

The Melba

Magazine of the Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust

OUR 2013 SCHOLARS

A NEW PATRON FOR THE MELBA

ANNOUNCING...

THE INAUGURAL
REPETITEUR SCHOLARSHIP

2013 SCHOLARS AT COOMBE,
THE MELBA ESTATE

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A NOTE FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER



IN 2013 OUR THREE-STREAM PROGRAM IS AS ROBUST AS EVER AND WE ANNOUNCE OUR LARGEST AND MOST FAR-REACHING SPREAD OF SCHOLARS YET. THE SEEDS FOR THIS SUCCESS WERE SOWN IN 2007, WHEN THE BOARD MADE THE DIFFICULT AND COURAGEOUS DECISION TO ALTER THE COURSE OF THE MELBA'S FUTURE. THE OBJECTIVE WAS TO ENSURE THAT WE COULD CARRY FORWARD DAME NELLIE MELBA'S VISION OF SUPPORTING AND NURTURING AUSTRALIA'S MOST PROMISING YOUNG OPERA SINGERS.

While the precise means to achieve this would crystallise in the following years, from the onset our driving force was Melba's own philosophy of helping singers to become 'more than a voice'. This meant that, in addition to developing vocal artistry, we aimed to produce well-rounded artists by also encouraging the development of languages, stagecraft, presentation, performance skills and professional development. We established funding for scholars to undertake a tailored, individual study program addressing each of these key areas — now known as our Scholarship Program.



Melba Scholars with Bryn Terfel

Dame Nellie also trained her young singers in the 'business' of singing. A revolutionary approach in Melba's day, this has become the strength of our model. Like Melba, we recognised the value of aspiring opera singers considering themselves as a 'small businesses' and the need for business know-how to support a professional freelance career in the operatic industry. This became the building block of our Mentor Program.

The Melba Conservatorium had a rich history of providing valuable performance experience to its students and this quality was to continue through the new organisation. From this our Melba Artists performance program was born.

The thread that held the vision together was maintaining the Melba Conservatorium's nurturing community whilst retaining independence and flexibility. Of utmost importance was to establish a financially secure future so that this new program would enjoy the longevity of its century-old predecessor.

Other ambitions at the time included the development of Indigenous operatic potential as well as repetiteurs and directors. The first was realised in 2012 with seed funding to launch the Harold Blair Opera Scholarship to be awarded to a promising young Indigenous singer and the latter this year via our inaugural Repetiteur Scholarship, made possible by the Helen McPherson Smith Trust.

Six years later, I look back at these aspirations and proudly acknowledge how our organisation has journeyed while retaining our singular link to Dame Nellie herself. We welcome with gratitude our new Patron, Saffron Foster, the great-granddaughter of Dame Nellie Melba. Our artistic integrity is strengthened by the high calibre of national and international artists, helping to deliver our programs. At the end of April scholars were privileged to



Melba Scholars with Susan Bullock

attend a session with Welsh baritone Bryn Terfel followed later in the same week by a full day master class and discussion with UK soprano Susan Bullock. Later this year we welcome back Cheryl Barker, Yvonne Kenny and New York Director Chuck Hudson for their third consecutive year as Mentors. They are joined by a host of other experts who generously and enthusiastically impart their knowledge to our young scholars and alumni.

The Melba program has reached its strides and we are delivering what was merely a promise six years ago. To successfully meet the remaining challenge of establishing financial security, we continue to grow our capital endowment. Our goal to be self-sustaining will be achieved with an endowment of \$7million by 2015.

We are over half way there and I sincerely thank those supporters who have contributed and continue to contribute to this achievement.

As the end of the financial year approaches, we ask our community to please consider offering your support by making a tax-deductible donation. The merit of our program is clearly seen in the progress of our scholars, which you will read about in these pages. Your donation allows us to keep our eyes focused on the future and the preparation of Australia's best young singers. Thank you and please enjoy this winter edition of The Melba.

AMY MCPARTLAN-BLACK

ABOUT THE MELBA

THE DAME NELLIE MELBA OPERA TRUST PREPARES AUSTRALIA'S MOST PROMISING YOUNG OPERA SINGERS WITH THE ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT AS WELL AS BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY SKILLS TO UNDERPIN A PROFESSIONAL OPERATIC CAREER.

- To do this, our scholars participate in three complementary programs:
- Our **Melba Scholarship Program** provides funding so that our singers can undertake individual study in vocal development, languages, stagecraft and professional development.
 - Our **Melba Mentor Program** focuses on 'the business' of singing, providing workshops and seminars with industry experts on topics such as legal, accounting, networking, negotiation, proposal

writing, media training, time management and more. We also host a range of master classes with visiting artists, conductors, directors and repetiteurs.

- Our **Melba Artists Program** creates performance opportunities for our singers to put into practice what they are learning and to gain experience as freelance artists.

THESE PROGRAMS PROVIDE A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO OPERATIC DEVELOPMENT WITH AN EMPHASIS ON EXCELLENCE AND PRODUCING POLISHED YOUNG PROFESSIONALS.



THE MELBA
WELCOMES NEW
PATRON:

THE HONOURABLE SAFFRON FOSTER

THE MELBA IS THRILLED THAT THE HONOURABLE SAFFRON FOSTER, GRANDDAUGHTER OF OUR FOUNDING PATRON, PAMELA, LADY VESTEY, HAS AGREED TO CONTINUE THE FAMILY TRADITION AS PATRON.



Patron The Hon. Saffron Foster with Founding Patron Mary-Jane Joscelyne and 2013 scholars at Coombe Cottage

"My grandmother would have been so happy that The Melba asked me to be patron. I feel very honoured to be carrying on. I do hope that I will be of some use and, with my planned trips to Australia, I hope we can do more and more at Coombe Cottage for much-needed fundraising, especially when the new restaurant opens."

Saffron's interest and support has also extended beyond Australia. She has already attended a performance in London by Melba alumna Lauren Fagan, who is currently studying at the Royal College of Music, and Saffron is "much looking forward to the next one".

Saffron is the fourth in the family to hold the position of Patron. Lady Vestey's goddaughter, Gardi Seymour, describes the lineage:

"After Madame Melba, Evie Armstrong, who was married to Madame Melba's only son George Armstrong, was the next patron from the family. Before her marriage she was an opera singer herself, known as Evelyn Doyle, but when she married George, it was decided that one professional singer in the family was enough! She had a wonderful ear for music and to me was an enchanting character, full of fun and surprises, and generous to a fault. It was entirely fitting that my godmother was next in line and now Saffron."

In early February this year, Saffron flew in from London to attend a reception and soirée at Coombe Cottage held in her honour, a fitting beginning to her new role.

"I did so enjoy the afternoon at Coombe. I have spent so many happy times with Grandma there, so it was strange and quite sad that she was not there. Being her eldest granddaughter, I do think we had a special bond. But I know this will get easier, and it was really wonderful to hear the 2013 scholars sing in that splendid drawing room surrounded by memories of Melba. I am very much looking forward to coming back later in the year to hear the singers' progress."

Saffron's first event as patron was equally appreciated by others in attendance. To Gardi, it was a magical event and the perfect opportunity to be there for "what was possibly the start of the young singers' careers".

"It was also wonderful to be able to chat with the performers afterwards. What a friendly and talented bunch they were, including their brilliant accompanist Amir Farid! I felt very much that the ghosts of Evie and Pam were with us and how proud they would have been."

For Amir, inaugural recipient of The Melba's Repetiteur Scholarship, the feeling was mutual.

"It was a great joy to play for the talented Melba scholars. But to have the opportunity to make music with them in the very same room where Dame Nellie held her soirées and to play the very same piano she would have played was an event I will never forget."

The singers, too, found performing in Dame Nellie's residence inspirational. For Tiriki Onus, it was also "a lovely opportunity to meet many of the people who make the Melba programs possible". Brenton Spiteri noted that it was "a great way to commence our year as Melba scholars" and Emily Edmonds added that she "found singing for such an appreciative audience a sheer joy, as was meeting and speaking with guests afterwards".

Retired council member of 31 years Jenny Sutherland, whose father Thomas Mitchell was Melba's nephew, sums up The Melba's sentiments perfectly.

"The Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust is so privileged to have The Honourable Saffron Foster as its Patron. Saffron is a very dear, sensitive, fun-loving young mother of four children. She will be a great support and we are very lucky. Her patronage is music to my ears."

INTRODUCING OUR 2013 SCHOLARS

WE AT THE MELBA ARE VERY EXCITED ABOUT OUR NEW GROUP OF SCHOLARS. THE POOL OF APPLICANTS CONTINUES TO GROW AND THIS YEAR IS NO EXCEPTION. OUR 11 SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS FOR 2013 HAIL NOT ONLY FROM VICTORIA, BUT ALSO FROM NEW SOUTH WALES, QUEENSLAND AND WESTERN AUSTRALIA, TESTIMONY TO THE FACT THAT THE TRUST'S PROGRAM IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY WELL KNOWN AND HIGHLY RESPECTED.

LADIES OF THE MELBA:

PANAYIOTA KALATZIS (SOPRANO), LEILAH FOX (SOPRANO), REBECCA GULINELLO (SOPRANO) AND EMILY EDMONDS (MEZZO SOPRANO)

It's always interesting to know what has influenced people's choice of career and perhaps particularly so for music, which involves hard work, commitment and passion, usually from an early age. And those who choose such a career are often asked whether they come from a musical background. While Emily, Leilah, Rebecca and Pana are the first in their families to pursue it as a profession, music has been very much present in their respective upbringings and they have all enjoyed the support of their families in their opera-singing pursuits. They have also been fortunate enough to have astute music teachers who recognised their potential.

Rebecca's early musical environment revolved around her church community, but it was her year 12 voice teacher who recognised the classical potential in her voice and encouraged her to audition for VCA to pursue further tertiary training.

Emily's first experience of music came in a different form.

"My family are actually all wonderfully talented at sport! But music and performance have always been a part of my life, as I grew up with family members playing piano beautifully."

Like most young singing students, Emily didn't really know what opera involved when she started singing, nor that it could actually be a career path. It was her canny singing teacher who steered her in the right direction.

"I remember when my first singing teacher gave me a DVD of a Glyndebourne production of *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and my world just opened up. I didn't realise that music could be so beautiful, storytelling so wonderful, or that the human voice could make such extraordinary sounds. This was the start of my discovery, which has continued to delight me at every turn."

Like Emily, Leilah was fortunate to have good mentors, particularly

during her high school years. They encouraged her towards classical voice studies, as her sound lent itself naturally to this genre, though she had always loved singing, no matter what style. Her affinity with singing was perhaps a natural outcome of having a musical Welsh father, but it emanated from her mother's side as well.

"My father played cello, guitar and saxophone among other instruments. His favourite composer was Richard Wagner and I grew up listening to his operas blasting out of the living room speakers. It's funny that my voice now seems to be heading towards the dramatic side of the soprano repertoire! My mother, who also loved opera and classical music, has a wonderful voice and played the piano from a young age as did her mother and grandmother."

Pana's path to opera started with musical theatre which was her first love. However, she took classical lessons and again it was an astute teacher who set her on the path to opera.

"Opera Queensland visited my school and my music teacher suggested I attend the after-school program. They realised some potential and suggested I audition for the Queensland Conservatorium. I haven't looked back."

Within her family, it was Pana's aunt who was her primary musical influence. In fact she believes she may be living her aunt's own, personal dream.

"She started classical singing at the age of 12, but had a strict Greek upbringing and her father was adamant she should work hard in the family business and settle down at a young age. I think that if my grandfather had been supportive, she would have pursued singing. Her love for opera is still evident."

Pana was naturally very familiar with the legacy of Dame Nellie Melba, but heard about the Melba Trust

program through friends who had been scholars. They sang its praises and Pana was enthused with the idea of being mentored "by the best in the business". She decided to apply and is already especially enjoying meeting others at the same stage with the same passion.

Once successful, Melba Trust singers develop clear plans about where to focus their energies during their time as scholars. Development of vocal technique and artistry and the study of foreign languages are chief among their aims. But as Emily points out, there is much else to gain.

"I want to develop my art in as many ways as possible. This involves a well-rounded exploration of not only singing, but also acting, movement and stagecraft."

Leilah is excited about the opportunity she believes does not exist elsewhere to "bridge the gap between studying and performing". She sees the program as particularly relevant to the current developmental stages of her and her colleagues. Rebecca looks forward to "having the craft of singing nurtured" and especially to the vital performance opportunities afforded Melba scholars.

For Leilah and Pana their time as Melba scholars will also provide the opportunity to consolidate further their transitions from mezzo soprano to soprano. Leilah had been singing mezzo in Perth, but when she moved to Brisbane teacher Lisa Gasteen recognised characteristics in her voice that "no-one else had" and encouraged the switch. Initially terrified, she concentrated on her technique and her voice has naturally developed into the soprano fach. Pana experienced a similar anxiety at first because she had wanted to be a mezzo which, she feels, may have provided her with more opportunities. It's still a work in progress for her, but she is adapting fast and is growing to love the shift.

ARS

While our singers will be concentrating very hard on honing the art of singing during 2013, they also need to maintain balanced lives. Leilah feels it helps that most of her friends, if not all singers themselves, share her interest in music, while those who aren't musical are intrigued by and supportive of her uncommon career path. This helps her sustain good friendships alongside her work.

Rebecca also aims for a harmonious mix between work and play.

"I'm a social butterfly and an extrovert, and I think that a certain amount of exuberance is helpful also in one's career development. I am careful of conserving my voice leading up to a performance, but I believe the old adage of 'everything in moderation' is good to remember."

It certainly helps if other hobbies and social activities can in some way complement the singers' major focus. Rebecca's other interest is cosmetics, which she feels forms a nice counterpart to her singing.

"Good grooming is essential and this includes basic make-up application. It's a skill to be able to make the most of your physical features. It makes you feel good about yourself, which helps you to perform to the best of your ability, both off and on stage."

For Pana, it's jewellery:

"When shopping one day about a year ago, I saw a pair of earrings I loved but couldn't afford. I enjoy crafts, so I decided to make them myself and then people started commissioning me. This skill definitely comes in handy, as we have to be presentable as singers and tasteful jewellery adds the finishing touch to our outfits."



GENTLEMEN OF THE MELBA:

TIRIKI ONUS (BASS BARITONE), CHRISTIAN GILLETT (BASS BARITONE), MATTHEW REARDON (TENOR), ROBERT BARBARO (TENOR), AMIR FARID (REPETITEUR) AND BRENTON SPITERI (TENOR)

Like as with our ladies, the families of first-time Melba scholars Robert, Christian, Samuel and Matthew have encouraged their sons' musical activities, without necessarily all being musical themselves.

Robert started playing the piano at the age of 7 and later studied violin, guitar and singing. But it was actually while completing degrees in Law and Arts that he started serious classical and opera-singing training.

"When young I started singing my favourite Beatles, Elton John and Billy Joel songs and at high school I focused on the baritone repertoire in musical theatre. But later I discovered a recording of Plácido Domingo singing 'Una furtiva lagrima' [from the opera *L'elisir d'amore* by Donizetti] and heard Mario Lanza and

musical instruments. For Samuel, it was piano and percussion from the age of 9, but he gravitated more towards singing.

"There wasn't a time in my life when I didn't have singers such as Mario Lanza and Bryn Terfel playing in the family car, so I thank my parents for my early opera experiences. As I progressed through school, I found my way to musical theatre and really enjoyed the 'team experience' I'd previously had on the sports field. I loved the stage, but I perceived the opera stage as being another world of talent. I'm very fortunate to have had teachers who recognised the potential in my voice."

Matthew's story resonates with those of Robert and Christian in that his initial tertiary studies were not in music. As a child, music was an enjoyable hobby, and he'd always loved singing, but after high school he had a different path in mind.

"I wanted to work in radio, so I completed a communications degree and then worked in radio in Australia and overseas. By chance I discovered a voice teacher who told me I had operatic potential and encouraged me to pursue it. I completed a degree in music, and here I am!"

As new scholars in 2013, Robert, Christian, Sam and Matthew will be concentrating on establishing vocal technique to the point where it becomes reliable and 'second nature', refining their language skills and increasing their awareness of their individual attributes and areas of focus. All are looking forward to continuing opportunities to work with the considerable expertise of Melba mentors and, as Christian puts it, to making "many new and fruitful connections with individuals and groups within the music and opera community".

Returning Melba scholars in 2013, Brenton and Tiriki are aiming to consolidate the training and experience acquired in 2012. Brenton is clear about his objectives this year.

"Vocal technique remains my most important focus in 2013. I am constantly striving to improve vocally and dramatically, and to this end I'll

continue my weekly singing lessons and regular vocal coachings. Another goal for 2013 is to get as much stage experience as possible because it's obviously important to put into practice what I'm learning."

Having already performed the role of Jaquino in Melbourne Opera's production of Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*, been a soloist in the Victorian Opera's recent Gala Concert and given a number of solo recitals, Brenton feels he is on track to achieving this goal.

For Tiriki, 2013 is about expanding on his foundations and seeking further refinement.

"This year is much more about fine detail, about finessing my singing technique and improving my foreign language skills. Last year was a significant turning point for me and I'm really looking forward to challenging myself further, seeking more knowledge and the people who possess it and to raising the expectations I place on myself as a performer."

The gentlemen agree that it's important to maintain social connections and other activities during such an intense year of operatic training, while remaining mindful of the need to look after their voices. And it's helpful to have people around them who understand and appreciate their career choices and the hard work involved. Our scholars seem to have the right friends who support them with encouragement and attendance at concerts, even if they are not familiar with opera. Christian is optimistic that there may even be some new converts among his friends.

"When my friends who hadn't previously been exposed to opera have seen me perform, they have become interested in experiencing more—what could be better than that?"

We look forward to following the progress of our 2013 group of scholars and to seeing and hearing their development in many performances throughout the year.

"WHEN MY FRIENDS WHO HADN'T PREVIOUSLY BEEN EXPOSED TO OPERA HAVE SEEN ME PERFORM, THEY HAVE BECOME INTERESTED IN EXPERIENCING MORE—WHAT COULD BE BETTER THAN THAT?"

Beniamino Gigli recordings at home. Opera excited me and I started diving in. I also realised that my voice type is actually tenor!"

Christian's musical beginnings were similarly in musical theatre, which his family raised him to appreciate. Like Robert, he started classical singing training while undertaking a different, though perhaps more directly related, degree.

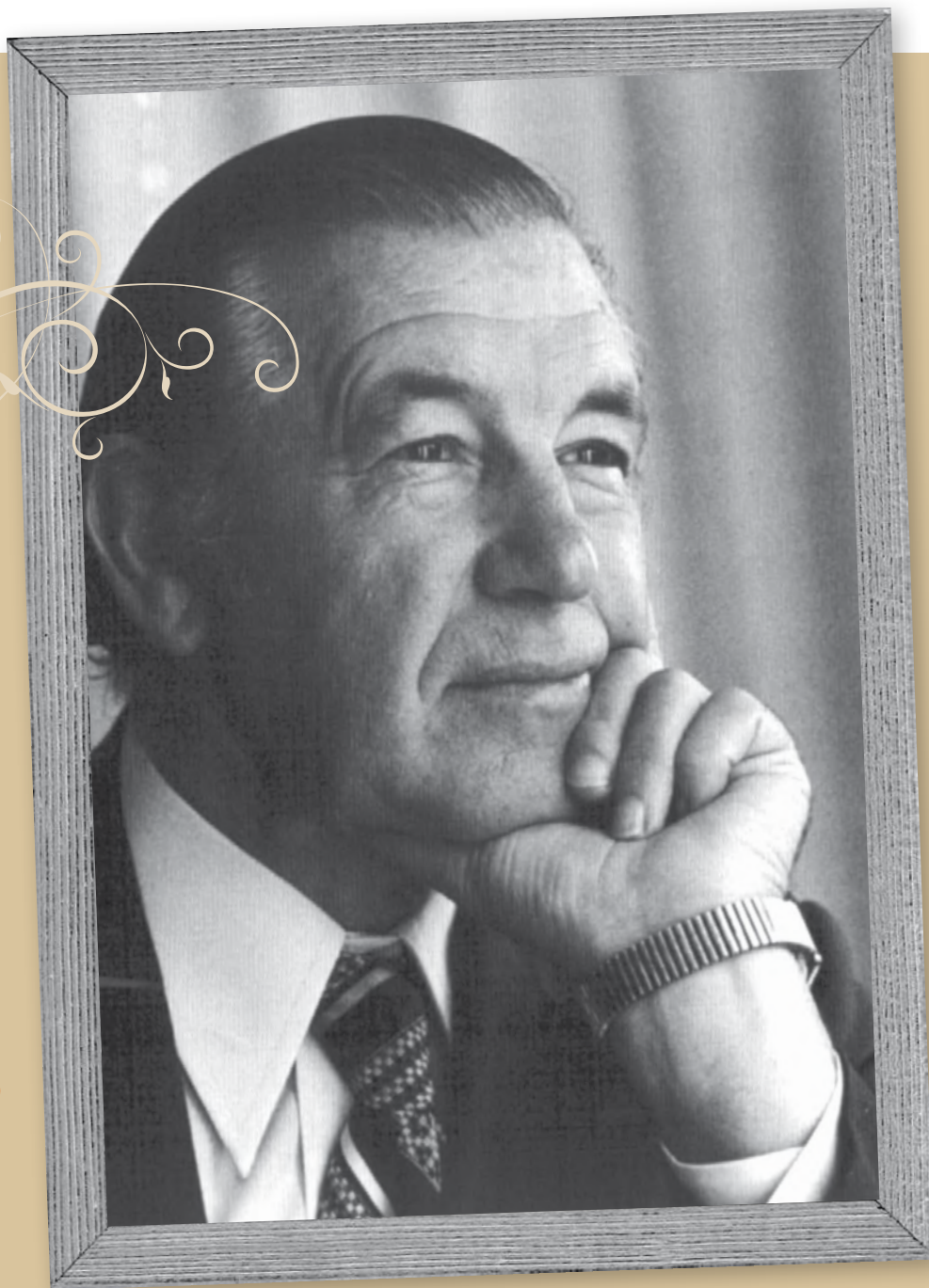
"While studying acting, I was often told when I sang that it wasn't the 'run-of-the-mill' voice. I decided to have singing lessons and discovered that my voice was a lot deeper than most men of my age, which limited my repertoire in genres other than opera. So once I found the classical repertoire, it seemed the perfect fit."

After singing in choirs and church events from an early age, Samuel, too, found his way into musical theatre. While he and his family were keen on sport, they were also keen on music and all can sing. He and his brothers were encouraged to play



Inaugural R.J. Hamer Opera Scholar
Samuel Johnson

BARITONE SAMUEL JOHNSON IS "INCREDIBLY HONOURED TO BE THE INAUGURAL RECIPIENT OF THE R.J. HAMER OPERA SCHOLARSHIP" OFFERED THROUGH THE MELBA.



SIR RUPERT HAMER'S LEGACY RESOUNDS

The name 'Hamer' is of course well known in Victoria and throughout Australia—Sir Rupert (Dick) Hamer was premier of Victoria from 1972 to 1981. In 2004, the Hamer Family Fund was established under the auspices of the Australian Communities Foundation, as a philanthropic fund commemorating the lives and work of four siblings: Dick Hamer, Alan Hamer, Alison Patrick and David Hamer. The fund provides support not only to the performing arts, but also to the environment and good government, with grant recipients including the Melbourne Chamber Orchestra, Victorian National Parks Association, the Climate Institute, the Musica Viva schools program, and many others. In conjunction with the University of Melbourne, the fund also runs the annual Hamer Oration. Dick Hamer's daughter Sarah Brennan explains the history behind the Scholarship:

"Opera was one of my father's abiding loves. Following his retirement he spent ten full years

as chair of the Victorian State Opera, working in conjunction with the charismatic Richard Divall (conductor) and Ken Mackenzie-Forbes (manager), who were strongly supported by Jeanne Pratt among others. Dad often attended one opera production several times, pressing tickets on family members so we could share his excitement at the latest *Rigoletto* or *Marriage of Figaro*. He loved the fact that the principal roles were taken by fresh young performers who were able to play young lovers convincingly, that the chorus included talented amateurs, and that the whole thing was Victorian. He was also very proud of the high standard of singing and acting. The VSO came to be a kind of operatic second family for him and, no doubt, for others. Presumably the company had its politics and tensions, as all do, but there was also a lot of 'zing', creativity and fun.

Later there were productions (through a separate company) of more lucrative popular forms:

musicals and operetta, including his beloved Gilbert & Sullivan. These he also enjoyed—he had a great capacity for enjoyment—but I suspect he saw them as secondary to the VSO's main purpose. He was greatly saddened when the company had to amalgamate with the Australian Opera and effectively disappeared.

It is entirely fitting, therefore, that our mother April should have decided to fund opera scholarships in his name and, given its sterling work in encouraging both musical development and all kinds of professional skills needed by up-and-coming artists, the Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust seems an excellent vehicle."

Lady April Hamer herself sums it up:

"Dick and I were great lovers of opera. We were very keen to help young singers get into this line of work and make professional lives. The Melba is a very useful aid to their progress."

THE RUSKIN OPERA AWARD: A DATE FOR THE DIARY!

ROZ ZALEWSKI AND JEREMY RUSKIN ARE BEING ESPECIALLY PROACTIVE IN GROWING THE RUSKIN OPERA AWARD, WITH ROZ CURRENTLY IN THE THROES OF ORGANISING WHAT WILL BE A VERY SPECIAL FUNDRAISING DINNER TO BE HELD ON SATURDAY JUNE 15.

"This will be a formal dinner with lots of entertainment and fun. We are very excited to have secured 'Cranlana' (home of the Myer family) as the venue through the generosity of Lady Marigold Southey AC. We hope that many members of the Melba 'family' and their friends will come along and enjoy beautiful food, wine and song in a magnificent setting and contribute to the development of our brilliant young singers."

2013 Ruskin Opera Award recipient Panayiota Kalatzis will perform during the evening, as will past recipient Stacey Alleaume along with current scholars Robert Barbaro and Amir Farid. Those interested should telephone The Melba for further details. Places are strictly limited.



Panayiota Kalatzis
2013 Ruskin Scholar



Stacey Alleaume
Past Ruskin Scholar



Robert Barbaro
Opera Society
Vocal Scholar



Amir Farid
Repetiteur Scholar

THE 2013 MENTOR PROGRAM—

DESIGN,
DEVELOPMENT,
DELIVERY

AN EXTRAORDINARY AMOUNT OF WORK GOES ON BEHIND THE SCENES BEFORE A MENTOR BLOCK GOES 'ONSTAGE' AND MUCH OF THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MAKING THE PROGRAM HAPPEN FALLS ON THE SHOULDERS OF PROGRAM COORDINATOR BRUCE RAGGATT.

"I work with Amy at the start of the year to figure out what the program should cover and then decide whom to approach. It makes sense to lock in the international people first and slot in the locals later. Once people's dates are fixed, I liaise with them about fees and other requirements, and organise all logistical aspects of the program, including flights and accommodation, venues, catering, photographers, equipment, handouts—everything! I also distribute information to the singers and handle the feedback process following the various mentor blocks."

The first block of the Mentor Program for 2013 was an extremely intense and wide-ranging five and a half days from Thursday 31 January to Tuesday 5 February. Topics covered included time management, critical thinking, improvisation and theatre sports, public speaking, character development, repertoire preparation and performance tailoring, career development strategies, vocal health and a master class with Merlyn Quaife. And in amongst all this was a special dinner with Founding Benefactor Betty Amsden OAM and a reception and soiree at Coombe Cottage to welcome new Melba Patron The Honourable Saffron Foster!

This was truly an organisational marathon, but Bruce felt that the content met expectations, with most sessions being well presented, covering what was intended, and

generally "hitting the mark". And for the scholars Bruce thinks it proved a very promising start.

"It helped that the singers mostly knew each other already, so they bonded quickly. They are a socially-confident group and really entered into the spirit of the program. They were all genuinely enthusiastic and wrestled with each topic to get the most out of it. They gave useful feedback, realising that this is the perfect way to ensure that the program can be further improved and tailored to the needs of next year's singers. This is fantastic"

The most challenging thing for the singers was to stay "switched on" for nearly six days, but they managed well. As a new scholar, tenor Robert Barbaro found it "exciting meeting the Melba team and the fellow scholars". He particularly valued the "various exercises in acting and public speaking, the session on time management and the preparations for the soiree at Coombe Cottage", and found the sessions "very useful in noting where we all are vocally at the moment".

Mezzo soprano Emily Edmonds commented that the sessions challenged her "in so many ways: dramatically, emotionally, physically and musically". For bass baritone Christian Gillett, "some of the aspects covered, such as public speaking and time management, were things I

hadn't considered before and this is why it's so enriching being a Melba scholar—it's not just about developing technique and performance skills, but encompasses everything required to be a successful professional singer."

With other singers echoing these sentiments, all in all it was a great beginning to the 2013 Mentor Program. And, as Bruce explains, there are many inspiring sessions to come:

"So far we've confirmed master classes with British soprano Susan Bullock in April and Australian soprano Yvonne Kenny AM and Luxembourg-based répétiteur Semyon Rozin in September. Covent Garden director Andrew Sinclair will lead a session in August, too. We were thrilled that Bryn Terfel had a private 'meet and greet' with the singers in April."

Negotiations are also underway with conductor Marko Letonja, American stage director Chuck Hudson, soprano Cheryl Barker, baritone Peter Coleman-Wright and bass baritone Teddy Tahu Rhodes, among others.

The calibre of the growing Faculty of Mentors demonstrates The Melba's on-going commitment to providing our singers with the best possible foundations for their future opera-singing careers. We look forward to watching the singers' development as it unfolds throughout 2013.



Top: Emily Edmonds and Amir Farid perform in master class
Middle: Scholars practise vocal exercises with vocal health expert Debbie Phyland
Bottom: Christian Gillett and Merlyn Quaife working in master class

A MINT MELBA PARTNERSHIP



SINCE SEPTEMBER 2011, MINT MELBOURNE (HOTELS & APARTMENTS) HAS BEEN THE EXCLUSIVE ACCOMMODATION PARTNER FOR THE MELBA. ON BEHALF OF MINT, DIRECTOR OF SALES MICHELLE MCAULIFFE HAS RECENTLY GENEROUSLY EXTENDED THIS SUPPORT TO MEMBERS OF THE WIDER 'MELBA COMMUNITY'.

"We are very happy to provide accommodation support for such a wonderful program and for Australia's most promising young opera singers and their mentors during 2013. As an accommodation partner, we are delighted to extend exclusive 'Melba' rates to all supporters, families and friends."

The partnership works both ways with Melba scholar Brenton Spiteri recently giving a surprise performance at a lunch held by Mint at Rochford Wines for its corporate clients. For him it was a valuable and enjoyable experience which also had its 'moments'.

"When I drove into Rochford Wines, I was greeted by a sea of Mercedes vehicles on show at the front entrance, which made me feel a little out of place in my humble Toyota Camry! But the personnel at Rochford Wines were very friendly and accommodating, and put me at ease. Unfortunately strong winds prevented me from singing outside in the spacious Sound Shell, so we were squeezed into a small room.

It was very 'up close and personal', but the audience was receptive and enthusiastic and seemed to really enjoy it. And I learned a thing or two about performing under pressure!"

Michelle was very pleased to have Brenton sing at this important client event and pronounced it to be a great success. She encourages the Melba community to avail themselves of the 'Melba' offer.

"Please come and spoil yourself in one of our contemporary apartment-style rooms. We're located in the heart of St Kilda Road, so we're close to the CBD as well as beautiful parks and gardens. You may even bump into a scholar or visiting mentor during your stay!"

To access your 'Melba' rate, visit www.staymint.com/melbourne-st-kilda-rd, enter your dates and type 'Melba' as the promotional code.

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CD LAUNCH OF HYMNE À L'AMOUR

Siobhán Stagg and Amir Farid

“THE INTELLIGENCE, GENEROSITY AND RANGE OF THIS CONCERT WERE REMARKABLE. IF YOU MISSED THE CONCERT, PURCHASE OF THE CD IS STRONGLY ADVISED!”

(DARRYL EMMERSON – WWW.AUSTRALIANSTAGE.COM.AU)

It was wonderful to welcome Melba alumna Siobhán Stagg briefly back in Melbourne recently. Currently based in the UK and Europe, she flew home to join with inaugural Melba Repetiteur Scholar Amir Farid for several recitals to coincide with the release of their CD, a collection of exquisite art songs illustrating the frailty of the human condition through flirtation, deepest love and heartbreaking truths.

Siobhán and Amir first met as students at the University of Melbourne and their musical connection subsequently developed and flourished through the Melba programs. In 2012, they together won the Mietta Song Competition, which they agree “strengthened our musical partnership and created the impetus for the new album”.

The CD’s track list includes, among other things, classic art songs by Schubert and Liszt, the title track by Edith Piaf, and ‘Die Liebe Farbe’, a work written especially for them by one of Siobhán’s former singing teachers in Melbourne, Dermot Tutty.

On 2 April their first launch recital ‘There’s No Place Like Home’ was a charity fundraiser for Chances for Children at the new Arts Centre in Siobhán’s hometown of Mildura. This was followed by two recitals in the Salon at the Melbourne Recital Centre on Saturday 6 April. It will come as no surprise that all were well attended—in fact the matinee performance at the MRC was added because the evening performance had sold out nearly two weeks in advance! Audiences were not only treated to a program that included most of the CD tracks, but had the opportunity to witness the amazing progress and musicality of these two fine young musicians.

For Amir, “It was a great honour and pleasure to have made this recording with undoubtedly one of Australia’s great rising singing stars.” And for Siobhán, the trip back to Australia for the launch of their CD was particularly meaningful.

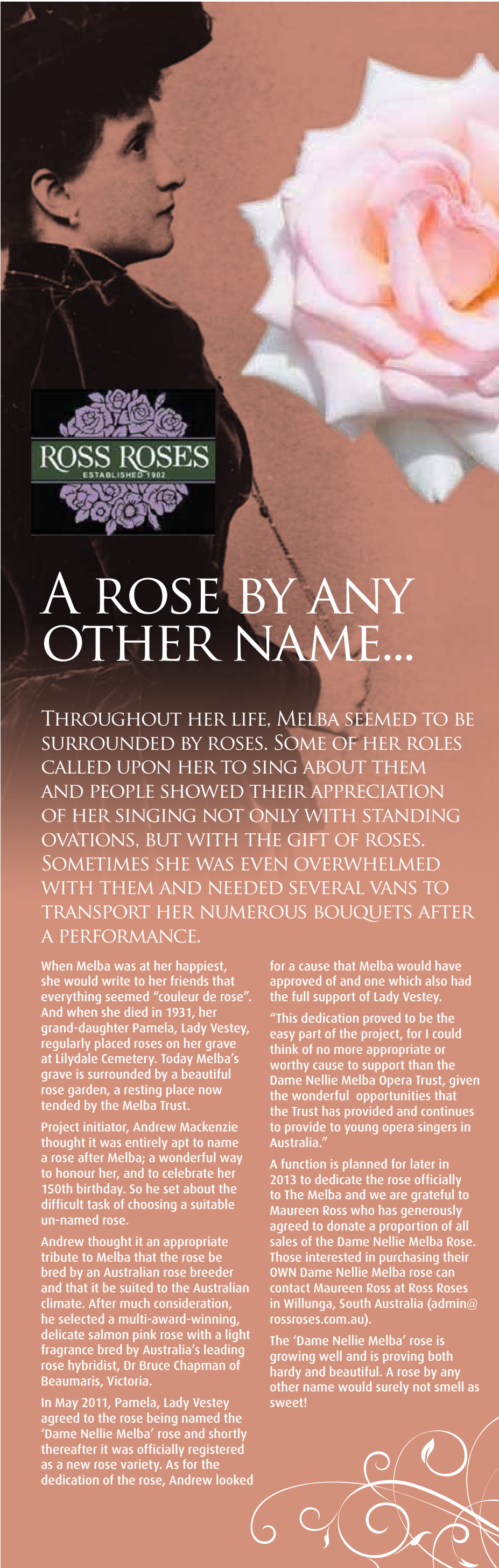


“I was really excited to be home in Australia celebrating the release of this long-awaited album. It was very important to me to be able to share this milestone with the Australian communities who have supported me so much over the years.”

“IT WAS A GREAT HONOUR AND PLEASURE TO HAVE MADE THIS RECORDING WITH UNDOUBTEDLY ONE OF AUSTRALIA’S GREAT RISING SINGING STARS.”

For those who have not already purchased a copy of *Hymne à l’amour*, it is available from the iTunes Music Store. It can also be purchased online through Buywell Just Classical or the Australian Music Centre which both offer secure online ordering. The CD can also be found in fine music retailers across Australia, including Thomas’, Title and Readings.

Next stop for Siobhán? Back to Cardiff for further study then to Deutsche Oper, Berlin where she will sing Woglinde in Wagner’s *Das Rheingold* and the Woodbird in *Siegfried* conducted by Sir Simon Rattle in September, Pamina in Mozart’s *The Magic Flute* in October and December and parts in *Carmen*, *Rigoletto* and *Don Carlo*, just to mention a few. It promises to be a very busy year ahead — visit Siobhán’s website for more details!



A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME...

THROUGHOUT HER LIFE, MELBA SEEMED TO BE SURROUNDED BY ROSES. SOME OF HER ROLES CALLED UPON HER TO SING ABOUT THEM AND PEOPLE SHOWED THEIR APPRECIATION OF HER SINGING NOT ONLY WITH STANDING OVATIONS, BUT WITH THE GIFT OF ROSES. SOMETIMES SHE WAS EVEN OVERWHELMED WITH THEM AND NEEDED SEVERAL VANS TO TRANSPORT HER NUMEROUS BOUQUETS AFTER A PERFORMANCE.

When Melba was at her happiest, she would write to her friends that everything seemed “couleur de rose”. And when she died in 1931, her grand-daughter Pamela, Lady Vestey, regularly placed roses on her grave at Lilydale Cemetery. Today Melba’s grave is surrounded by a beautiful rose garden, a resting place now tended by the Melba Trust.

Project initiator, Andrew Mackenzie thought it was entirely apt to name a rose after Melba; a wonderful way to honour her, and to celebrate her 150th birthday. So he set about the difficult task of choosing a suitable un-named rose.

Andrew thought it an appropriate tribute to Melba that the rose be bred by an Australian rose breeder and that it be suited to the Australian climate. After much consideration, he selected a multi-award-winning, delicate salmon pink rose with a light fragrance bred by Australia’s leading rose hybridist, Dr Bruce Chapman of Beaumaris, Victoria.

In May 2011, Pamela, Lady Vestey agreed to the rose being named the ‘Dame Nellie Melba’ rose and shortly thereafter it was officially registered as a new rose variety. As for the dedication of the rose, Andrew looked

for a cause that Melba would have approved of and one which also had the full support of Lady Vestey.

“This dedication proved to be the easy part of the project, for I could think of no more appropriate or worthy cause to support than the Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust, given the wonderful opportunities that the Trust has provided and continues to provide to young opera singers in Australia.”

A function is planned for later in 2013 to dedicate the rose officially to The Melba and we are grateful to Maureen Ross who has generously agreed to donate a proportion of all sales of the Dame Nellie Melba Rose. Those interested in purchasing their OWN Dame Nellie Melba rose can contact Maureen Ross at Ross Roses in Willunga, South Australia (admin@rossroses.com.au).

The ‘Dame Nellie Melba’ rose is growing well and is proving both hardy and beautiful. A rose by any other name would surely not smell as sweet!



Melba Alumna Kyla Allan working with Amir Farid

THE REPETITEUR AS 'COLLABORATIVE PIANIST'

FOR THE FIRST TIME THE MELBA HAS AWARDED A REPETITEUR SCHOLARSHIP IN 2013. THIS RECOGNISES THE IMPORTANT ROLE PLAYED BY THE REPETITEUR IN OPERATIC DEVELOPMENT AND PREPARATION. THE SCHOLARSHIP HAS BEEN MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH A THREE YEAR GRANT FROM THE HELEN MACPHERSON SMITH TRUST WHOSE CEO, ANDREW BROOKES, CLEARLY UNDERSTANDS ITS VALUE.

"Repetiteurs possess a set of performance, musicianship, teaching and coaching skills. We know there are excellent graduate pianists in Australia, but few professional repetiteurs and a lack of specialised training. In supporting this scholarship, we believe The Melba will be equipped not only to develop a pool of talented repetiteurs, but to assist its singing scholars to achieve a higher standard of performance."

Inaugural recipient Amir Farid is well aware of the rare opportunity provided by this scholarship.

"I am deeply grateful to the Helen MacPherson Smith Trust for enabling this unique scholarship, and to The Melba for giving me and my colleagues such wonderful chances to put our art into practice, as well as to develop our abilities to a world-class level."

Amir feels his work as a pianist allows him to be versatile. There are opportunities as a soloist, recording artist, chamber musician in Benaud Trio and in his quintet Tango Noir, and as an accompanist and repetiteur.

"To me, it doesn't really feel strange to switch roles—it's all piano playing, and it's all making music. But it's always more enjoyable when I have the opportunity to make music with others in a collaborative way."

Amir well understands the necessity to be a good pianist in order to be a good accompanist, and the particular abilities required to support singers.

"You have to be able to listen, react and blend. At the same time, you have to provide a musical foundation that complements the other musicians' intentions. It's a difficult balance to achieve. To what extent do you take charge, give, and back off? With singers, there is the added challenge of words—the pianist must understand the text to such an extent that the piano part alone can express their meaning."

Repetiteur Scholarship Mentor Sharolyn Kimmorley AM will guide Amir through 2013. She strongly agrees with Amir's words, but is also at pains to stress the importance of understanding the particular skills of a repetiteur in addition to those of an accompanist.

"A repetiteur requires extra skills. You have to have all the pianistic techniques and musicality, but replicating an orchestral score is a particular art. In theory the piano responds in one way, but I think you can use the imagery of an orchestra or a solo instrument. If you hear the difference between an oboe and a violin, you can actually capture that on the piano. Then you play with more colour, imagination and texture. I will be working with Amir on this, and it will also enhance his playing as an accompanist, as a chamber musician and as a soloist. And when he plays operatic music in future, I think he can then approach it completely differently. He will be a 'collaborative pianist'—a term commonly used in the USA which I think is entirely apt because it encompasses the idea of an equal partnership."

Sharolyn is taking her role as mentor very seriously, acknowledging the invaluable role played by significant mentors in her own development.

"I was very fortunate to have some amazing mentors. They really set me on the path to work. When I joined the Australian Opera as a very junior repetiteur straight from the conservatorium, Ted Downes [British conductor Sir Edward Downes] had me there at 9am playing scores. Carlo Felice Cillario taught me every piece of the Italian repertoire I know, and my score of Verdi's Simon Boccanegra still has the markings on it from that time. It's so important to pass

down traditions and information, and there's not enough of this going on. Ideally we'd have mentors who've been in the theatre for 40-50 years. I mean I want old people—I want the old grey-headed conductor who's been around—but they're not easily found, and there's not the same respect for them anymore. But young aspiring artists should take as much advantage as they can of any available mentoring opportunities, and this is why the work of the Melba Trust is so impressive."

While Sharolyn is not quite ready to include herself in the category of old, wise, experienced and grey-haired maestri, she has "worked with some amazing conductors and singers and directors over the years", and she wants to pass on her knowledge and experience. Amir will be the fortunate beneficiary of this, a fact that has not passed him by.

"As the inaugural recipient of the Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust's Repetiteur Scholarship, I am excited at the prospect of developing my skills to prepare and support singers. Refining my ability to blend with the voice, developing my language skills, and building confidence towards coaching singers are areas that my mentor, Sharolyn Kimmorley, will help me achieve. In the long run, I hope these skills will allow me to work with some of the greatest singers in the world, and overall expand my armoury as both a repetiteur and a pianist."



THANK YOU TO HELEN
MACPHERSON SMITH
TRUST FOR MAKING THIS
SCHOLARSHIP POSSIBLE

SCHOLARS AS IMPRESARIOS:

THE MELBA SCHOLARS RECITAL SERIES

FOR THE FIRST TIME THIS YEAR AS PART OF THE MENTOR PROGRAM, A SERIES OF THREE INTIMATE RECITALS WILL BE PRODUCED BY THE SCHOLARS THEMSELVES. THESE SPECIAL EVENTS WILL BE HELD AT PATRICIA ARMSTRONG-GRANT’S IDEAL VENUE IN BLACK ROCK AND WILL FEATURE DIFFERENT SCHOLARS ON EACH OCCASION.

The initial idea came from Patricia, who offered this “recital concept” in her belief that The Melba offers “the most sensible, useful (in terms of content) and professional singing scholarships in Australia”.

“I strongly believe that unless you have actually done something, you don’t know how to do it. I’ve read numerous autobiographies and biographies of famous singers who comment about singing at badly-organised events which have caused them embarrassment, inconvenience and loss of income. This process will help the scholars learn the essential art of standing on their own two feet.”

Melba Artists Manager Jo Beaumont points out that the principal idea behind this series is that the singers organise all aspects of the recitals themselves. They will be required to sell tickets, collect money, assess the venue, arrange set-up and catering, and greet and farewell their guests, as well as designing a marketing strategy and selecting repertoire to match the market. When they need a sympathetic ear and sounding board, however, they will be able to call on the support of Amy McPartlan, Sharolyn Kimmorley, Patricia and Jo, who between them have many years experience in public speaking, singing, coaching, accompanying and instrumental performance. Patricia hopes to use “all this experience, expertise and enthusiasm gently and effectively to guide the singers through the process”.

“As we know, performing in a small, intimate setting is in many ways more intimidating than singing in a large opera house. I will be stressing to them the great opportunity they have at this function to gain a group of people who will follow their careers by attending their events or

perhaps supporting them in other ways.”

With the first recital scheduled for Sunday 12 May, preparations are underway. Singers Christian Gillett, Rebecca Gulinello and Robert Barbaro are devising a program that will take the audience on a musical journey through opera, art song, folk song and musical theatre—“from Puccini to Rodgers and Hammerstein” as Christian says. They are hoping to reach a new audience who may then be encouraged to attend more classical vocal performances. At the same time, Robert stresses that they are trying to select repertoire that will avoid the potential ‘gimmicky’ effect of including too many styles in one program.

The singers are already recognising the potential challenges of the process. It can be difficult to obtain sponsorship for such things as wine and food, and as Robert says, they will need to do their best “to convince potential sponsors of the benefits of involvement in a concert of this nature”. And Christian points out the obvious logistical trial of “finding times in our busy schedules to meet and plan, but so far so good!”

But along with these minor challenges come real benefits. They are valuing the experience it is giving them and the opportunity to develop a program that showcases them to the best of their current abilities. They are also enjoying the opportunity to work together as artists.

All recitals will be held at 3pm at the Armstrong-Grant Recital Room in Black Rock. Venue address will be provided upon purchasing tickets. The second recital on Sunday 23 June will include singers Panayiota

 **DE BORTOLI WINES**

WITH SINCERE THANKS TO DE BORTOLI FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF THIS INITIATIVE AND CONTINUED GENEROSITY

Kalatzis, Leilah Fox, Samuel Johnson and Brenton Spiteri. The third and final concert is scheduled for Sunday 25 August with Tiriki Onus, Emily Edmonds and Matthew Reardon. Inaugural Melba Trust Repetiteur Scholarship holder Amir Farid will accompany each performance.

Subscriptions for all three events and single tickets are available.

We look forward to seeing you there to support and enjoy the work of our aspiring young singers!

DETAILS

3.00PM. ARMSTRONG-GRANT RECITAL ROOM, BLACK ROCK

SUNDAY 12 MAY
Rebecca Gulinello
Robert Barbaro
Christian Gillett

SUNDAY 23 JUNE
Panayiota Kalatzis
Leilah Fox
Brenton Spiteri
Samuel Johnson

SUNDAY 25 AUGUST
Emily Edmonds
Matthew Reardon
Tiriki Onus

**Each recital will be accompanied by our inaugural repetiteur scholar, Amir Farid*

TICKETS

SUBSCRIPTION FOR 3 CONCERTS
\$75 Adult \$45 Student

SINGLE TICKETS
\$30 Adult \$20 Student

To purchase a subscription please call **03 9867 4833**. Single tickets can be purchased at **www.trybooking.com/CPSB** or call **03 9867 4833**.

MELBA ARTISTS— PUTTING PRACTICE INTO PRACTICE

OUR MELBA ARTISTS PROGRAM HELPS OUR SCHOLARS PUT THEIR PRACTICE INTO PRACTICE BY PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERFORMANCE IN ALL MANNER OF SETTINGS. IT’S ONE THING TO LEARN ‘HOW’ TO BE A PERFORMER BUT TO ACTUALLY ‘BE’ A PERFORMER GIVES THE BEST EXPERIENCE OF ALL!

Melba Artists Manager Jo Beaumont’s brief is to source performance opportunities—both public and private—for Melba Scholars

“I try to arrange a variety of performance experiences — everything from private dinner parties to general public concerts. So far this year we’ve arranged two concerts for the Brimbank City Council at Overnewton Castle. One was for an Australian naturalisation ceremony and the other for an event to honour Brimbank’s Citizen of the Year. Now I’m negotiating with them to do ‘Opera in St Augustine’s’ in June—they love having our singers there.

Future plans include ‘Opera in the Mansions’ at Mandeville, an opera gala evening at the Italian Institute

of Culture, several performances at St Michael’s and performances at Richmond Uniting Church as part of their Sunday afternoon concert series. I’m also exploring opportunities for our singers to be involved in community initiatives with council and retirement homes.”

Jo is particularly keen that the singers not only perform with piano, but with other instrumentalists. In March Brenton Spiteri and Stacey Alleaume performed with the Melbourne Sinfonia, a large orchestra associated with the Royal Children’s hospital. In October, Brenton will be joined by Hannah Dahlenburg as they perform Mozart with Orchestra 21.

Of course Melba Artists performances are also helpful in providing Melba supporters the opportunity to hear and see our scholars. For your interest, we have included a list of upcoming performances — we hope to see you there!

If you would like to involve Melba Artists in your next occasion, please call Melba Artists Manager Jo Beaumont on 03 9867 4833 or email artists@melbaoperatrust.com.au

WHEN CAN YOU HEAR OUR SCHOLARS??

SUNDAY 12 MAY, 3.00PM
La Scala to Broadway: arias and songs from the biggest hits of opera and Broadway
Armstrong-Grant Recital Room, Black Rock
Featuring: Rebecca Gulinello, Robert Barbaro and Christian Gillett – Amir Farid, pianist
Tickets: \$30 (full) \$20 (student). Bookings essential. Visit www.trybooking.com or call 03 9867 4833

SUNDAY 19 MAY, 5.00PM
La Scala to Broadway: arias and songs from the biggest hits of opera and Broadway
Richmond Uniting Church, 304 Church Street, Richmond
Featuring: Rebecca Gulinello, Robert Barbaro and Christian Gillett – Amir Farid, pianist
Entry by donation.

SUNDAY 26 MAY, 10AM
St Michael’s Uniting Church
Featuring: Emily Edmonds as part of the Sunday morning worship. All are welcome to attend

THURSDAY 20 JUNE, 6.30PM
A concert program of well known opera arias.
St Augustine’s Church, 100 Harrick Road, Keilor Park
Featuring: Hannah Dahlenburg, Brenton Spiteri, Jeremy Kleeman – Amir Farid, pianist
Tickets: \$5. Bookings essential. Email hillaryh@brimbank.vic.gov.au or call on 9249 4000

SUNDAY 23 JUNE, 10AM
St Michael’s Uniting Church
Featuring: Leilah Fox as part of the Sunday morning worship. All are welcome to attend

SUNDAY 23 JUNE, 3.00PM
Four the Love of Song
Armstrong-Grant Recital Room, Black Rock
Featuring: Panayiota Kalatzis, Leilah Fox, Brenton Spiteri and Samuel Johnson – Amir Farid, pianist
Tickets: \$30 (full) \$20 (student). Bookings essential. Visit www.trybooking.com or call 03 9867 4833

SUNDAY 7 JULY, 10AM
St Michael’s Uniting Church
Featuring: Panayiota Kalatzis as part of the Sunday morning worship. All are welcome to attend

SUNDAY 7 JULY, 2.00PM
Robert Stolz Viennese Music Society Concert
Whitehorse Theatre, 397 Whitehorse Road, Nunawading
Featuring: Rebecca Gulinello, Panayiota Kalatzis, Brenton Spiteri, Samuel Johnson – Stefan Cassomenos, pianist
Tickets: \$37 (full) \$31 (seniors/concession) and \$18 for students/under 18. Tickets can be purchased from the box office 9262 6555 or via the Whitehorse Theatre website.

SUNDAY 14 JULY, 5.00PM
A program of lieder featuring the winner of the National Lieder Fest prize and Melba Opera Trust scholar, Samuel Johnson.
Camberwell Uniting Church, 314 Camberwell Road, Camberwell.
Featuring: Samuel Johnson – Stefan Cassomenos, pianist
Tickets: \$25 (full) and \$20 (concession). For further information please visit www.liedersocietyvic.com

SUNDAY 21 JULY, 5.00PM
Viennese Concert
Richmond Uniting Church, 304 Church Street, Richmond
Featuring: Rebecca Gulinello, Brenton Spiteri and Samuel Johnson – Stefan Cassomenos, pianist
Entry is by donation

SUNDAY 25 AUGUST, 3.00PM
Mezzo forte
Armstrong-Grant Recital Room, Black Rock
Featuring: Emily Edmonds, Matthew Reardon and Tiriki Onus – Amir Farid, pianist
Tickets: \$30 (full) \$20 (student). Bookings essential. Tickets can be purchased at www.trybooking.com or call 03 9867 4833

SUNDAY 13 OCTOBER, 3.00PM
Orchestra 21 Concert
St John’s Church, 5 Finch Street, East Malvern
Featuring: Brenton Spiteri and Hannah Dahlenburg
Tickets: Details TBA. Refer to www.orchestra21@org.au

HAROLD BLAIR

APPEARS IN SPIRIT AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE

IN NOVEMBER 2012, THE HAROLD BLAIR OPERA SCHOLARSHIP CAMPAIGN WAS OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED AT A RECEPTION AND PERFORMANCE AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE HOSTED BY THE TRUST'S PATRONS-IN-CHIEF, THE GOVERNOR, THE HONORABLE ALEX CHERNOV, AO, QC, AND MRS ELIZABETH CHERNOV.

As readers may be aware, Indigenous Australian singer Harold Blair was an alumnus of The Melba's predecessor the Melba Conservatorium of Music and The Melba, since its creation in 2008, had aspired to develop this scholarship. This was finally made possible through seed funding from the John and Gwenda Lloyd Trust. The Lloyds had supported Harold Blair's career and their daughter Jenny Crew approached Indigenous composer, singer and educator Deborah Cheetham about how their support could continue. It was on Deborah's recommendation that the funds were eventually transferred to The Melba to create in perpetuity the Harold Blair Opera Scholarship.

Therefore it was particularly apt that Deborah should perform alongside inaugural Harold Blair scholar recipient Tiriki Onus on this auspicious occasion. Deborah reiterates the scholarship's significance:

"This scholarship is so important, not only in acknowledging what Harold achieved, but in recognising the talent and potential within the Aboriginal community. The Melba Trust is committed to the development of opera as an art form and really fills a gap in the education of aspiring opera singers, so it's fitting that it should administer this scholarship. Performing alongside Tiriki Onus at Government House to officially launch the scholarship campaign was a poignant and special occasion, as well as providing an excellent opportunity to spread the word so that talented young

Indigenous singers may be supported in the years to come."

For Tiriki, it was a perfect culmination to his first year as the Harold Blair Opera Scholar.

"The memory of singing at this event will stay with me for the rest of my days. It was an honour to represent The Melba and a truly humbling experience to stand in Government House in the name of Harold Blair. A real hero of Aboriginal Australia, Harold was a man ahead of his time, a man who challenged expectations and strove for a better future for his people. And I felt immense pride performing alongside wonderful Indigenous singer Deborah Cheetham to launch this scholarship campaign. It was particularly special to have Harold's widow Dorothy Blair in attendance. She is a wonderfully supportive and giving woman—a great inspiration, as was her late husband."

In his address to attendees at Government House, Melba Chair Robert Logie-Smith stressed the value of the scholarship and appealed for support.

"This scholarship is about making sure that Indigenous Australians who have the talent and the drive are given the opportunity and support to realise their potential in this specialist field. And it is about inspiring other young Indigenous voices to consider that this is possible for them. We are very proud of the progress our inaugural Harold Blair scholar Tiriki Onus has made over the course of this year and this would not have happened without the Harold Blair Opera Scholarship. We currently have close to \$100,000 in the scholarship fund and need to grow this corpus to \$500,000 for it to be endowed in perpetuity. At present the fund provides for a part-scholarship only. To provide a full scholarship, we need to engage the support of individuals."

If you would like to assist by making a tax-deductible donation to the Harold Blair Opera Scholarship, please refer to the gift card included with *The Melba*. Alternatively you can make a donation via our website www.melbaoperatrust.com.au.



Warren Blair, Mrs Chernov, The Governor of Victoria, Tiriki Onus, Mrs Dorothy Blair



Harold Blair inaugural scholar Tiriki Onus with Melba Patrons-in-Chief the Governor and Mrs Chernov

2013 SCHOLAR SNAPSHOTS



Emily Edmonds—Mezzo Soprano

Dame Nellie Melba Memorial Scholarship
Patrick & Vivian Gordon Award
Emily completed her Bachelor of Music Performance (Hons) at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music in 2012. In the same year, she was a finalist in the Mietta Song Competition and a quarter-finalist in the McDonald’s Operatic Aria (Sydney Eisteddfod) Competition. She has spent time studying in Berlin and London.



Rebecca Gulinello—Soprano

Amelia Joscelyne Memorial Scholarship
Rebecca is an honours student completing her Bachelor of Music at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music. Last year she was a semi-finalist in the Joan Sutherland and Richard Bonyngel Bel Canto Award, a semi-finalist in the *Herald Sun* Aria, and a finalist in Australian Music Events Scholar of the Year Competition.



Leilah Fox—Soprano

Margaret Schofield Opera Scholarship
Leilah has completed an Advanced Diploma of Performing Arts and a Bachelor of Music—both with High Distinction—at the WA Academy of Performing Arts. In 2010 she was accepted into the West Australian Opera Company. She relocated to Brisbane in 2011 to study with dramatic soprano Lisa Gasteen.



Panayiota Kalatzis—Soprano

Ruskin Opera Award
Mel & Nina Waters Award
Panayiota holds Bachelor of Music and Master of Music Studies in Opera degrees as well as a Graduate Certificate in Performance from the Queensland Conservatorium of Music at Griffith University. She has received a number of awards and scholarships, and in December 2012 sang at Admiralty House for the Governor-General, Ms Quentin Bryce AC CVO.



Robert Barbaro—Tenor

Opera Society Vocal Scholarship
Robert holds bachelor degrees in Arts and Law. While working towards these, he commenced his study in classical voice. He is a casual chorus member for Opera Australia, and has won a number of awards in singing competitions throughout Australia. He is a frequent performer in concerts, festivals, community, private and charity events.



Christian Gillett—Bass Baritone

Beleura-Tallis Opera Scholarship
Christian completed a Graduate Diploma of Music (Classical) at the WA Academy of Performing Arts in 2012, where he performed several roles. He has a keen interest in other genres, including cabaret and musical theatre, and performed in the 2010 Melbourne International Comedy Festival in the cabaret *iOpera 2.0 & Other Musical Condiments*.



Samuel Johnson—Baritone

RJ Hamer Opera Scholarship
Samuel is currently completing his Master’s degree in Operatic Performance at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music at Griffith University. In 2012, he was a finalist in both the McDonald’s Operatic Aria (Sydney Eisteddfod) Competition and the Italian Opera Foundation Awards.



Tiriki Onus—Bass Baritone

Harold Blair Opera Scholarship (2012, 2013)
Tiriki completed his Bachelor of Music (Performance) at the University of Melbourne in 2011. His first professional operatic role was Bill in Deborah Cheetham’s opera *Pecan Summer*. He has performed throughout Australia, including at the 2010 *Dreaming Festival* in Brisbane and the *Murray River International Festival* in Mildura.



Matthew Reardon—Tenor

Opera Arts Support Group Award
Matthew graduated from the WA Academy of Performing Arts with a Bachelor of Music. He made his solo debut as Young Man 1 in Deborah Cheetham’s opera *Pecan Summer*, and has since performed as a soloist on several occasions. He has also worked in broadcasting for National Radio News in Bathurst, NSW and Deutsche Welle Radio in Bonn, Germany.



Brenton Spiteri—Tenor

John & Elizabeth Wright-Smith Scholarship (2012, 2013)
Brenton has completed the double degree of Bachelor of Arts/ Bachelor of Music (Hons) at the University of Melbourne. In 2012, he was the winner of the 88th *Herald Sun* Aria Competition and won a Special Encouragement Award in the Mietta Song Competition. This year, he is a featured artist with Victorian Opera and the Melbourne Art Song Collective and will sing in the chorus for Opera Australia’s *Ring Cycle*.



Amir Farid—Repetiteur

Repetiteur Scholarship
Amir is a Melbourne based solo pianist, associate artist and chamber musician. A graduate of Melbourne University and the Australian National Academy of Music, Amir is pianist in Benaud Trio. Accolades include winning the prestigious 2006 Australian National Piano Award, receiving the Piano Trio prize at the 2005 Australian Chamber Music Competition and being awarded best pianist at the 2006 and 2012 Mietta Song Competitions.

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Thank you for making our programs possible...

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Mary-Jane Joscelyne (Founding)
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Fleur Gibbs
John & Jo Grigg
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