

MELBA OPERA TRUST



2027 Vocal Scholarship Information

melbaoperatrust.com.au





Cover: Sophie Blades, Lachlan Higgins and Chloe James performing with the MSO and MYO, image: David Ng Above: 2026 Melba Artists, image: Hilary Walker

Melba Opera Trust delivers Australia's premier scholarship program for promising young opera singers and aspiring repetiteurs.

The Melba Program prepares artists for the rigours of a professional career in opera. Three development streams underpin our comprehensive approach: Artistic Development, Mentoring and Performance. The program creates a steadfast foundation for scholarship recipients to launch their careers as performing artists.

Artistic Development

Artists receive funding to underwrite an individually tailored Artistic Development Plan. This is developed in consultation with the Artistic Manager and CEO and is periodically reviewed. Plans are required to address a balance of languages, repertoire development and professional development activities. To deliver the individual plan, artists nominate their preferred service providers. Melba Opera Trust provides support with guidance and introductions.

Mentor Program

The Mentor Program consists of a series of workshops and seminars with industry experts throughout the year. It focuses on equipping artists with practical professional skills, while fostering a supportive industry network for their continued development. National and international experts are enlisted as mentors to cultivate a global understanding of the industry. In addition to audition preparation and masterclasses, the Mentor Program encourages the artists to develop their business skills, giving them access to legal and accounting professionals, sessions on networking, negotiation, grant writing, media training, time management and more. Skilled practitioners also nurture the artists' personal development, health and wellbeing.

Performance Program

The Performance Program creates performance opportunities for artists to put their learning into practice. Performances range from concerts in metropolitan and regional venues, to intimate private gatherings and special events. The objective is to provide regular performance opportunities and facilitate experience as performing artists. Through this program, artists will learn how to plan and execute their own performances, gain experience in interacting with an audience and have the opportunity to raise their performance profile.



Jack Bolton and Teddy Tahu Rhodes, image: Katje Ford

Important Information for Applicants

Eligibility Criteria

- Melba Opera Trust invites applications from singers who will be aged from 21 to 28 years in 2027.
- By 1st January 2027, applicants must have completed an undergraduate degree in voice or an equivalent level of performance studies. Applicants without these tertiary qualifications must include a letter of reference from a vocal expert endorsing their potential.
- For singers who demonstrate dramatic vocal potential the age limit will be extended to 30 years. In this instance, applicants must include a letter of reference from a vocal expert endorsing their dramatic potential.
- Melba Opera Trust offers an Indigenous scholarship in the Melba Program. Applicants will be able to indicate their eligibility for this scholarship on the application form.
- Applicants must be Australian citizens.

Selection Criteria

Applicants should be aware that the quality of application documents, video audition, live audition and interview will be considered equally in the selection process.

Applicants must demonstrate:

- outstanding operatic potential
- a high level of language skills, interpretation, stagecraft and musicianship
- availability to attend Mentor Program sessions and participate in the Performance Program
- dedication and commitment to carrying forward their professional development
- the ability to self-motivate and be organised
- the potential to be an ambassador for Melba Opera Trust.



David Belkovski and Sophie Hamer, image: David Ng

Important Information for Applicants

Application Guidelines

- The Melba Program is designed for singers that have completed their formal academic studies in Australia and are looking to establish themselves as professionals in the industry. It is not practical to undertake another formal development or academic program alongside a Melba Opera Trust scholarship.
- Funding is to be used within Australia for programs of study approved by Melba Opera Trust and is conditional on attendance at the Mentor Program sessions and participation in the Performance Program. Repeat artists may be considered exempt from certain aspects of the Mentor Program in recognition of prior learning.
- Scholarship funds are to be expended in the 2027 calendar year.
- The applicant is responsible for ensuring they have gained permission from referees to provide Melba Opera Trust with their contact details.
- It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure all attached files and links are provided in the appropriate file type and links are functioning. Should any links to audition material be password protected it is the applicant's responsibility to provide that password with the link.
- In submitting an application, the applicant certifies that the information contained in the application form and the documents submitted is all true and correct, is not misleading or deceptive and that no material information has been omitted or deleted.
- Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.
- Decisions of the panel are final and applicants agree to accept the outcome. There is no forum to challenge or appeal the decision on any ground, nor is feedback given.
- Communication or attempt to communicate by or on behalf of an applicant with any member of the selection panel is not permitted.
- Melba Opera Trust reserves the right not to award any or all scholarships in any given year.

The Melba Program – FAQs

Applications/Auditions

How do I know if I am ready for the Melba Program?

The Melba Program is for artists who are 21 to 28 years of age and are at a pre-professional stage in their career development. Typically, recipients have completed their formal tertiary studies (although this is not a requirement) and are preparing either to enter the profession or to continue their operatic development overseas.

I do not have an undergraduate degree in music/voice. What constitutes an equivalent level of performance studies?

Some of our most successful alumni did not complete an undergraduate degree in music. Instead, they displayed outstanding potential and demonstrated the equivalent level of experience and training through a self-devised program of lessons, coaching, language study and acting.

How much does it cost to apply?

There is no cost to apply to the Melba Program.

What if I'm not available for the live audition?

It is a requirement of the audition process that shortlisted recipients present for a live audition and interview with the Melba selection panel on the nominated date. There are no exceptions.

If I am unsuccessful, can I request feedback?

Due to the high volume of applicants we are unable to provide individual feedback on applications or auditions.

Scholarships

How many scholarships are there and what kind?

Up to 8 artists are selected each year from around Australia to participate in this intensive, year-long artistic development program. The program is fully funded with scholarships available for singers and répétiteurs.

What is included in the scholarship?

Participation in all aspects of the Melba Program. Recipients also receive funding to underwrite a tailored artistic development plan and to cover the cost of individual coaching with industry experts. Performance fees are paid in addition to the scholarship.

Structure of the Melba Program

What is the focus of the program?

It is a year-long program of intensive, self-motivated development.

The Melba Program aims to equip artists with the practical tools they need to succeed in an operatic career. There is an equal focus on artistic preparation, learning the business of opera, personal development (such as health and wellbeing), and establishing a network within the international industry. Typically, Melba Artists leave the program as polished artists, able to apply the skills they have learnt to their chosen career paths.

How is the year structured?

Melba Artists come together as a group in Melbourne 7 to 8 times per year for week-long intensives. The cost of travel and accommodation for interstate participants is included in their scholarship.

The intensives are periods of activity that include workshops, coaching, seminars, rehearsals and performances. A high level of preparation is required for these intensives, particularly in relation to repertoire and languages.

Outside of these intensives, recipients are expected to continue their tailored artistic development plan, including lessons, coaching, language, stagecraft and other agreed development activities.

Why can't I undertake a second development program whilst being a Melba Artist?

The preparation required for these intensives – both the performances and the individual artistic development plan – requires a significant investment of time and personal commitment throughout the entire year. It is not practical for a recipient to undertake additional development activity.

Who do I learn with?

Recipients are able to work with their preferred singing teacher, vocal coach, language expert etc. Melba Opera Trust staff are available to guide and advise as required.

Mentors involved in the intensives are leaders in their fields.

When will the 2027 Melba Program begin?

The Melba Program runs for an entire calendar year. Intensives commence in February 2027.



Application Process – Actions to Complete

Sophie Blades, Zachary Hamilton-Russell and Jack Bolton, image: David Ng

Stage 1 Vocal Application with Video Audition

Applications close at 11.59pm AEST on Monday 31 August 2026. Applications that are incomplete or submitted after this time will not be accepted. Melba Opera Trust will acknowledge receipt of your application by email.

1. Prepare supporting documentation as a single PDF file (10MB maximum size) including:

- Your CV – please include the following:
 - Tertiary study – full details of all courses completed/completing, including name of course, name of institution and campus, duration (years) and year completed/completing. Do not include the name of your teacher.
 - Professional or musical experience – dates and organisations.
 - Any other training undertaken (including language courses).
- Proof of Australian Citizenship and age – please include a copy of a passport or birth certificate, or a similar official document that confirms date and birthplace.
- Contact details of two professional referees (not your vocal teacher).
- Scanned reference letter confirming dramatic vocal potential (if applicable).
- Supporting documentation (for Indigenous Scholarship applicants).

Please note: all files provided should ONLY be in PDF format.

2. Upload your audition videos to YouTube

- Each applicant is required to nominate four (4) pieces, in at least three (3) different languages. At least two (2) must be operatic arias. Art song, oratorio and operetta are also permitted.
- Two of these four pieces, including at least one operatic aria, must be submitted as video recordings uploaded to YouTube for Stage 1.
- Both pieces should be performed from memory with piano accompaniment for the purposes of the audition video.
- Recordings should not be more than six months old.
- Videos must include both audio and video.
- If any videos are saved as private recordings, passwords must be provided.



Application Process: Actions to Complete

Devon Lake and Zachary Hamilton-Russell, image: Anna Kucera

Video Quality Standards and Specifications

For the first stage of the process the Melba Opera Trust audition panel will be assessing candidates exclusively by their video recordings and written responses. The quality of your audition video will be critical to the panel's assessment of your audition. Please take care to follow the guidelines and tips below to ensure the quality of your video is suitable.

YouTube Video Requirements

Refer to the latest recommended YouTube resolution and encoding settings at <https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/1722171?hl=en>. YouTube will automatically compress videos that do not adhere to their standards, which may result in loss of quality.

Lighting

Film your video in a well-lit location, where you are facing the light source. Avoid light behind or directly above you.

Framing

Your full body should be in the shot. If you cannot fit due to space constraints or sound issues, make sure your head, torso and hands are still visible.

Sound

Test your microphone ahead of recording and make sure the sound is clear.

Tips

- Record a test video and review the resolution and sound. You should also do a test upload to YouTube to make sure the quality is maintained.
- Test for ambient sounds that your microphone is picking up from nearby appliances that you may need to turn off or move away from while recording.
- Be mindful of not standing too close or too far from the microphone. Test this as you want to avoid voice peaking where sound becomes distorted, or increased background noise from being too far away.

Once your application is finished, use the **CHECKLIST FOR VOCAL APPLICANTS** (see page 9) to ensure all areas have been completed before submitting your application.



Video Audition and Interview

2026 Melba Artists, image: David Ng

Stage 2 Live Audition and Interview

Live auditions and interviews will take place in Melbourne on Saturday 7 and Sunday 8 November 2026 in front of a selection panel of industry experts. Melba Opera Trust will notify all applicants advancing to Stage 2 of the date, time and venue details by Friday 2 October 2026. Auditions will last for approximately 20 minutes.

- Applicants residing in Victoria are required to provide their own accompanist.
- An accompanist will be provided for interstate applicants.
- Once repertoire has been submitted, any changes must be requested and approved in writing by Melba Opera Trust at least one week prior.
- Applicants should be prepared for a short coaching to be incorporated into the audition process.

Melba Opera Trust will notify all Stage 2 applicants of the outcome of the live auditions by **Monday 16 November 2026.**



Joyce DiDonato and Chloe James, image: David Ng

Checklist for Vocal Applicants

- ☐ I have read IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS in the 2027 VOCAL SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION Brochure.
- ☐ I have prepared my supporting documentation as a single PDF file (10MB maximum size) including:
 - ☐ a CV
 - ☐ a scanned copy of passport or birth certificate, or a similar official document that confirms date and place of birth as proof of Australian Citizenship and age
 - ☐ contact details of two referees
 - ☐ a scanned reference letter confirming dramatic vocal potential (if applicable)
 - ☐ supporting documentation (for Indigenous applicants).
- ☐ I have provided YouTube links for my two application videos and provided passwords for any private links.
- ☐ I have submitted my application at <https://www.melbaoperatrust.com.au/2027-vocal-scholarship-application/>

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