

THE MELBA

MAGAZINE OF MELBA OPERA TRUST

Edition 19 Spring 2018

HONOURING A LEGEND
MASTERS AT WORK
RAISING AN OPERA SINGER



Melba

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Cover image

Fleuranne Brockway performing at
Deakin Edge.

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Note from the General Manager



As the end of the 2018 scholarship year approaches, I am proud to bring you this latest edition of *The Melba*. In its pages you will read highlights from the second half of our year along with some impressive achievements from scholars and alumni.

The image to the right captures one of our great moments from the year, our Meet the Scholars concert at Deakin Edge. It was a rare opportunity to hear our young artists perform together and a great showcase of the talent within the 2018 ensemble. Since then, we have farewelled two of the group, with Paull-Anthony Keightley relocating to Berlin to work with Deutsche Oper Berlin and Fleuranne Brockway moving to London to commence her Masters with the Royal College of Music. Back here in Australia, their fellow scholars continue to go from strength to strength and you can read of their progress in the pages that follow.

Several years ago, we reaffirmed our mission with the concise statement: 'Inspiring excellence, realising potential, forging careers'. For the team at Melba HQ, these are the intentions that drive our program and we remain firmly focused on preparing Australia's most exceptional young operatic talents for professional careers on the world stage.

We believe the key to inspiring excellence rests with the Mentors involved in our program. Working and learning from experts who are at the absolute pinnacle of the opera world – Thomas Hampson, Stuart Skelton and Simon O'Neill to name but a few – establishes the bar to which our scholars strive. Our program is proudly *national*: our scholars are selected from around Australia and our training takes place within Australia. Our focus, however, is on developing exceptional artists who will perform to an *international* standard.

Realising potential – this begins with our selection process, where potential is first recognised. We are currently preparing for 2019 auditions, and once again our incomparable Artistic Advisor, Sharolyn Kimmorley AM, will chair the panel. Sharolyn will be joined by internationally acclaimed director, Moffatt Oxenbould OAM and renowned Finnish tenor, Topi Lehtipuu. Selection is only the beginning. The *raison d'être* of the Melba program is to realise that potential through a tailored

approach that focuses on artistic development alongside personal development and the gaining of professional skills. We recognise that developing potential takes time, and our repeat scholars continue to demonstrate what can be achieved given sufficient time, expert guidance and nurturing support.

Our success in forging careers is probably best demonstrated on page 10 of this magazine. Here you will find details for our alumni performing professionally all around the globe. It has been particularly rewarding this year that several of our European-based alumni have returned for performances in Australia: Samuel Sakker in *Hamlet* for the Adelaide Festival, Alexandra Flood in *William Tell* for Victorian Opera, Siobhán Stagg in *Pelleas and Melisande* for Victorian Opera and Emily Edmonds in *Artaserse* for Pinchgut Opera.

Next year marks 10 years since our first Melba Opera Trust scholarships to Siobhán Stagg (2009-2012) and Stephanie Gibson (2009-2010). We're enormously proud of how far the program has evolved, the successes of the alumni and the milestones of our fundraising journey to build a capital endowment that will sustain this world-class program for the future. We are looking forward to celebrating our anniversary throughout 2019 and I look forward to sharing more details in due course.

The 2018 scholars performing at Deakin Edge.

In the meantime, I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank our loyal and generous supporters who help make our program possible. The 2018 scholars have benefited from more than 70 mentor sessions in addition to their tailored vocal, language and stagecraft development, and we presented 35 performances to a variety of audiences. We rely entirely on private giving and each offer of support is enormously valuable to the organisation. Should you wish to find out more about our private giving or bequest program, Peter Garnick and I would welcome the opportunity to speak with you and can be contacted through the Melba office 03 9944 2100.

Please enjoy our Spring edition of *The Melba*.



A place to call home

In latest news, the Nellie Melba Retirement Village in Brandon Park made its debut in August, welcoming its earliest residents. The official grand opening remains expected for early next year.

New Zealand retirement village provider Ryman Healthcare named the village after Dame Nellie as part of its long-standing tradition of honouring exceptional people, including Sir Edmund Hillary, Dame Kiri Te Kanawa and Dame Malvina Major. Building and operating more

than 30 villages throughout New Zealand since 1984, Ryman has now expanded into Australia with its first village, Weary Dunlop Village in Wheelers Hill and the second, Nellie Melba Retirement Village in Brandon Park. Five more villages are planned to open throughout Melbourne in the coming years.

Ryman Healthcare and Melba Opera Trust shared a strong association throughout the naming process; an association that will proudly continue through an endowment pledged by Ryman Healthcare. 2019 will see the awarding of the inaugural Ryman Healthcare Opera

Scholarship to one of Australia's most promising young opera singers.

In the meantime, Ryman's Facebook page has several inspiring video-portraits of new residents sharing their delight at being the first inhabitants. Early next year, the village centre will open, as well as the care centre with 200 beds. Ryman offers a "continuum of care", with services ranging across the spectrum of needs, from completely independent living to serviced apartments and much higher-level care.

By the time it is finished, the Melba village will have 420 apartments.

"There is still a lot that looks like a construction site. It is a big endeavour to get people settled, but those who are there are loving it," the spokesman says.

Dame Nellie's great-great-granddaughter and Melba Opera Trust's Honorary Patron, the Hon. Saffron Foster, said the family were delighted to hear of the progress and are looking forward to attending the official opening next year. The family will continue to be involved with the village along with Coombe – The Melba Estate.



About Melba Opera Trust

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

Inspiring Excellence – Realising Potential – Forging Careers



Honouring a Treasure

Above, the performers, special guest and audience. Below, Mary-Jane Joscelyne is honoured by Siobhán Stagg at South Melbourne Town Hall.

When Siobhán Stagg made a diversion mid-aria at a special concert in honour of Mary-Jane Joscelyne OAM on 23 July, the crowd – and Mary-Jane – were at first surprised, then amused, and ultimately delighted.

Siobhán, an Amelia Joscelyne Memorial Scholar from 2009-12, was singing the Contessa di Folleville's aria from Rossini's opera *Il viaggio a Reims* to the crowd at South Melbourne Town Hall when she decided – even keeping the surprise from the pianist – to go “looking” for Mary-Jane amid the audience.



Siobhán has long had a close relationship with Mary-Jane, and she wanted to somehow integrate this much-loved woman into her performance. Having just finished a full production of this Rossini opera at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, it was fresh in her mind, and so she adapted the comedic scene in which the fashion-obsessed Contessa is devastated to learn her luggage has been destroyed in transit, but joyous on discovering a beautiful bonnet has survived unscathed.

Instead of a bonnet, Siobhán discovered Mary-Jane. “I wandered through the crowd, searching unsuccessfully through to the back row, and finally collapsed against a wall in mock tears. As the music changed to the happy section, I pretended to catch sight of Mary-Jane in her seat of honour in the front row, and delightedly led her back up on stage with me.”

Though she didn't know it was coming, Mary-Jane sportingly went along with the game, chuckling and improvising, much to the delight of onlookers. Siobhán sat her down on a chair in the middle of the stage and finished off the aria “with all its glittery coloratura” in celebration of “finding” Mary-Jane.

“It went down really well – everyone laughed and got into the spirit of the occasion,” Siobhán says. “Mary-Jane beamed the whole way through. It was the perfect example of Mary-Jane's generosity of spirit and quest to share joy with those around her.”

Siobhán was one of many celebrating Mary-Jane and the

legacy of Amelia's scholarship. Along with Joscelyne alumna Fiona Jopson (2010) and current scholars Paull-Anthony Keightley and Adam McMillan, Siobhán helped to honour this extraordinary woman, whose daughter treasured her time at the Melba when it was the Melba Memorial Conservatorium of Music.

The Amelia Joscelyne Memorial Scholarship is a cornerstone of Melba Opera Trust's program and is cherished by recipients for the opportunities it provides, along with the supportive and nurturing network the Joscelyne community offers. Established in 1989 by family and friends of Amelia, it has provided precious support to 26 gifted young singers thanks to the vibrant community of more than 400 supporters who make the scholarship possible.

Mary-Jane says that Siobhán in some ways is a bit like her daughter, who had an aura about her. “Very individual,” she says. “Siobhán has a really smart brain and has her feet firmly on the ground; she epitomises everything that is good about a person.”

While Mary-Jane feels she is getting better at speaking about Amelia in public, she does not find it easy, but she was buoyed by the fact that many people present were those who had connections with Amelia during her life. “It is extraordinary all these people are still there, coming to Melba events, because of Amelia's personality,” she says. “Which is a real compliment.”

In her talk about Amelia at the day-of-honour, Mary-Jane related

stories of her daughter as a five-year-old, going to Lauriston Girls' School with her red hair in bunches; her participation in “everything and more”, including musicals; and of the many families and friends she made connections with through school, university, work and the Conservatorium, many of them still in Mary-Jane's life and associated with the Melba today.

“I think a bit of Amelia has been sprinkled on this scholarship, it has a lot of the warmth and style she had.”

Mary-Jane says the memorial scholarship was set up in a loving fashion by all these friends of the Joscelyne family, growing over the years. “Who knew what was going to happen with the scholarship? We have had such wonderful recipients. It has been a part of their lives and has always had a lovely warmth about it. When it was set up we thought it might go for five or ten years, now we think it will go forever.

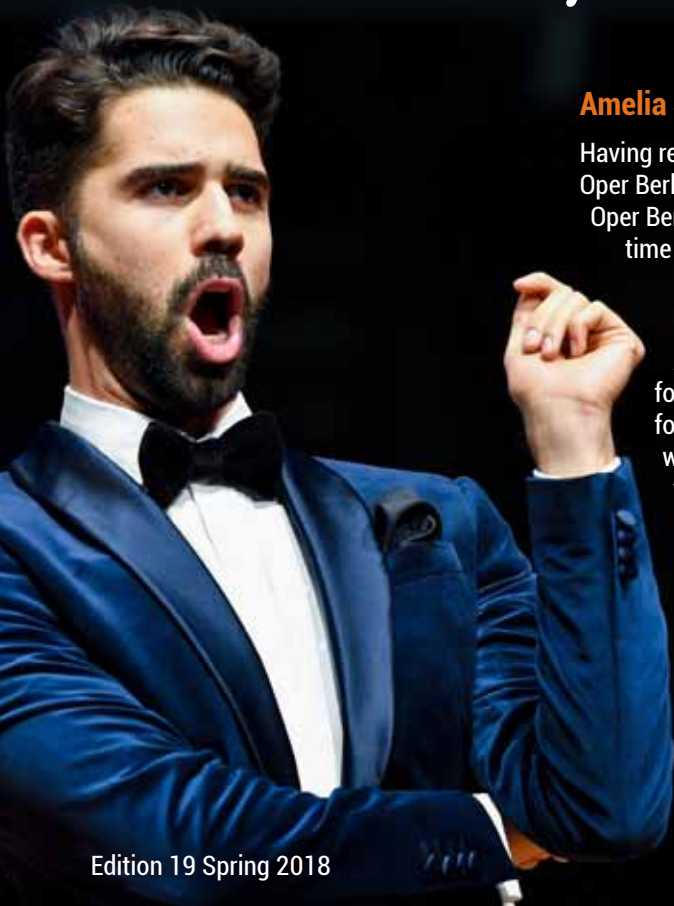
“It has been a source of great joy, and very inclusive.”

Paull-Anthony Keightley says he still gets goosebumps thinking about the concert in honour of Mary-Jane. “Meeting and singing with Siobhán and Fiona was filled with such joy as we celebrated Mary-Jane, Amelia and the whole Joscelyne community. The look on Mary-Jane's when she saw the three of us rehearsing with Adam was pure magic.”

“I have been so fortunate to have such a wonderful soul come into my life, but I know I am not alone. Thank you, Mary-Jane. From all of us!”

REFLECTIONS: THE 2018 SCHOLARS

Paull-Anthony Keightley – Bass



Amelia Joscelyne Memorial Scholarship

Having recently moved to Berlin on a year-long contract with Deutsche Oper Berlin, under The Opera Foundation for Young Australians Deutsche Oper Berlin Award, Paull-Anthony has swapped an extraordinarily busy time in Australia for an even busier diary in the German capital.

He says it was a baptism by fire on arrival, with his first two weeks spent staging and opening *La traviata* (as Dr Grenvil) and *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (as the Officer) while beginning rehearsals for *Nabucco* (as the High priest of Baal) which opened the following week. “This workload is certainly a major step up from what I was used to in Australia,” he says. “I have been welcomed with open arms by my new colleagues from all over the world. Many of the singers in the company started on the same scholarship program as I and are now among the most loved faces of the company.”

Paull-Anthony says his Melba scholarship has strongly supported his professional development and skills, giving him an excellent start of his life as a working opera singer. “All of the lessons I learned from my coaching, singing lessons and the mentor program allowed me to refine what skills I needed

to be self-sufficient. This to me was my biggest goal – to try things out, let myself fail and learn from my mistakes before taking this next step.”

Under the guidance of Melba's Sharolyn Kimmorley AM, his priority before departing was to fully prepare and memorise as many of his roles as possible – he managed ten out of fourteen, with only the smaller roles now left to finish. “I also made great progress with my German language skills. Despite being a little shy to use them with confidence in Germany, I am able to get by in rehearsal when they are split between German and English.”

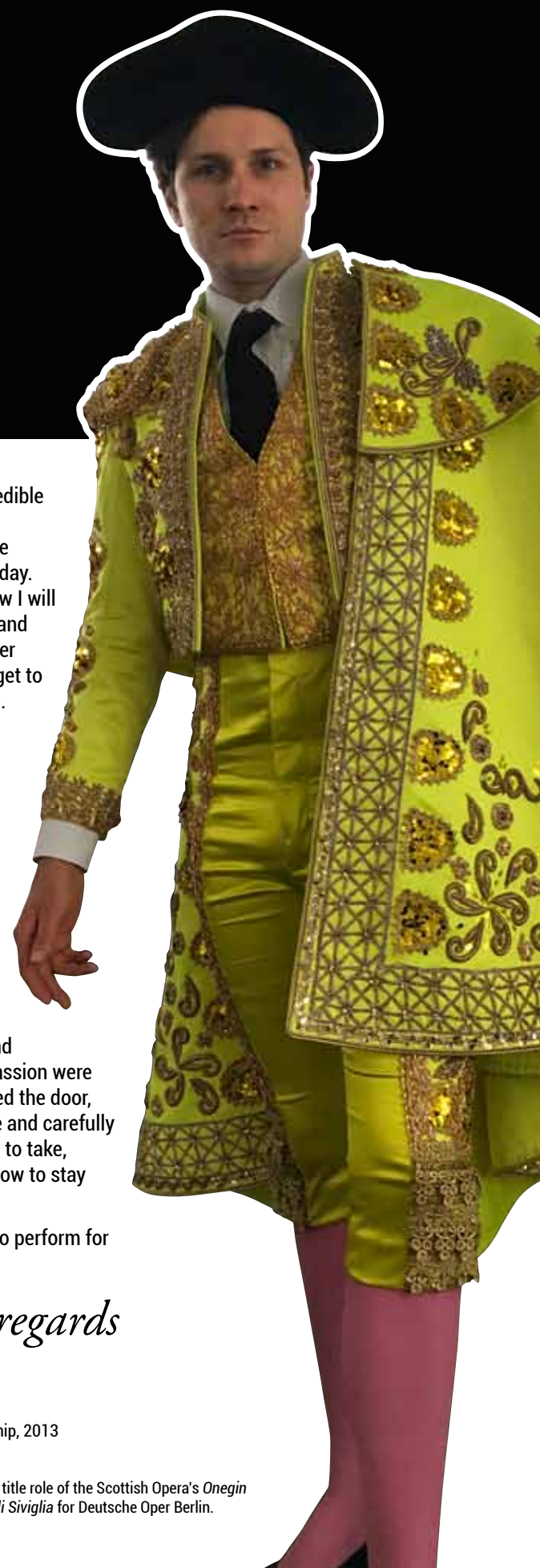
This all came on top of an important season spent with West Australian Opera, where he had the bass roles of Colline (*La bohème*), Badger/Parson (*The Cunning Little Vixen*) and Zuniga (*Carmen*). While he hopes now to learn much from his Deutsche Oper colleagues, especially in stagecraft, musicality and stamina, he would also like to audition for other European opera houses “to see if this is the place for me to call home for the time being”.

One of the great benefits has been having other Melba alumni around at the Deutsche Oper, including Siobhán Stagg and Samuel Dale Johnson. “Sam, in particular, has been such a wonderful face to see around the opera house.”



Letter from Abroad

SAMUEL DALE JOHNSON



Hello everyone!

For nearly nine months, I've been on the road with other companies, but now I'm back to my German home here in Berlin and I'm enjoying life. It is busy: so far this season I've had my debut as Figaro in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, after which I went straight into a concert in Prague, followed by my *Don Giovanni* debut.

Before the end of the year, I will also have once again sung Escamillo in *Carmen*, a role which I performed three times recently for Deutsche Oper Berlin, and I will have made my debut as Dr Falke in *Die Fledermaus*.

Here in Berlin I have the pleasure of being part of one of the most highly regarded ensembles in the world. In this ensemble we have Australians Siobhán Stagg, Derek Welton and Alexandra Hutton; and joining us this season we have Paull-Anthony Keightley as a Stipendiat (fellow).

Looking back, I see how extremely fortunate I've been, beginning with my Melba scholarship, and then continuing my operatic career at the Royal Opera House, London in the Jette Parker Young Artist Programme, which is regarded as one of the most prestigious, unique operatic training programs in the world. Not only do you receive training toward your vocal development and stagecraft, but you also have the opportunity to see,

listen and talk to the masters of the profession.

I was a Young Artist at ROH for two years before moving to Berlin, where I've made my base, but I do of course have the opportunity to explore projects outside of the company. When I finished the Jette Parker Program at the ROH, my first project in the UK was Il Conte in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* with Scottish Opera. This was directed by Sir Thomas Allen CBE, one of the best, if not the most highly regarded baritones to perform the role. The work we did together to prepare for the role was invaluable and I was given information that I will hold dearly for the rest of my life.

I've been lucky enough to return to the company in Scotland on two other separate occasions this past year. After debuting Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* and returning to the Royal Opera House to debut the lover Silvio in Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* I began my study for my next project with Scottish Opera: the title role of *Eugene Onegin*. Five months earlier we had just finished our run of *Boris Godunov* performances at the Deutsche Oper Berlin and Russian was at that time a new experience for me. But I was ridiculously grateful for this fortuitous head start toward my Russian education.

Working on *Onegin* was one of the most fulfilling experiences of my

young career. We were extremely fortunate to have Oliver Mears (Director of Opera for The Royal Opera House) and his vision of *Onegin* with us. To study, discuss and discover *Onegin* with him each day was thrilling from day one until the day that curtain finally came down.

I always talk to my colleagues about adopting "baggage" from our characters, but I can comfortably say that I didn't just adopt some of *Onegin*, but he actually helped me grow and find the direction in which I was moving. This is ridiculous, I know, as his character has high ideals, but no motive to find direction himself!

As to my own future, fortunately, I don't have to think about it too much at the moment: the repertoire I've been asked to sing for the next four years is exactly where I saw my voice moving on my future vocal timeline. I don't want to push myself into rep that's too heavy, too soon. In the last two years, I have felt a change to my voice and I now have an ever-present security I perhaps didn't have when I was still in my mid-twenties.

I do miss home! My family are always my first thought waking up. I also miss my great operatic mentors, Margaret Schindler and Anna Sweeney AM. I am 100 per cent certain that I wouldn't be halfway to where I am today if it

wasn't for these incredible individuals! Margaret Schindler gave me the technique I rely on today. We still talk about how I will approach a new role and I'm forever sending her little clips as I never get to sing for her in person.

Anna Sweeney AM didn't just give me my stagecraft and help me focus my instincts, but she put into perspective what is expected of us in our industry. The attention she gave us all during my time at Griffith University was awe-inspiring and her work ethic and passion were infectious. She opened the door, led me into this maze and carefully explained which path to take, which to avoid, and how to stay resilient.

It would be a dream to perform for them both again.

Warmest regards
Sam J. x

RJ Hamer Opera Scholarship, 2013

— Samuel Dale Johnson in the title role of the Scottish Opera's *Onegin* and as Figaro in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* for Deutsche Oper Berlin.



REFLECTIONS: THE 2018 SCHOLARS

Cleo Lee-McGowan – Soprano

Joseph Sambrook Opera Scholarship (2017, 2018)

Cleo Lee-McGowan says she has seen wonderful changes in her voice since embarking on her Melba journey. "This year I have had the opportunity to spend more time in Sydney thanks to my Melba scholarship," she says. "Making regular trips from Melbourne to Sydney to see my singing teacher and work with various language and vocal coaches has facilitated a dramatic improvement in my voice."

Cleo has had a big year, working with Simon O'Neill ONZM and Andrew Sinclair in the March Mentor Block, and making her exciting debut with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra in April in Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. She says she hopes these experiences and other skills she is learning as a Melba scholar will embellish her in a professional context, and help her make the best musical choices.

"I've had some very exciting engagements this year," she says. "I was able to reprise my role of Gretel in Victorian Opera's *Hansel and Gretel* at the Arts Centre in Melbourne in June. Gretel is such a fun role, involving a lot of running around and dancing! I also travelled to Hobart and performed with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra; it was a wonderful experience to sing with such an amazing orchestra."

In September, she had the good fortune to sing with another fantastic orchestra: for the finals of the IFAC Handa Australian Singing Competition, she sang with the Opera Australia Orchestra under the baton of Nicholas Milton.

"It was undoubtedly a highlight of my singing life. I was very honoured to be the recipient of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama Award, Pasqualina Lipari Prize, Sydney Symphony Orchestra Award, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs Prize and the MOST Audience Prize."

Cleo says she is looking forward to continuing to work on her vocal technique and language skills. "My success in the ASC has granted me a place at the Guildhall in London, so the next twelve months I will be preparing for my move to the UK. It's an exciting prospect to be starting a new adventure overseas. There are many opportunities over there and I want to prepare fully for this change."

Introducing the Cast

KRIS NEILL

While Kris Neill was on an opera tour in 2017, she met and was enthused by several people with strong associations to Melba Opera Trust.

Annie McFarling and Sharolyn Kimmorley AM, among others, talked to her about the extensive work Melba does with young singers and musicians. Kris was deeply impressed.

"Everyone spoke about it with such pride and passion and I thought what a fantastic organisation it was," she recalls. "On my return, I offered to help out as a mentor, if there was an opportunity there. That was how I made the connection." Then, earlier this year, she accepted a place on the Board, the first Sydney-based Director – a key development for Melba with its remit as a national organisation.

Kris has had extensive experience working in both government and private sectors, and has been particularly active mentoring young employees during her time as the Executive Director and Global Head of Corporate Communications and Investor Relations at Macquarie Group Limited (2007-2017). During her time at Macquarie, Kris pursued many philanthropic interests as a Director of the Macquarie Group Foundation and

chair of the Macquarie Group Collection Committee.

Kris started her career as a journalist at *The Sydney Morning Herald* and has since held key positions such as Director of Corporate Affairs at News Limited, Chief of Staff to the former Premier of New South Wales, the Hon. Bob Carr, and advisor to the former Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon. Brian Howe. Now director of her own consulting business, she is also one of the founding board members and Chair of a not-for-profit called Women's Community Shelters, which partners with communities to set up and staff shelters for women and children who are homeless or escaping domestic violence. The group is about to open its sixth shelter. "It is very rewarding work," she says.

Kris's association with music, however, goes back much further in her life. "My parents loved opera," Kris recalls. "As I child I wasn't particularly a fan, but it was really the only music that was played in the house."

It was when she was in her teens and studying piano and music more generally that she developed a real love for opera as a musical artform. "From there, I have been listening to opera and learning as much about it as I can," she says. "I really enjoyed learning music – it was a bit like learning a language, in that

there is a difference between getting by and being fluent. But I had no aspirations for a musical career – I didn't believe I was good enough."

Going on to study arts at university, with a strong interest in history and political science, she then began her career in communications. During her extensive experiences here and abroad, she became deeply acquainted with the principles of corporate brand-building and its relationship to building a personal brand, which is so important to emerging artists. "I am a big believer in mentorship," she says. "It can be incredibly valuable for the mentee and very rewarding for the mentor in terms of what they get back.

"At Macquarie, I assisted young people to present themselves in the best way they possibly could to further their career. Some people might be incredibly talented, but need some developmental help to put their best self forward and that is, in essence, my approach: to lend a hand in giving them confidence in themselves and in doing things that might not come entirely naturally to them."

As an active mentor at Macquarie, Kris would work in particular with young people in line for promotion, helping them through the process of preparation for interviewing panels. "One young woman was very good with digital technology so there was



something of a reverse mentorship happening there – she mentored me in the dark arts of digital technology and I mentored her in regards to her career. That was a fantastic exchange of knowledge and experience."

It followed, then, that one of the things that really attracted Kris to

the Melba was its promotion of the idea that a singer or a musician is much more than just their voice or instrument. "The idea that there is a whole person to develop if they are going to be successful musicians and singers, particularly in these very competitive contract-focussed times, really attracted me."

REFLECTIONS: THE 2018 SCHOLARS

Samuel Piper – Baritone

John & Elizabeth Wright-Smith Scholarship (2017-2018)

The year has been full of learning and performing roles for Sam, who joined Opera Australia for three shows, and also performed in *Athalia* with Pinchgut Opera. If that was not enough, he also had several wins and placements in various sections of the Sydney Eisteddfod, and he says that singing in the Opera & Arts Support Group Final was definitely a highlight of this busy period.

"Performing so often has certainly helped me develop a more well-rounded understanding of stage technique," Sam says. "Generally speaking, having the continuing financial assistance of my Melba scholarship, going towards professional expenses, has been extremely helpful. My main focus this year has been on developing my vocal technique and pursuing intensive lessons and coachings would have been difficult without the scholarship.

"Through ongoing technique work, I have found an ability to do more with my voice. I'm able to use my more solid technique to 'say' more with my voice in terms of expression, colour, timbre and so on."

Sam also appreciated Melba's focus on developing his audition technique. "Auditioning is one of the most difficult aspects of our profession and often neglected by tertiary institutions."

Clearly, he has been auditioning well, as he is soon to make his main stage debut with Opera Queensland as Masetto in *Don Giovanni*. "I've worked with the company sporadically over the past few years and it's a privilege now to be able to sing such a wonderful role. I'm looking forward to developing the character and putting my study and training to use."

Following the final Melba mentor block in November, Sam will head to Treviso, Italy, as the recipient of the Pellegrino Scholarship through the Italian Consulate. "The scholarship will enable me to undertake four weeks of intensive Italian language study alongside lessons with renowned American voice teacher, Sherman Lowe. I'm looking forward to exploring Italy for the first time, seeing operas and enjoying the rich cultural heritage this beautiful country offers."

After that, his main goals are to continue developing a solid vocal technique as the foundation for a sustainable career and to learn a few great lyric baritone roles, such as Guglielmo, Il Conte, Dandini and Belcore.



THOMAS HAMPSON ——— MASTERS

Master classes are a critical feature of Melba Opera Trust's Mentor Program – and while the artistic wisdom imparted No two singers put the 'master' more into master class than Thomas Hampson and Stuart Skelton, and Melba



Having spent considerable time listening to recordings of Thomas Hampson, one of the world's foremost baritones, Melba scholar and baritone Stephen Marsh was excited this year to work with him in a master class environment.

"I was lucky as I had the chance to work with Thomas Hampson in two separate master classes," Stephen says. "I was able to take away a lot of different information from both sessions as I worked on two arias that are from very different time periods."

Stephen has long been impressed by Thomas Hampson's extraordinary career. Thomas has received many honours and awards for his artistry and cultural leadership, and has been honoured as a Metropolitan Opera Guild Met Mastersinger and inducted into both the Gramophone Hall of Fame and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences Hall of Fame.

Hampson has an opera repertoire of more than eighty roles, has sung in all the major opera houses of the world, has a discography of more than 170 albums, and in 2010 was honoured with a Living

Legend Award by the Library of Congress, where he has served as Special Advisor to the Study and Performance of Music in America. Thomas also maintains an active interest in research, education, musical outreach and technology, largely through the Hampson Foundation, which he founded in 2003, which employs the art of song to promote intercultural dialogue and understanding.

The scholars and master class observers were thrilled to have him aboard. "When working with someone who is the same voice type in a master class setting I feel as the student you can relate a little more," Stephen says. "They can push you a little harder as they have an understanding how this specific voice-type works, as they have lived it themselves. I really enjoyed working with Mr Hampson. The changes he asked for were easily explained and I have now adapted them in how I approach my singing every day. It was a fantastic experience."

Chair of Melba Opera Trust, Roz Zalewski-Ruskin, recalls Thomas as being especially charming and erudite with both scholars and observers in the room during the master class. Having noted that even for young singers with great voices it is difficult to have a career in opera, Thomas first invited the scholars to each sing an aria, and kept his focus initially on the physical aspects of their work and the need to be aware of what the body is doing while singing.

"What followed can only be described as a sort of crude dancing lesson," Roz recalls. "With each scholar's permission, he stood behind them, asked them to spread their arms as if they were wings and to move around."

"I felt for the scholars, glad it wasn't me and would have understood if one or more of them felt awkward and chose to leave the room. But they all quickly settled into the activity, the aim of which, I think, was to open up the diaphragm and body to enable the voice to expand accordingly. At least, this seemed to be the effect of the exercise. As each scholar repeated their aria, they appeared to be more expansive in voice and presentation, and they all said they felt more comfortable singing. They were clearly eager to learn and they drew a lot of admiration from the observers."

Roz says that of the many master classes she has attended, this one seemed to be the most physically demanding. "It made me realise how resilient and hardworking our scholars are."

Melba Opera Trust is grateful to the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra for making this opportunity possible.



Thomas Hampson working with Fleuranne Brockway and Adam McMillan and, left, demonstrating an exercise with Cleo Lee-McGowan.

REFLECTIONS: THE 2018 SCHOLARS

Jessica Harper – Soprano

Dame Nellie Melba Scholarship and Patrick & Vivian Gordon Award

Thanks to winning the inaugural Limestone Coast Opera Lucca Competition in Mount Gambier earlier this year, Jessica has just returned from Italy, where she was part of the Accademia del Bel Canto Rodolfo Celletti in Martina Franca. There, she spent a month working on Bel Canto style and technique, Italian language and studying music history and philosophy.

"It was a gift for my life and career," Jessica says. "Absolutely everything was in Italian, so I picked up what I needed to understand quickly – nothing like immersion to help you learn a language! We also performed all over Martina Franca, marking the first set of international performances of my career – a very special moment."

Jessica then travelled to Germany and the UK, finishing with a week in Florence where she auditioned for the Accademia del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino Young Artist Program. "I am thrilled to say I made it through to the final round for this audition (top 40), after making the top 200 in the semi-finals."

She hopes to return to Germany after her Melba scholarship ends. "Germany is the mecca of operatic performance at the moment. You can barely turn a corner without bumping into an Opera House! It's time for me to relocate to Europe for a few years and see if I can crack into the profession over there

or the UK. There are far more opportunities for musicians, and my partner Joseph (a classical cellist) will be undertaking his Masters in Dresden, so it makes sense for both of us to live there."

Jessica says the Melba has been crucial to her development and the year spent polishing her skills has more than lived up to her expectations. "The standard of performance expected of Melba scholars has meant that I am much more prepared with all of my work than what I have been used to producing," she says. "Initially, the adjustment to this depth of research (I was already researching to a high standard) was a challenge, but I am now used to it and as a result am discovering fascinating things about composers, librettists, operas etc. It is such compelling stuff and also means that my performances are much more nuanced. Most of the time I am achieving a standard of performance of which I am very proud."

"That is not to say that I feel I am 'fully cooked' at all – I'll never stop learning! – but I am thrilled that I have been pushed to achieve so much more than I was doing before I began the program and knowing that I can expect even more of myself."

Jessica will be applying all of these newfound focuses on her preparations for the Opera Foundation for Young Australians Lady Fairfax New York Award Finals and The Acclaim Awards Italian Opera Fellowship later in the year.



AT WORK — STUART SKELTON

is vital, the classes also offer the opportunity to establish and develop important relationships with industry leaders. Opera Trust's 2018 scholars were fortunate to work with both internationally renowned artists earlier this year.

When he began his recent master class with the 2018 Melba scholars, renowned heldentenor Stuart Skelton was getting ready for his own performances as Siegmund in *Die Walküre* at the Royal Opera House, London, and the title role in *Otello* at the Metropolitan Opera, New York.

This busy and successful man, though, says it is always a wonderful challenge and an immense enjoyment working with Melba scholars. He was pleased to put aside the time, especially as hosts Peter Reilly and Linton Soderholm generously opened their home Astolat for the special occasion. "An incredible venue and hosts," Stuart says. "And such a giving and warm audience."

Stuart is well-known as a Grammy Nominee and winner of the 2014 International Opera Award for Best Male Singer, as well as two Helpmann Awards. He appears regularly on the leading operatic stages of the world, and has sung with many acclaimed conductors.

With all this experience, Stuart's approach to a master class situation is interesting: he says he is generally looking to find one or two things that a singer can already do, but about which he is convinced they can do better.

"In a public master class I think that nothing is gained by having a singer work on anything with which they are struggling," he says. "Nothing

makes you not want to work on something more than having it go 'wrong' in front of others. Find something that needs polishing or something that you, as a master class teacher, know the singer can do spectacularly, and coax them into it in front of an audience.

"It is a confidence-boost for a young singer that is entirely necessary. Oh, and make both singer and audience enjoy it. Make them laugh and empathise with the singer."

Stuart says this class went brilliantly and some excellent questions were asked. Also, some great technical work was done with the singers in the private class before the audience arrived.

"The look on a singer's face when I bet them they can do something they're not sure they're capable of and then they do pull it off: that look of joy on their faces (and the audience's) is wonderful. And I have yet to lose that bet!"

Stuart says he is always impressed with the Melba scholars' level of preparation and attention to detail and their desire to improve, learn, and take everything they possibly can from a teacher. "And the young baritone, Stephen Marsh, is a baby Verdi baritone, I am convinced of it. Of course, no-one should tell him this for some time, but that is where he is headed. No doubt."

2018 Melba scholar Cleo Lee-McGowan says she was fortunate to work with Stuart also in 2017, and found her time with him extremely

beneficial. "I was excited to work with him again in July this year," she says. "It goes without saying that Stuart is not only a wonderfully talented musician and artist, but also a generous and skilled teacher. I was happy to bring Nannetta's aria 'Sul fil d'un soffio etesio' from Verdi's *Falstaff* after he suggested that it would be a good fit for me last year."

While he was in town, Stuart made his Melbourne Recital Centre debut. "I had an absolute blast with it. Some repertoire that has been very close to my heart for some time and repertoire that I am sure was new to most in the audience. And the level of care that MRC showed to me and my dear friend and collaborator, Richard Peirson, was truly wonderful."

As if all this were not enough activity, Stuart also recently released a new album. "Once we had decided on the repertoire, a certain timeline seemed to suggest itself," he says. "This was an exploration of Wagner's music from his earliest to his final works and then taking a glimpse at the world of music that was influenced by him. And mostly I am relieved. It's out there now and people can make up their own minds about me, my singing and the repertoire. I do hope that they enjoy it."

Stuart Skelton's work with Melba Opera Trust was made possible thanks to the Melbourne Recital Centre.

—
Stuart Skelton working with Samuel Piper.



The 2018 Mentor Program is made possible by:

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



REFLECTIONS: THE 2018 SCHOLARS

Stephen Marsh – Baritone

Paulette Bisley Opera Scholarship and Eleanor Blakemore Opera Society Scholarship

Working with some of the world's finest operatic performers in master classes, private coachings and mentor sessions has been a highlight of the year for Stephen. "This year I personally feel I have grown so much as a performer and professional and this is due to the training, coaching and opportunities that Melba Opera Trust provides," he says. "The knowledge that has been imparted to us as young professionals has been invaluable."

The hard work is already paying off: in August, Stephen won the Melbourne Welsh Male Choir Singer of the Year Competition and was also selected as a Richard Divall Emerging Artist with Melbourne Opera. Earlier in the year, he was runner-up at the Inaugural Limestone Coast Aria Competition.

Stephen greatly enjoyed the Melbourne Welsh Male Choir competition experience. "It was a great opportunity to put into practice some of the new skills I have learnt throughout this year in the Melba Program, as competitions are a relatively new frontier for me."

As for Melbourne Opera, with which he has been involved for six years, the Richard Divall Emerging Artist Program provides aspiring professionals the opportunity to develop in a fully functioning opera company. "We are

currently undertaking language study, stagecraft workshops and then as developing artists we have the opportunity to put these skills into practice by both covering and performing roles throughout the Melbourne Opera performance season," he says. "It is fantastic as I have found that the training that I have undertaken with Melba Opera Trust and also with the RDEAP program is complementary."

Stephen has also been a developing artist with Victorian Opera for the past 18 months and has been in several mainstage productions. Most recently Stephen performed the role of the Shepherd and the Doctor for *Pelléas et Mélisande*. "I have been truly fortunate to be a member in three developing artist programs this year, as it has been my first year working full-time as a singer. These diverse programs have given me support as a developing artist and also the opportunity to perform on stage."

Stephen says the Melba mentor sessions on language, administration, mental health, tax, law, media and diction – to name a few – have been vital in preparing him for his career. "I am still learning but, compared with the start of the year before I joined Melba Opera Trust, I feel I understand these administrative components much better and no longer find it as daunting as I once did."

Stephen was recently a finalist in the 2018 *Herald Sun* Aria Competition.



Touchdown in Wiesbaden

DANIEL CARISON

**Opera Society Vocal Scholarship and Beleura-Tallis Opera Scholarship (2015)
Paulette Bisley Opera Scholarship and Ruskin Opera Award (2016, 2017)**

Throughout his three years with Melba Opera Trust (2015-17), Daniel Carison had his sights on Germany. Finally, he is there – and within a week of his June arrival, he was asked to make his company debut with just a day's notice.

Each year, the German Australian Opera Grant, in conjunction with the Hessisches Staatstheater Wiesbaden, enables one fortunate singer the opportunity to work in Germany. The successful applicant is offered a twelve-month working contract with Staatstheater where they perform in various productions during the season.

When Daniel was at the Melba, he auditioned for the grant in 2015 and made the finals. "But I knew then I still had a way to go before I was ready to tackle the German opera scene. After two more years of rigorous study with the Melba, I knew I was ready for all the responsibilities and challenges that would follow."

He won the grant for 2018 and in the week of his arrival, Daniel received the unexpected call to step-in as Masetto in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. "Stepping into a role at the last minute isn't entirely uncommon in the world of opera, but when that last-minute swap is also a European debut, the stakes are raised significantly," he says. "That being said, it all came to hand rather simply. I was rehearsing for *Die Meistersinger*

von Nürnberg and shortly after hopping into my rehearsal costume, I was approached by the casting director who informed me that a colleague had fallen ill and a cover was desperately required for the upcoming performance of *Don Giovanni* the next day. Given that I was programmed to perform the role of Masetto in the next season, it wasn't beyond the realm of possibility that I could step in. Suddenly I was pulled out from the rehearsals and was immediately sworn into a series of last-minute preparations."

While he was anxious, he wasn't traumatised by the prospect. "In the hours leading up to the show, it is safe to say I was fairly panicked. I wasn't so much concerned with my own performance as I was with hindering the performance of my fellow colleagues." By the time he set foot on the stage, however, the nerves transformed into adrenaline and "suddenly I was alive".

"Before I knew it, the show was over and I couldn't believe I'd had so much fun in such a potentially horrible situation." Following the two performances of *Don Giovanni*, it was made clear his efforts and poise under such pressure had not gone unnoticed.

Although it is still early days in his contract, Daniel says the experience has been "exhilarating and stressful all at the same time", with his theatre work immensely positive.

"I am fortunate to have a wonderful group of colleagues around me who are both supportive of this new venture and prepared to challenge me," he says.

He is looking forward to the demands of the 2018/19 Season at the Staatstheater when he will reprise roles in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* as Ortel, and Masetto in *Don Giovanni*. In following months, he will sing Stárek in Janáček's *Jenůfa*, Marullo in *Rigoletto*, Reinmar von Zweter in *Tannhäuser*, Brother in *Die sieben Todsünden*, Yamadori in *Madama Butterfly* and the Zweiter Nazarener in *Salome*.



REFLECTIONS: THE 2018 SCHOLARS

Adam McMillan – Repetiteur

**Margaret Schofield Opera Scholarship and
Mel & Nina Waters Award**

With his first foray into the world of opera beginning with his Melba scholarship, Adam McMillan has had some extraordinary growth over the past year. Next month the immersion continues when he goes on a four-day tour of northern Victoria with other Melba scholars, presenting concerts at various venues.

Adam says his Melba scholarship has enabled him to receive repetiteur coaching, to expand his language skills (specifically focussing on Italian) and to learn more about all aspects of the business side of musical life.

"I've been able to gain greater familiarity with some of the repertoire through working alongside the vocal scholars," he says. "I would say the strongest areas of growth for me have been in my Italian language proficiency, in my ability to sight-read music when required, and in my improved abilities as a pianist to approach my playing in a more orchestral way (as is required when playing an orchestral reduction).

"I've also gained a lot from the professional training we have had to do with public speaking and performance psychology; these are such crucial skills to have alongside our musical skills."

Adam says that working with Sharolyn Kimmorley AM and Jennifer Marten-Smith has greatly helped improve the way he accompanies singers, and to refine his perception of all the things to listen for when coaching singers. "They both have helped me to grow as a pianist through challenging me to refine my ear to orchestral sounds when playing, and to play in a way that supports the voice," he says.

"As language is such an enormous part of the study of opera, the Melba program provides strong support for our language studies (especially Italian), and many of the blocks include diction coaching. Working with Teresa Desmarchelier on Italian diction during the blocks has been very helpful in my training this year. Having a strong grasp of diction is a very challenging pursuit, but one that will help me greatly in working with singers."

Adam's work with singers is complemented by his busy performance schedule as a solo pianist and chamber musician. Other successes have included playing in the Peninsula Summer Music Festival early this year, giving a recital of Chopin's 24 Preludes, and playing in Camerata – Queensland's Chamber Orchestra.

"I'm looking forward to a few things to come later this year including performing in a Musica Viva master class for Sir András Schiff, performing in the Australian Piano Duo Festival, and giving a violin-piano duo recital at the Melbourne Recital Centre."



A Spotlight on Sydney

In August, Melba was in Sydney for a week-long program of Mentor sessions and activities.



Below:
Discussing legal and public liability considerations for artists with expert, **James Williams**



Left and above:
Week-long intensive acting, audition and movement technique with US Director, **Chuck Hudson**



Above:
Exploring the art of stage makeup with Opera Australia's **Andrew Keshan**

Left and below left:
Recording for auditions with sound engineer, **Virginia Read**



Left and above:
Private coaching with renowned Australian soprano **Yvonne Kenny AM**.

REFLECTIONS: THE 2018 SCHOLARS

Fleuranne Brockway – Mezzo-soprano

Ruskin Opera Scholarship and Annie McFarling Opera Scholarship

Fleuranne Brockway says she has had a whirlwind of a year, going from not knowing what she would be doing in six months' time to having her next two years mapped out.

"It takes an army to raise an opera singer, and this year I have truly had an army of great mentors and colleagues to support my development," she says. "The Melba program caters to the needs of each individual singer and is highly focussed on how to maximise their potential. I would never have been able to achieve what I did without the support of Melba Opera Trust and am incredibly grateful for their support."

Western Australia-based Fleur says one of the great benefits of the Melba program has been access to world-class coaches across Australia. "I have travelled to Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Tasmania this year, all to work with top industry professionals. Alongside developing my artistic skills, this time travelling the country for Melba allowed me to put many of the business skills we have learned into practice. "I have had to plan out my own study trips, network, negotiate different opportunities and manage my finances like a business, which are all necessary skills for the life of a freelance singer. I have also learned a lot about how to look after myself when travelling alone,

which is a huge part of the profession and one that is hard to gain experience in before you start working."

Fleur's success in not one, but two major competitions this year has created a pathway for her operatic future. Last month, she relocated to London to commence an Artist Diploma in Opera at the Royal College of Music, thanks to the Australian International Opera Award. After completing the course, Fleur will turn her sights to Wiesbaden and Munich for German language training and work experience before joining the principle ensemble with Hessisches Staatstheater Wiesbaden thanks to the German-Australian Opera Grant. "Melba Opera Trust has a history of winners in both awards and I am incredibly grateful to add to this legacy."

Apart from these two awards, Fleur's other non-Melba successes this year included her debut with West Australian Opera in the role of Mercédès in their production of *Carmen*. "It was an absolute joy to share that moment with Roz and Jeremy Ruskin, two of my scholarship providers who flew all the way to Perth to share it with me." A croquet champion, she also kept up her game. "Thankfully London has many croquet clubs, so I won't be putting down my mallet any time soon." In the meantime, Fleur is improving her fluency in German and Italian, and, learning flamenco dance, ballroom and Alexander Technique. "All skills can be useful in the creative arts, and now that I have another year of time to focus on working on these, I intend to make the most of it."



Did you hear...

Stacey Alleaume as Fiorilla in Opera Australia's production of *The Turk in Italy* (Sydney Season – August)

Damian Arnold as Tebaldo for Auckland Opera Studio's production of *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* (August)

Robert Barbaro as Ferrando for Dulwich Opera's production of *Così fan tutte* (June-November)

Shauntai Batzke as a featured soloist in *Stand By Your Woman* with Spire Ensemble at Hamer Hall (September)

Daniel Carison as Masetto in Hessisches Staatstheater Wiesbaden's production of *Don Giovanni* (July)

Hannah Dahlenburg as Melba in Yarra Valley Opera Festival's adaptation of *Der Schauspieldirektor* in *A Tale of Two Divas*

Zoe Drummond was named the winner of the 2018 Marianne Marthy Scholarship from the IFAC Australian Singing Competition

Lauren Fagan as Woglinde in *Das Rheingold* and *Götterdämmerung* at Royal Opera House (September)

Amir Farid in his Lincoln Centre debut with Mark Morris Dance Group for the Mostly Mozart Festival NYC (August)

Alexandra Flood as resident artist for the Bangalow Music Festival with Southern Cross Soloists (August) and Jemmy in Victorian Opera's production of *William Tell* (14-19 July)

Samuel Dale Johnson as Figaro for Deutsche Oper Berlin's production of *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (September)

Fiona Jopson has commenced a full-time contract as a member of the principal ensemble for Vienna State Opera



Stacey Alleaume in *The Turk in Italy*. Photography by Keith Saunders

Jeremy Kleeman as Collatinus in Victorian Opera's production of *The Rape of Lucretia* with Sydney Chamber Opera and Dark Mofo (June)

Timothy Newton as Colline in New Zealand Opera's new production of *La bohème* (September-October) and is the winner of 2018 Deutsche Oper Berlin Award from the Opera Foundation for Young Australians

Michael Petruccelli as Goro and Matthew Reardon as Pinkerton in Opera Australia's touring production of *Madama Butterfly* (July-September)

Jacqueline Porter as Susanna with Jeremy Kleeman as Second Elder in Handel in the Theatre's production of Handel's *Susanna* (September)

Samuel Sakker as David in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* with State Opera South Australia (4 August) and Don José in *Carmen* for Den Jyske Oper (October)

Siobhán Stagg as Mélisande in Victorian Opera's production of *Pelléas et Mélisande* (11-13 October), as a featured artist at the Australian Festival of Chamber Music (July) and a soloist with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra across Tasmania and Victoria (August-September)

Brenton Spiteri as Mathan in Pinchgut Opera's production of *Athalia* (June), soloist in Bernstein on Broadway with Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and Benvolio in Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra's *Roméo et Juliette* (20 October)

Nicholas Tolputt as soloist for Bernstein Classics with Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (15 August)

Janet Szepei Todd as Brianne in the LA premiere of Mark Lanz Weiser's new opera *Place Where You Started* (May), Alison in the Facebook-based opera *Someone Like Me* (2018) and Cio-Cio San in Opera Columbus' *Madama Butterfly* (28-30 September)

Sophie Yelland has commenced a full-time contract with Welsh National Opera

Listen out for...

Stacey Alleaume at Opera Australia for their 2019 season performing Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Sophie in *Werther* and Gilda in *Rigoletto*

Daniel Carison at Hessisches Staatstheater Wiesbaden in their 2018/2019 season performing Hermann Ortel in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, Die Zweite Nazarener in *Salome*, Marullo in *Rigoletto*, Reinnar von Zweter in *Tannhäuser*, Yamadori in *Madama Butterfly* and Altgesel in *Jenůfa*

Stefan Cassomenos in his first season as Artistic Director of the Port Fairy Spring Music Festival alongside Monica Curro in late 2019 and a soloist with the Melbourne



Damian Arnold in *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*. Photography by Stephen Fitzgerald

Symphony Orchestra with Christopher Moore (29-31 May 2019) and for *Ghost Stories* (3 November 2019)

Emily Edmonds as Semira in Pinchgut Opera's production of *Artaserse*, Varvara in Royal Opera House's 2019 production of *Kátya Kabanová* and L'enfant in Komische Oper Berlin's 2019 production of *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*

Lauren Fagan as Alcina in 2019 Internationale Händel-Festspiele's production of *Alcina*

Georgia Hall as a soloist with Australian Dance Theatre's *The Beginning of Nature* touring throughout Germany, Belgium and The Netherlands (November-December 2018)

Samuel Johnson at Deutsche Oper Berlin for the 2019/2019 season performing Dr Falke in *Die Fledermaus*, Escamillo in *Carmen*, Juan in *Don Quichotte*, Angelotti in *Tosca*, and Ping in *Turandot*

Jeremy Kleeman in recital with Stephen Cassomenos for Musica Viva at the Melbourne Recital Centre (26 March 2019) and Melbourne Symphony Orchestra for *Messiah* (13 December 2019)

Michael Petruccelli at Frankfurt Oper for the 2018/2019 Opernstudio performing Don Basilio/Don Curzio in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Ein Offizier in *Ariadne auf Naxos* and Ein italienischer Sänger in *Capriccio*

Jacqueline Porter as soloist the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic *Messiah* (9 December 2018) and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra for *Fantasy and the Firebird* (8 March 2019)

Samuel Sakker as Tokhon Kabanov in Scottish Opera's 2019 *Kátya Kabanová*, Erik in Angers-Nantes Opéra and Opéra de Rennes' 2019 *Der fliegende Holländer*, and as a soloist for Royal Philharmonic Orchestra 2019 Valentine's Day Gala and Tippett's *A Child of our Time* for Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra in 2019

Brenton Spiteri as Aquilio in Pinchgut Opera's *Farnace* (4-10 December 2019)

Siobhán Stagg in the title role for Lyric Opera of Chicago's production of Massenet's *Cendrillon* (November-December 2018), at the 2019 Mozartwoche Festival as a soloist for Mozart *Mass in C Minor*, in her role debut at Deutsche Oper Berlin for the 2018/2019 season performing Micaëla in *Carmen* (February 2019) and Soloist for *Messiah* with Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (7-8 December 2019)

Nicholas Tolputt in *Messiah* with Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (15-16 December 2018) and Feace I, Melanto and Marittimo I in Pinchgut Opera's *The Return of Ulysses* (13-19 June 2019)

Dame Heather Begg Memorial Award announced for 2018

Melba alumna, soprano Lauren Fagan, has continued her year of wonderful success by becoming the sixth recipient of the esteemed Dame Heather Begg Memorial Award.

The annual Award was established through Dame Heather Begg's estate and continues the legacy of the internationally-renowned New Zealand mezzo-soprano by providing a \$25,000 grant to support the artistic development of a gifted emerging Australian or New Zealand opera singer.

Lauren describes this Award as extremely generous, and wonderful in the way it supports a crucial stage in a singer's career, when they are established as young artists, but require important artistic development to carry forward their career goals.

"After her long and incredible operatic career Heather wanted to support the development of other young opera singers," she says. "The path that Heather followed to achieve such a wonderful and varied career definitely resonates with me. She was born in New Zealand and after being recognised as having considerable vocal potential moved over to study in the UK and her career developed from there.

"After leaving for London six years ago, I have now completed my studies and begun working at many of the opera companies over here in the UK. It is extremely exciting to see that Dame Heather's debut with the Royal Opera was in 1959 in Wagner's *Die Walküre*, and right now I am about to make my Royal Opera debut as a principal artist (not as a Jette Parker Young Artist) as Woglinde in Wagner's *Rheingold* and *Götterdämmerung*."

Lauren loves waking up to news from Australia and when she received the email about winning, she was in mild shock. "The thing about this award is you don't put yourself forward so it came as a complete and very welcome surprise."

Lauren says the unique nature of the Award will allow her to clearly 'assess' what she needs to improve to reach her operatic goals by removing any financial stress. "I have already begun intensive German lessons twice a week, as I am determined to be able to converse in German before my contract in Karlsruhe early next year. I am also looking into the possibility of a fest contract in Germany down the line and know that this will really help with this, too."

Lauren says she is really enjoying the journey of her burgeoning operatic career and stresses the importance of mentoring in the



process. "I feel like I mention it all the time, but I cannot impress enough how important my inner circle of mentors is to me – Glenn Winslade and Sharolyn Kimmorley AM are my rocks! Like everyone, I have good and not so good days vocally, but essentially it's the mental strength which can keep it all together and enable you to continue improving. My mentors help me all the time to keep myself on the right

path of a healthy vocal technique and a healthy mind."

Lauren joins a growing list of recipients for this unique award:

2017	Emily Edmonds
2016	Jeremy Kleeman
2015	Amina Edris
2014	Janet Szepei Todd
2013	Samuel Dundas

Lauren Fagan in *La traviata*. Photography by Robert Workman

Raising an Opera singer

We're fond of saying "it takes a village to raise an opera singer", but what does that look like for promising young opera singers in Australia?

The path to an operatic career is varied and at times uncertain, but fortunately there are many organisations committed to ensuring our talent is supported each step of the way.

Melba's role is a constant within the village; preparing scholars for the rigours of life as a professional operatic artist. We are proud to have helped forge so many promising careers.

Listed is just a sample of the many paths our Melba scholars have followed in pursuit of their aspirations.

Zoe Drummond Soprano

TODAY Wins the Mathy Award with IFAC Handa Australian Singing Competition

2017-19 Full scholarship to Guildhall School of Music and Drama; Artist Masters in Opera Performance

2017 Principal Artist for Opera Australia and Victorian Opera

2016 Wins Lady Fairfax New York Scholarship with The Opera Foundation for Young Australians

2015-17 Melba Opera Trust

2015 Lisa Gasteen National Opera School

2013 Pacific Opera Young Artist

Top: Lindsay Kearney, Opera Australia
Middle: Lisa Gasteen National Opera Studio
Bottom: Lindsay Kearney, Opera Australia



Stacey Alleaume Soprano

TODAY Principal Artist with Opera Australia

2016 Moffatt Oxenbould Young Artist, Opera Australia

2016 Wins Joan Sutherland Scholarship – Australian Opera Awards Committee

2015 Wins scholarship to Music Academy of the West, USA

2014 Opera Australia ensemble and principal artist for regional tour

2013 Wins Herald Sun Aria

2012 Melba Opera Trust and wins Sydney Eisteddfod Opera Scholarship

Opera Australia school's company

2010 Melba Opera Trust

2009 Opera Studio Melbourne (now Gertrude Opera)

Top: The Acclaim Awards
Middle: Prudence Upton, Opera Australia
Bottom: Georges Antoni, Opera Australia



Michael Petrucci Tenor

TODAY Joined Oper Frankfurt Opernstudio (2018/19)

2017 Principal artist for Opera Australia and Victorian Opera

2016 Melba Opera Trust

2015-16 Victorian Opera Developing Artist Program

Above: Royal Melbourne Philharmonic
Top right: Charlie Kinross, Victorian Opera
Bottom: Charlie Kinross, Victorian Opera



Fleuranne Brockway Mezzo-soprano

TODAY Wins German-Australian Opera Grant which will see her joining the Hessisches Staatstheater Wiesbaden for the 2019/20 season

Wins Australian International Opera Award; full scholarship at the Royal College of Music International Opera School, London

2018 Melba Opera Trust

2017-18 West Australian Opera Wesfarmers Young Artist Program

2017 Wins National Liederfest, Franz Schubert Institute Prize

2016 Victorian Opera Developing Artist Program

2014-16 Lisa Gasteen National Opera School

Top: James Rogers, West Australian Opera
Middle: James Rogers, West Australian Opera
Bottom: Charlie Kinross, Victorian Opera



Shakira Tsindos Mezzo-soprano

TODAY Scholarship at Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London completing an Artist Masters in Performance

2018 Opera Australia Victorian schools tour

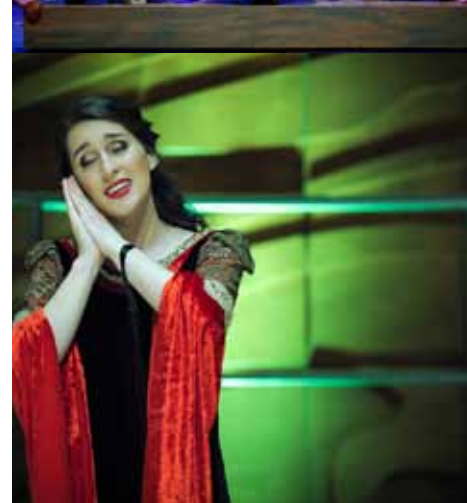
2017 Wins Acclaim Award Fellowship

2016 Melba Opera Trust

2016 Victorian Opera Developing Artist Program

2013-16 Opera Scholars Australia; scholar of the year

Above: Hopkins Sinfonia
Top right: Jeff Busby, Victorian Opera
Bottom: Opera Scholars Australia





Objects of Fame

A new exhibition at the University of Melbourne's Grainger Museum is exploring the concept of fame as it affected Dame Nellie Melba and innovative pianist and composer Percy Grainger.

Contrasting the effects of international fame and highlighting their remarkable achievements, the show ***Objects of Fame: Nellie Melba and Percy Grainger*** is a collaboration between the university and Arts Centre Melbourne, which houses an enormous collection of artist-related outfits and paraphernalia.

According to curators Margaret Marshall, curator for the Australian Performing Arts Collection, Arts Centre Melbourne, and Dr Heather Gaunt, curator of Exhibitions and Collections at the Grainger Museum, the exhibition looks at Melba's and Grainger's international stardom in the modern world and also highlights their connections to each other.

"Realising that these semi-mythical figures like Grainger and Nellie

Melba experienced fame in the way that mega-stars do now 100 years later — the upsides, the downsides, the media over-exposure, the personal cost of the slog of touring endlessly around the world so that you can be heard to a clamouring public — I think this will resonate immediately with the exhibition audiences," Dr Gaunt says.

Ms Marshall says the fact that Nellie Melba and Percy Grainger knew each other — that their lives intersected both personally and professionally — adds a particularly interesting layer to the exhibition.

She says that because Dame Nellie was one of the most famous women in the world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, mixing with members of royalty, high society and the artistic elite, and being dressed by leading French couturiers, her fame reached beyond the opera stage.

"She became a celebrity of the glittering Belle Époque," she says. "Despite the adulation Melba received, she also endured the

difficulties of being famous. She undertook demanding tours, encountered negative press reports and unkind rumours, and suffered costs to her personal life. In her 1925 memoir, she reflected that, 'One of the drawbacks of Fame is that one can never escape from it'.

"I'm sure that visitors will enjoy the opportunity to view rare costumes worn by Melba in performance, along with photographs, personal letters and other intriguing items."

Melba Opera Trust was pleased to have been involved in the grand opening of this impressive exhibition, with featured performances by current scholar Cleo Lee-McGowan.

Objects of Fame: Nellie Melba and Percy Grainger is at the Grainger Museum, the University of Melbourne until 17 February.



Blue satin shoes worn by Nellie Melba and black leather lace-up shoes worn by Percy Grainger. Australian Performing Arts Collection, Arts Centre Melbourne and Grainger Museum Collection

Cloak worn by Nellie Melba as Elsa in *Lohengrin*, c.1891. Designed by Jean-Philippe Worth. Gift of Pamela, Lady Vestey, 1977. Australian Performing Arts Collection, Arts Centre Melbourne



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