s Will Bequest Circle provides the opportunity to connect through gifts in wills and estates, which are invested into long-term funds that generate perpetual income. Every gift, large and small, brings us one step closer to our goal of delivering the Melba Program in perpetuity, ensuring it may nurture Australia’s most promising opera artists for as long as the music plays.

‘I am absolutely committed to the idea of the Melba Program and fostering young singers and pianists’ says Garry Fehring, a contributor to Melba’s Will



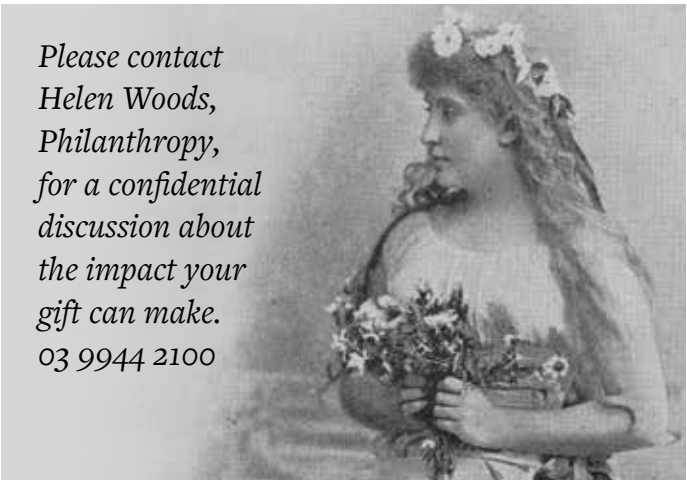
tomorrow. This year it has been difficult to engage with the Melba community through events but our need for support is as strong as ever. Every donation and every bequest is vital and we are grateful for your involvement.

Supporting our artists is central to everything we do. We are regularly approached by alumni seeking support for ongoing career development, and so we are very pleased to be responding with the Alumni Grant Program (see page 5).

Designed to build on the strength of the Melba Program, from October 2021 alumni can apply for a grant to underwrite artistic or professional pursuits. Our inaugural round of grants will be selected by a panel of industry experts and will be made public after the announcement of our 2022 Melba Artists.

With your help, these enduring programs will make sure that Australian artists are supported to be their best on opera stages around the world. ‘Once a Melba, always a Melba’.

AMY BLACK | Chief Executive Officer



Program. ‘For me, Melba Opera Trust lives the great Dame’s view that a good voice [or talent] is not of itself enough; each individual artist needs to be skilled socially, environmentally, psychologically and even politically to meet the Melba mission and holistic philosophy. It is a delight to see Melba alumni going forward in the world.’

Your generosity has the power to build the next generation of talent and it will be in gratitude to the generosity of lifelong opera lovers that many more Melbas may arise.

From strength to strength: Roz Zalewski

We spoke with recently retired Chair, Roz Zalewski about her 15-year involvement with Melba, first as a donor of Melba Memorial Conservatorium, then board member and eventually Chair of Melba Opera Trust.

Roz Zalewski at Melba Opera Trust Meet the Artists 2021. Image: Anna Kucera

Although she first became involved in Melba Opera Trust through the family of her husband, Jeremy Ruskin, Roz Zalewski's tenure as Chair from 2016 to 2021 was a role she made completely her own.

Jeremy's father, Alfred, was a well-known arts administrator and board director. Melba Memorial Conservatorium of Music was one of the organisations he participated in, serving as Chair for 26 years. Jeremy's mother, Pamela, was a Walkley award-winning journalist and founding contributor of the magazine *Dance Australia*. She won her Walkley for an interview with Barry Humphries, and her regular column in *The Argus* was considered essential reading for Sir Robert Menzies.

'When I first came into the [Ruskin] family, they were very involved in the local and Australian arts scene,' Roz said, 'and we were always having lots of discussions about the arts.'

The family was motivated to create a legacy in Alfred's name, following his death in 1996, establishing the Ruskin Memorial Award in 2006 as an annual gift to the Conservatorium. It was pure coincidence that their involvement came on the precipice of historic change; it was announced that the school was to close permanently in 2008. It had been Alfred's foresight as Chair that saw the purchase of the Conservatorium's York Street premises in 1983 and the sale of the property would become the seed funding for the Conservatorium's successor: Melba Opera Trust.

The following year, Roz was invited by then Chair, Robert G Logie-Smith AM, to become a board member.

'I wasn't new to boards, and voluntary work has always been a big part of my life. I got a lot out of working with Melba. I took it very seriously.'



*I can see the product
of my contribution, out there
on international stages.*

Roz served as Deputy Chair to Rob for five years. When Rob retired, Roz was invited to become Chair, a request she embraced

'I considered it a great honour to be asked,' says Roz.

Under Rob's leadership, the fledgling organisation had become financially viable, and Roz wanted to continue the success of his legacy by establishing operational viability.

'I had worked in roles where there had been a lot of structure and governance and I knew I could bring that [expertise]. Rob achieved incredible financial stability under his leadership, and I wanted to establish structural foundations.'

Under Roz's leadership, a range of resourcing policies were introduced as well as staffing structures and a review of the Constitution. A governance committee was established, a formal recruitment process for board membership was adopted and this paved the way for several important board appointments, including the organisation's first alumni, Siobhan Stagg.

At a time when the organisation was celebrating its 10-year anniversary, Roz was focused on establishing a lean but equitable model to support the organisation's future.

During her tenure many innovations were seeded: a pilot international study tour, the establishment of an alumni grants program, ground-breaking virtual reality projects and establishing a vital foothold within the arts precinct, to name a few.

Reflecting upon her time as Chair, her most memorable moments came from being part of the community. She looks fondly on performances such as Stacey Alleaume singing in her home and hearing Lauren Fagan perform at the Vestey home in the Cotswolds.

'The engagement part of the organisation is so important to me,' said Roz, 'and the way Melba does this is unique. We get to know the artists, which I consider a great privilege. What we get from them is just as valuable as what they get from us.'

'I've always loved working with young people. And this organisation just grabbed my heart and my spirit. I can see the product of my contribution, out there on the international stages.'

Roz's skilled leadership has placed Melba in an enviable position of strength from which to grow. A gift for which we are all grateful and will be felt by generations of artists to come.

Thank you, Roz.

In conversation with Teresa Desmarchelier

Mentor and diction coach

When ten-year-old Teresa Desmarchelier left Piacenza, her Italian birthplace, to start a new life in Queensland, she couldn't have known she would become one of Australia's most well-regarded diction coaches. Speaking no English, she began to learn, intrigued by the differing accents, from her ocker neighbours in suburban Brisbane, to the nuns at school. Learning to discriminate between accents trained Teresa's ears early, honing the listening skills which would prove so essential in her line of work, as well as starting a lifelong passion for languages.

Teresa works as a diction coach with the University of Queensland's School of Music and opera companies around Australia. Most recently she coached Opera Queensland's cast, including Melba alumni Jeremy Kleeman, Timothy Newton, Xenia Puskarz Thomas and Samuel Piper, in *The Marriage of Figaro*.

But what exactly does a diction coach do?

'The goal for a singer in the classical tradition is to sing with all of the qualities of a native artist. We essentially have to fool the public into thinking that we're fluent in the language.' Diction is more than correct pronunciation, although that is essential. It is also about getting the right rhythm, intonation, style and expression.

Beginning by relaxing a singer, dispelling any fears about learning another language, Teresa



Stephen Marsh and Adam McMillan with Teresa Desmarchelier

assures them 'that it is possible to sing well in a foreign language once they understand what is involved and how it can be achieved'.

Teresa invites them to think how they learned their native language. It's critical to know your own well in order to learn another. As a child this process relied exclusively on the *ear* to discriminate sounds and only much later on their written form. That's why it isn't possible for a singer to do everything in twelve months; Teresa shares a method 'to telescope what a native speaker has done over many years.'

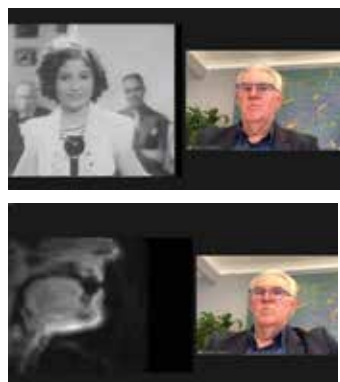
Teresa asks them to read their opera text as if it were a play. How they read informs what she needs to focus upon.

Next the singers write out their text, breaking words into syllables. Syllables 'are the building

blocks. They need to know how to pronounce each syllable and put them together smoothly.' Then words can be linked into phrases. Now the singer learns what to accentuate, to create the drama of their interpretation. Observed singing with a pianist helps to refine this process. After all, singing is different from speaking and their music will influence the way sounds are made.

The International Phonetical Alphabet is a critical tool. It's a special alphabet, each symbol representing a sound and, once mastered, helps one pronounce any word accurately and confidently. Dictionaries are wonderful tools, too, as are idiomatic opera translations, such as those created by singer Nico Castel. Artists also need to do language courses so that they can acquire grammar and vocabulary.

'What I like about Melba is the appreciation of the language work that must be done if artists want to be considered for the profession. Melba understands what the singers need to succeed in the business.' Teresa admires our artists who, so far away from traditional centres of opera, devote themselves to mastering this craft. It is particularly rewarding for her to observe the progress made by this year's cohort under difficult circumstances. Perhaps her greatest joy is sharing with the artists a love and curiosity for language that will enthuse them for the years of study and refinement ahead.



Glenn Winslade

AUDIENCE with a MENTOR



Graham Abbott



Dr Erin Helyard

Throughout the uncertainty of the past two years, Melba Opera Trust has sustained its program delivery by adopting a hybrid approach of online and face-to-face learning.

When it became apparent that sustained lockdowns and state border closures were going to impact event and performance plans this year, we quickly looked for alternative ways to involve our community and provide a unique insight into the Melba Program.

Audience with a Mentor is a webinar series featuring Melba Mentors discussing a variety of industry related topics.

'When we came up with the idea for *Audience with a Mentor*, we wanted to give our supporters a taste of what the artists experience; to see first-hand the calibre of Mentors our artists have the opportunity to work with, which is only

possible because of their generosity', said CEO, Amy Black.

'We also know how tough things are at the moment and we wanted to help brighten the day by introducing something a little new.'

The inaugural series included three webinars throughout September, beginning with renowned tenor and voice teacher Glenn Winslade discussing *The Human Voice and Vocal Health*.

It was the launch that captured Annie Gibson, watching from lockdown in Sydney. 'Just watched and listened to your first webinar and was thrilled by it – utterly fascinating and clearly explained, even though I am not a singer – by a very long chalk!' she said.

In the second, *Who Wears the Pants?* conductor and media personality Graham Abbott considered the voice types typically associated with pants

roles in opera and Dr Erin Helyard, Artistic Director of Pinchgut Opera, talked participants through the audience experience of *A Night at the Baroque Opera*.

It takes a leap of faith to dive into something new and we extend heartfelt gratitude to all who registered, the artistic and technical teams behind the content and the mentors themselves who were generous enough to share their expertise with all of us.

Audience with a Mentor will return in 2022, and details will be included in the regular Melba Opera Trust e-newsletters. You can subscribe to the e-newsletters here if you don't already receive them.

www.melbaoperatrust.com.au/subscribe/

Always a Melba: launching the Alumni Grant Program

At the heart of Melba Opera Trust is a commitment to artistic excellence and the pursuit of long and sustainable careers. The Alumni Grant Program will build on the strength of the Melba Program by funding grants to support professional career development for alumni.

Current global conditions are challenging businesses and professionals across the world. The arts and cultural industries have been impacted more than most and the last two years have been plagued by interruptions and serious challenges for our Melba alumni network.

Even before the pandemic, the Melba Opera Trust board was seeking to develop a structure to sustain support for Melba Artists throughout their career development. With recent events, the need became more urgent and we are proud to announce the establishment of the Alumni Grant Program.

Not only will this project stand by our initial investment in our young opera singers and répétiteurs, but it will also ensure that alumni are supported to be their personal best throughout every turn of their careers.

During their time in the Melba Program, Melba Artists are prepared with artistic and professional skills to help them *launch* a sustainable career. When our artists complete the Melba Program they are faced with a new chapter in their journey; one that is punctuated by challenges and a continual need to learn or refine.

Melba's CEO Amy Black explains, 'Our mentor program is unique. It helps our artists build their levels of resilience and curiosity to be sustained into their careers. But inevitably there are many bridges to cross before establishing a successful opera career.'

Operatic development is not a sprint: it's more of a marathon that requires time, commitment and financial investment.'

Amy describes the purpose of the new Alumni Grant Program as 'a way to support Melba Artists to grow and sustain their careers. We want our artists to always have the freedom to seek out higher levels of personal, professional and business mastery. Once a Melba, always a Melba!'

Others with a vested interest in this project include visionary donors who have committed to endowing grants within the new alumni program.

John and Elizabeth Wright-Smith are passionate about being able to provide young talented singers and répétiteurs with an opportunity to have the space and time to develop their skills and knowledge, and fulfill their passions and dreams.

As John explains, 'Life is not a straight line. What my wife Liz and I enjoy most is being an integral piece of Melba's system. We see our role as investors in preparing wonderfully talented young artists to arrive on the world stage.' And John's motivation is truly driven by joy. He goes on to say, 'As the artists' paths evolve, we follow their progress with pride and travel vicariously along-side them, ready to celebrate the milestone achievements of flourishing singing careers.'

Mary-Jane Gething has pledged two endowments to the initiative: one in her name and another in her daughter's name. 'Our involvement with Melba through the Joseph Sambrook Opera Scholarship has been enormously rewarding. The satisfaction of seeing the artists in the Melba Program grow is immeasurable, and now we want to support that continued career growth.'

How you can help

The inspiring lead gifts of John, Liz and Mary-Jane have enabled us to launch this initiative with a modest perpetual endowment. To increase the level of grants distributed to alumni, the endowment needs to be bolstered.

Donors are asked to consider extending their support for Melba to include an additional gift towards the general Alumni Grant Program endowment.

Helen Woods, Melba's head of philanthropy, acknowledges 'we're keenly aware that the current Melba Program is not yet fully endowed and we don't want to divert support away from this critical path, but we hope the community also recognises the urgent need to provide complementary support to our alumni too. We're hopeful donors will consider stretching their support to include both these critical areas.'

As has been the case within the current Melba Program, the Alumni Grant Program offers donors the opportunity to establish named perpetual endowments through lifetime giving and bequests.

For more information about this program please contact
Helen Woods, Philanthropy
hwoods@melbaoperatrust.com.au



Dear Melba Family

Our London journey has become a reality! A few weeks ago we shuffled off the plane with our whole life packed into two suitcases. We arrived at our new home, Goodenough College, and were welcomed by a gorgeous community. We are meeting people from all over the world with many talents and skill sets. Something that binds us all together is our passion for our chosen studies, and a craving for community amidst this pandemic.

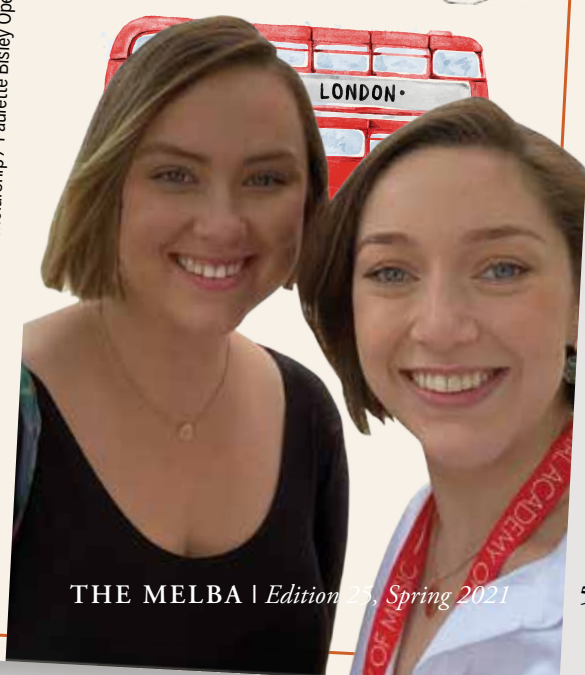
We have attended concerts at the Royal Albert Hall for BBC Proms and next on our list is *Rigoletto* at the Royal Opera House. We are in Orientation Week at the Royal Academy of Music and have already sung for the remarkable tutors that will be guiding us. The halls are filled with encouragement and hope.

We've also caught up with alum Rebecca Hart and next weekend we're looking forward to seeing Cleo Lee-McGowan, Katherine and Georgia at an Aussie BBQ!

Sending much love from London.

Chloe Harris (left); Eleanor Blakemore / Ryman Healthcare Opera Scholarship
Emilia Bertolini; John & Elizabeth Wright-Smith Scholarship / Paulette Bisley Opera Scholarship

Chloe and Emilia



In opera, the learning

Melba artists complete the program ready for the next chapter in their career, but operatic

Stephen Marsh

EMERGING CAREER

At the end of his time in the Melba Program, Stephen Marsh planned the next stages of his emerging opera career. He decided to pursue additional training overseas and apply to young artist programs at Bayerische Staatsoper in Munich and the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

‘It was my intention after Melba to go overseas for an exploratory period of time,’ he said.

In preparation for his live audition for the Lindemann Young Artist Development Program (Metropolitan Opera), Stephen first travelled to Germany to receive intensive coaching from staff at the Bayerische Staatsoper, including Artistic Director of the opera studio, Tobias Truniger.

Stephen was able to return to Europe this year to make his international debut at the 2021 Verbier Festival.

In New York, Stephen re-connected with his friend and mentor Simon O'Neill, whom he first met in the Melba Program.

Whilst in Europe, on Truniger's recommendation, the director of the Verbier Festival Academy approached Stephen about joining the 2020 festival. Within days, Stephen had been offered the role of Marcello in the Academy production of *La bohème*.

Unfortunately, the pandemic had other plans. Stephen was in Milan when the virus broke in Italy, but he thankfully made it home to Australia, just days before the country was shut down.

‘My personal experience of 2020 was one of self-discovery. I lost five contracts, but I learned that the preparation you do behind the scenes is just as important. I wasn't performing, but I kept singing. I thought about my trajectory and reflected on what I wanted for my career.’

This preparation was rewarded when, in November 2020, Stephen became the inaugural recipient of the Michael Stubbs Malcolm Roberts prize. The prize provided full-time work with Victorian Opera, regular coaching and development with Richard Mills and Phoebe Briggs, and the invaluable experience of working within an opera company.

‘The advice I was given overseas was that the best thing I can do is to spend time in the fabric of a company. Absorb everything you can and be part of the process. Getting a living wage is a substantial financial prize; I'm thankful to Michael and Malcolm for that every day.’

Stephen was able to return to Europe this year to make his international debut at the 2021 Verbier Festival.

‘I still reflect so much, and often, about the experience I had at Melba. The work we did with Sharolyn and the coaches and the all-encompassing career process. I draw on it on a daily basis.’

Paulette Bisley Opera Scholarship, Eleanor Blakemore Opera Society Scholarship, 2018, 2019.



Stephen Marsh as the Giant in *The Selfish Giant*, Victorian Opera.
Image: Charlie Kinross



Alexandra Flood in Paris for her debut

Alexandra Flood

MID CAREER

When Alexandra Flood visited Paris last year, she used the time to explore professional opportunities at Opéra national de Paris.

‘I did a professional development course with Hedwig Fassbender, a German voice teacher based in Paris, and her husband René Massis who runs the Massis Agency,’ she said. ‘They were very supportive of me.’

When she heard Paris Opéra was looking for a guest artist to perform the role of Female Chorus in Benjamin Britten's *Rape of Lucretia*, she thought she would stand out as a native English speaker in this critical narration role. She put herself forward with Fassbender's recommendation and was offered the role immediately.

The experience of working in Paris is very different to Germany.

‘Paris Opéra is different to the German or Austrian houses because they don't have ensemble contracts. Paris Opéra is a seasonal house, so they only hire the singers as guests.’

In many ways, this creates a competitive environment, but it also gives a performer the opportunity to put themselves forward for roles that, in Germany, would go to contracted

never stops...

development takes time and focus. We interview three alumni at different stages of the journey.

singers. For Alexandra, an essential part of standing out to a director is communicating in their native language.

‘[*Rape of Lucretia* director, Jeanne Candel] and I spoke exclusively in French, and it meant we had a more intimate understanding of what we wanted to achieve. It led to such an amazing outcome,’ she said. ‘Anything you can do to set yourself apart is essential. I’m conscious of having meaningful interactions with directors.’

Alexandra travels all over Europe and the world in her thriving and varied freelance career, and she shared some brass-tacks tips for managing it. From finding great coffee to packing light, Alexandra has a process that she has honed for her life of travel.

‘Obviously healthy artistic practices and habits are essential. The first thing I do when I get to a new country is I go to the opera house and the practice rooms,’ she said.

Creating a community and nurturing connections is equally important.

‘I consciously invest in my professional and personal networks in the world. I know that wherever I go, I have community. The vast majority of my work comes from stage directors who have worked with me before and book me again.’

For Alexandra, an essential part of standing out to a director is communicating in their native language.

Since relocating to Germany in 2016, Alexandra has returned home to Australia annually, but it is usually far more work than holiday.

‘I feel a strong sense of duty to return to Australia and re-invest in my learning because I really wouldn’t be where I am without the support of several major Australian foundations, including Melba,’ she said.

‘Believing that I have something inside me that the world will be better off if I share. That’s what it is to be an artist. Melba validated that for me.’

RJ Hamer Opera Scholarship, 2014.



Samuel Dale Johnson. Image: Simon Pauly

Samuel Dale Johnson

ESTABLISHED ARTIST

Samuel Dale Johnson is a fest artist at Deutsche Oper Berlin. A fest contract is a highly sought-after opportunity for opera singers. The system is unique to the opera houses of Germany, Austria and Switzerland who produce multiple concurrent productions of major operas. Fest artists are paid a salary to sing the principal roles.

As a fest artist Sam’s daily practice involves studying new roles or refreshing roles he has performed before.

‘I might be expected to sing Figaro in *The Barber of Seville* one night, the next night Don Giovanni,’ says Sam. ‘and the next night I could be singing a significant but supporting role like Mathieu in *Andrea Chénier*.’

After completing the Melba Program in 2013 and his Bachelor of Music in Brisbane, Sam went directly to Europe to continue his language study.

‘When I left Australia, knowing I wanted to be a professional opera singer, I went to Siena, Italy and I studied at the Dante Alighieri School. Any opportunity I got, any downtime I had, I would go back to the Dante Alighieri. Or I would go to the Neue Schule in Berlin.’

In 2014, Sam was one of three Melbas (including Lauren Fagan and Samuel Sakker) to be accepted

Sam’s advice to artists navigating their early careers? Focus on your instrument.

into the prestigious Jette Parker Young Artist Programme at Royal Opera House in London. As a young Australian, the programme offered the perfect springboard into the industry, and prepared him for the daily rigours of a career as a full-time opera singer.

‘I was working with the industry’s best,’ says Sam, ‘and it was very demanding. You have to sing every day for a substantial amount of time. Now that I’ve been working professionally for a number of years I know that it’s normal to be singing that much!’

Based in Berlin, Sam’s fest contract affords him a stable foundation, but still allows time to travel as a guest artist. He recently made his US debut as Count Almaviva in the Laurent Pelly production of *The Marriage of Figaro* for Santa Fe Opera. This is the same role and same company where Sir Bryn Terfel made his US debut. After Santa Fe, he travelled to Russia to perform Don Giovanni before returning to Berlin. It’s a busy schedule, but one that he feels prepared for.

Sam’s advice to artists navigating their early careers? Focus on your instrument.

‘Just be the best artist you can be. Take the opportunity to play with social media and work on repertoire, but honestly, the thing that will carry you is your technique. Let that be number one!’

RJ Hamer Opera Scholarship, 2013.

Uncovering a hidden legacy of Indigenous storytelling

Tiriki Onus is an opera singer, academic and activist and the inaugural recipient of the Harold Blair Opera Scholarship at Melba Opera Trust.

In 2014, in an old suitcase belonging to his grandfather Bill, Tiriki stumbled across still images of young Aboriginal men painted in preparation for a Corroboree. Shortly afterwards, Tiriki would receive a phone call from the film writer and director Alex Morgan telling him that he had uncovered silent footage that he believed may be linked to his grandfather.

The discoveries marked the beginning of a six-year journey by Alec and Tiriki as co-directors of the 2020 documentary, *Ablaze*, and culminating in Tiriki's filmmaking debut at the 2021 Melbourne International Film Festival.

In narrative filmmaking, it's called the 'inciting incident'; the moment that a protagonist accepts the quest that the film demands of them.

Ablaze is precisely that: a biographical detective story that follows Tiriki as he uncovers the unknown history of his grandfather. The lost footage may mean Bill was not only an entrepreneur, performer, theatre director and civil rights activist, but possibly Australia's first Indigenous filmmaker.

Throughout the film, Tiriki explores his grandfather's compelling history and the legacy



Uncle Jack Charles and Tiriki Onus in *Ablaze*



Tiriki Onus. Image: Giulia McGauran



From Tiriki Onus' film, *Ablaze*

he left as a storyteller and performer. And this defines the most poignant theme of *Ablaze*: the power of performance. For Bill Onus, social and political discourse belonged not only in parliament, but on stages and screens.

Umbrella Entertainment will be distributing Ablaze to theatres next year.

Harold Blair Opera Scholarship, 2012, 2013.

Throughout Ablaze, Tiriki Onus explores the legacy he carries forward as a storyteller and performer.



Hi Folks

I hope everyone is keeping well throughout these tricky times we find ourselves in. Sending lots of love from Sydney, where I'm keeping as busy as possible.

I'm keeping my days occupied not just by singing, but also working part-time at a north shore butcher. How many singing butchers do you know?

I'm also busy preparing for several exciting projects next year, but sadly none that I'm allowed to announce! Stay tuned!

I hope it's not too long until we can all get back into the concert hall and start making music again. Until then stay safe, and we'll see you soon!

Louis

Louis Hurley: Joseph Sambrook Opera Scholarship



Hello from Sydney!

The current change of pace has given me plenty of time to contemplate what 2022 may look like for a freelance artist. And I've had the opportunity to flex some of my newly learnt networking and business skills.

I'm continuing my language work with weekly Italian sessions and have been reading through repertoire. The abundance of time has allowed me to explore what kind of music speaks to me.

I have also been enjoying having time to read and have started to develop a connection to Australian literature – which is exciting! Extra leisure time has led to investing in my physical health and I have no doubt it's helping me keep me relatively sane thus far!

Take care.

Su

Su Choung: Margaret Schofield Opera Scholarship, Mel & Nina Waters Award

Announcing the 2021 Dame Heather Begg Memorial Award

Fleuranne Brockway is the 2021 recipient of the prestigious Dame Heather Begg Memorial Award.

Established through Dame Heather Begg's estate, the \$25,000 award is given annually to exceptional opera singers establishing their careers.

Trustee of the Award, Moffatt Oxenbould AM, feels that Dame Heather's foresight is particularly important given the challenges facing artists today.

'In these unsettled times we can be especially grateful that young Australian and New Zealand artists of quality can, at an early stage in their professional careers, benefit from this generous Award.'

Since completing her scholarship with Melba in 2018, Fleuranne has been widely acknowledged as a star on the rise. As the recipient of the Australian International Opera Award she travelled to London to complete her Masters of Music at the Royal College of Music. Following this, she began a full-time ensemble contract at Hessisches Staatstheater in Wiesbaden, made possible by the German-Australian Opera Grant.

Fleuranne's tenure at Staatstheater Wiesbaden has been extended until 2024. Her upcoming performances include the title role in *Hansel and Gretel* and will appear in *Don Carlo*, *Il tritico*, *Elektra* and *The Magic Flute*.

For Fleuranne, being selected for the Award is especially meaningful.

'Receiving this award is a very full-circle moment for me as Dame Heather Begg was one of the reasons I came to opera in the first place. My first operetta was a re-run of Opera Australia's *The Mikado*, with Dame Heather Begg as Katisha.'

Dame Heather Begg was a New Zealand born mezzo-soprano whose career began in Australia and took her all over the world. She shared the stage with opera giants such as Dame Joan Sutherland and Luciano Pavarotti. The Dame Heather Begg Memorial Award is a legacy of her significant contribution to opera and ensures that young singers can continue to pursue excellence in their own careers.

Fleuranne Brockway was the 2018 recipient of the Annie McFarling Opera Scholarship and Ruskin Opera Scholarship.



Fleuranne Brockway as Annina in *Der Rosenkavalier*, Wiesbaden 2019. Images: Opernfotografie Detlef Kurth



Hello to you all from sunny Sydney!

Once again, we find ourselves with plenty of time on our hands, but I'm fortunate to have lots to do to keep myself occupied.

I've spent these last months preparing applications to U.S colleges, grant applications, language study, voice lessons, coaching, and assisting Melba Opera Trust deliver its inaugural webinar series, *Audience with a Mentor*.

In my downtime I'm taking bush-walks in my area, kayaking, and catching up (virtually) with friends and family. It's important to stay connected and getting out for fresh air doesn't hurt either.

Thank you for all your support during this time, and I hope to see you all very soon!

Nathan

Nathan Bryon: Ruskin Opera Scholarship



Melba Artists in the spotlight

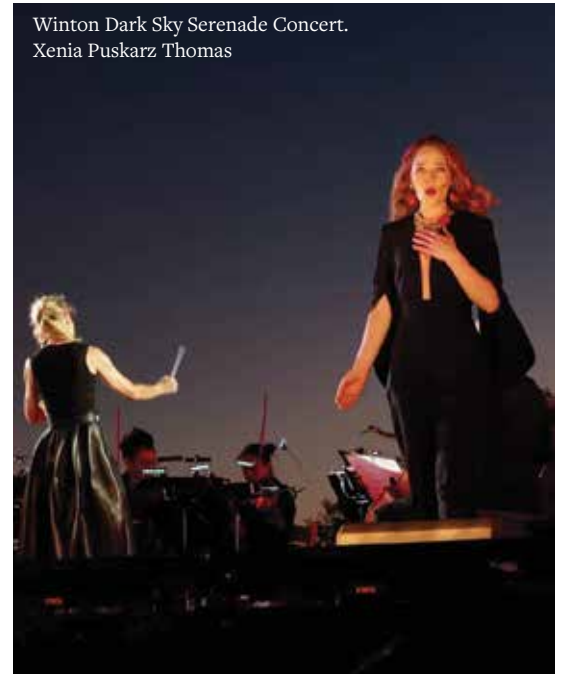
Despite the current environment, Melba artists continue to shine



The Marriage of Figaro, Opera Queensland.
Xenia Puskarz Thomas



Barber of Seville, WA Opera. Michael Petruccelli



Winton Dark Sky Serenade Concert.
Xenia Puskarz Thomas



Top
Melba Circle. Louis Hurley, Katherine Allen,
Georgia Melville
Above
Melba – Her Legacy in Concert. Sharolyn
Kimmerley AM, Rebecca Gulinello, Samuel Sakker
Right and below
Cleo Lee-McGowan in the Opera Makers with
Guildhall School of Music and Drama
Below right
Melba Circle. Louis Hurley, Georgia Melville



The Marriage of Figaro,
Opera Queensland.
Jeremy Kleeman



Above
The Marriage of Figaro, Opera Queensland.
Xenia Puskarz Thomas, Samuel Piper,
Irena Lysiuk

Left
Melba – Her Legacy in Concert.
Sharolyn Kimmerley AM, Su Choung,
Samuel Sakker, Georgia Melville, Nathan Bryon,
Rebecca Gulinello, Emilia Bertolini,
Chloe Harris, Emily Edmonds, Louis Hurley,
Katherine Allen, Mairi Nicolson



Melba Circle. Georgia Melville

Hello from London

I am absolutely loving it here, despite the shock of going from lockdown to the hustle and bustle of a big city.

I'm staying in the Lambeth/Westminster area with my boyfriend Henry. It's a short tube ride to the Royal College of Music, or an hour-long stroll passing Big Ben, Buckingham Palace and Hyde Park.

I'm going into college every day to explore the state-of-the-art facilities. It's a magical place, directly opposite the Royal Albert Hall!

Last Sunday, I went to see Sabine Devieilhe and Alexandre Tharaud in recital at the Wigmore Hall. I also got £10 tickets to the opening night of *Die Zauberflöte* at ROH. The atmosphere was electric.

All best.

Georgia xxx

Georgia Melville: Amelia Joscelyne Memorial Scholarship



LONDON



Melba Circle. Katherine Allen



Melba - Her Legacy in Concert.
Nathan Bryon, Georgia Melville



Melba Circle.
Louis Hurley



Melba - Her Legacy in Concert. Chloe Harris, Katherine Allen, Emilia Bertolini, Georgia Melville



Glyndebourne Festival. Siobhan Stagg



Brenton Spiteri in
L'occasione fa il ladro



Above
Melba Circle. Su Choung,
Louis Hurley, Katherine
Allen, Georgia Melville

Left
Rigoletto, Bregenzer
Festspiele. Stacey Alleaume

Right
La traviata. Lauren Fagan

Far right
The Marriage of Figaro,
Opera Queensland.
Katie Stenzel, Timothy
Newton



Hello from London

I'm fast approaching my one month anniversary in this vivacious city and time has flown.

From the moment I arrived and ventured out to my local high street, there was such a feeling of life and zest about the area. The Saturday markets were up and the place was crowded with people from all over the world.

I've attended two concerts at the Wigmore Hall, two concerts at the Royal Albert Hall, and one sunny Sunday afternoon concert at Hampstead Heath!

We're in the middle of orientation week at the Royal College of Music and I already have so many exciting classes, auditions, and concerts to work towards. I couldn't be happier to start this exciting and challenging new adventure.

Take care.

Katherine

Katherine Allen: Dame Nellie Melba Scholarship, Annie McFarling Opera Scholarship, Patrick & Vivian Gordon Award



The Marriage of Figaro, Opera Queensland. Images: Jade Ferguson with Visual Poets Society
Opera Makers with Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Images: Matthew Ferguson
Melba - Her Legacy in Concert. Images: Melbourne Digital Concert Hall
Winton Dark Sky Serenade Concert. Image: Frank Mercurio
La traviata. Image: Ali Wright. *Rigoletto*. Image: Karl Forster
Glyndebourne Festival. Images: Richard Hubert Smith
Barber of Seville, WA Opera. Image: James Rogers
L'occasione fa il ladro. Image: Tristram Kenton
Melba Circle. Images: David Ng



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With artists and mentors being located across Australia and overseas, travel is a feature of the Melba Program and quality accommodation is something we take seriously.

Melba Opera Trust is proud to announce an accommodation partnership with Quest St Kilda Road.

A core value of Quest St Kilda Road is bringing people together. Their commitment to working with like-minded organisations made a partnership with Melba Opera Trust a natural fit. ‘By nature, our industries are keen to work together. Teams build the best outcomes’, says Cat Mapperson, from Quest St Kilda Road.

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