

ARIA



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Dame Kiri comments ...

2021 has definitely been a year of mixed emotions for me. Sadness because I made the decision to leave the UK after 50 years – the last 20 at our home in East Sussex. It was so hard to say goodbye to all my friends, many of whom I had not seen for 18 months because of Covid. Joyful because the main reason for making the switch was to become a regular grandmother to my three-and-a half - year old grandson Luther here in New Zealand – watching him grow and doing all the things that children do that I couldn't see from England. I am so happy to be with him and his parents Tom and Zeera.

This is the 30th edition of *Aria*. I can vividly recall back in 2004 the first edition was all about this fledging charitable organisation that I had created and the gala concert that would launch it. The last 17 years have been exhausting but very satisfying for me personally. I have been extremely fortunate to have been supported by a group of trustees in both foundations who are focused on achieving our objectives.

Covid came along 18 months ago and the world will never be the same again. Thankfully the trustees from both foundations were determined to take a lead so by creating a joint initiative we were able to financially support 18 singers who were facing extreme circumstances – lives dislocated and income expectations dramatically undermined. With the help of many donors we were able to provide funding of \$148,000 (split between the 18 singers in NZ and overseas) – I was proud of the way the Foundations responded and even more for the resilience shown by these young people. You can read some of their positive outcomes in this edition of *Aria*. I want to thank all our donors who supported our projects.

Finally, I cannot let the opportunity pass without paying a further tribute to my great friend Dame Cath Tizard who passed away just six weeks ago. She gave the Foundation sterling service as our chair for over a decade. I know our trustees are already missing her very much – special thanks to Ian Fraser for his lovely tribute which follows.

I send all our supporters and the singers we are privileged to support best wishes for a very Happy Christmas and good health in 2022.

Kiri Te Kanawa



COURTESY NZ WOMENS WEEKLY

Welcome to the 30th edition of *Aria*

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Happy Christmas

Dame Kiri and the Trustees of the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundations extend their very best wishes for a very Happy Christmas to all our supporters and their families and the singers that the Foundations are privileged to work with and support. May the New Year bring you continuing good health and prosperity.



An Appreciation of Dame Cath

The Hon Dame Catherine Tizard, known to all as Dame Cath, died in Auckland on 31 October, 2021 at the age of 90. This tribute was contributed by Ian Fraser a long-time friend and Foundation Trustee.

Cath Tizard had the rare gift of being able to keep one foot in the Order of Nature while keeping the other firmly fixed in the Order of Grace. In other words, she managed to maintain the common touch (intermittently seasoned with her own patented brand of salty language), even as she was becoming more and more widely recognised as a colossus of our public life, invested with great personal authority and a unique and endearing form of down home wisdom. Few of our public figures have evoked the affection and warmth that she managed so effortlessly.

Cath loved the arts and had a special place in her heart for opera. As Governor General she came to the New Zealand pavilion at Expo 92 in Seville as cheerleader, with Prime Minister Jim Bolger, of the New Zealand National Day festivities at the Expo. She was, therefore, at the Opera House of the Real Maestranza when her friend Dame Kiri Te Kanawa gave a legendary performance on our National Day with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra under Dr Franz Paul Decker. As Commissioner General for New Zealand at the Expo, I vividly recall the hysteria that this concert aroused. Our Expo office was bombarded with demands for tickets, even though the concert had instantly sold out. We could have sold it many times over. A stellar range of the world's greatest artists and orchestras came to Seville during the course of the Expo – but only we had Kiri!

It was at the Expo, too, that Cath was re-acquainted with the great Placido Domingo, whom she had met on an earlier concert tour of New Zealand. We staged a lunch for him at the pavilion and before the festivities concluded, he had roped Cath and an entourage into coming to a rehearsal of the

production of *Un Ballo in Maschera* he was starring in at the Real Maestranza. Few of us have the opportunity to go to the opera in a motorcade at Formula One speeds, attended with lights, sirens and tremendous consequence. To Cath, it was just another day at the office!

There is a memorial for Sir Christopher Wren in St Paul's Cathedral that reads, "*Si monumentum requiris, circumspice*" – 'If you seek his monument, look around you'. Cath's claim to the same sort of enduring reputation takes the form of the Aotea Centre. She was Mayor of Auckland and the driving force behind the enormous job of designing and building the Aotea Centre and securing a truly daunting level of local support for it. She had the presence of mind to invite Dame Kiri back to Auckland to help with the fundraising. Kiri performed in two special concerts with the APO, which raised nearly \$500,000 to launch the fund-raising campaign.

Appropriately, Cath became one of the founding trustees of the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation in 2004 and ultimately served as chair of the Foundation for more than a decade until 2018, when she was appointed Foundation Lifetime Trustee. She had all the qualities the Foundation needed in its Chair – a professional approach to governance, wisdom, depth of knowledge, humour and compassion.

On a personal note, I need to record Cath's importance as a cherished member of my own whānau.

We had enormous fun together and talked the legs off a succession of tables. She sometimes stayed with us in Wellington, where we designated her quarters at Talavera Terrace the Dame Catherine Tizard Memorial Suite. Currently it lies empty. We sorely miss her. We shall not see her like again.



Invitation Singing Coaching group pictured at Dilworth School of Music

Rays of resilience shone through 2021

Rodney Macann Foundation trustee and co-ordinator of the ongoing Kiri Programme reports on the Foundation's activities – the highs and the lows of 2021 and the resilience that continually emerged.

During 2021 Covid continued to snatch the hopes and dreams of many young singers yet through all this rays of resilience continually shone. True there were many Covid related frustrations but they were generally counter balanced by corresponding benefits and when allowed by the lockdowns we were able to enjoy the performances of a number of singers who we have supported over the years. We also endeavoured to be faithful to our mandate and explore ways to identify some of the exceptional singers emerging and ways we can support them.

Although the Kiri Programme was on hold for obvious reasons we decided to identify and invite 9 young singers from around NZ to two-days coaching at the Dilworth School of Music in Auckland. One of the great advantages of 'The Invitation Singing Coaching Weekend' was that we were able to have Dame Kiri with us and we programmed accordingly. The Saturday was given over to coaching sessions with Claire Caldwell, Somi Kim and Terence Dennis. We shared a meal together on the Saturday evening and were very pleased to be able to invite two of our Alumni Natasha Te Rupe Wilson and Oliver Sewell to come and share their experiences as they took the major steps to overseas study and performances. Dame Kiri was then interviewed and shared frankly and helpfully from her own experiences of transition. We also shared very good food, so a good time was had by all. On the Sunday all of the singers had the opportunity to sing for and be coached by Dame Kiri. Kiri's reaction – "I didn't expect them to be so good". Later in the afternoon we met with the singers to discuss their own hopes and plans. The coaching weekend was followed by a 4-hour zoom session with the outstanding High Performance coach Campbell Thompson whose focus is about being in the right head space for performance. The reaction to all of this from the singers was uniformly positive. All we can say at this stage is 'watch this space'.

An exciting development in these uncertain times has been the formation of a new opera company – Wellington Opera. With their focus on encouraging and providing opportunities for the best of our young New Zealand singers there was a natural meeting of minds with the Foundation and so we were happy to be major sponsors for their opening season – 4 performances of Don Giovanni at the State Opera House in Wellington, accompanied by Orchestra Wellington. This was a thoroughly successful venture filling a noticeable gap in live opera performance and attracted people from all around New Zealand. We have again committed to further support for the upcoming 2022 season of La Traviata. We were delighted to see in action some of the singers we have supported over recent years – Natasha Te Rupe Wilson in a role that could have been written for her, Oliver Sewell showing to us what an accomplished singer he has become and James Ioelu, owning the stage as Leporello.

Despite the difficulty of these times we have taken considerable pleasure in being able to see the real development of some of our singers as they had opportunity to perform in New Zealand. Oliver Sewell and Natasha Te Rupe Wilson have already been mentioned and there were numerous opportunities to see them in performance. It was also a real delight to have Manase Latu and Samson Setu back in New Zealand for the Northern Hemisphere summer break and see and hear their development from being participants in the New York Metropolitan Opera Lindemann Young Artists Programme and of course have the opportunity to meet with them.

It continues to be a pleasure for the Foundation to be in a position to identify and encourage young New Zealand singers with exceptional potential.



Madison Nonoa wins prestigious award

Earlier this year NZ Soprano Madison Nonoa was awarded the 2021-22 Victoria League Scholarship for Singing which is funded by the Victoria League Trust in NZ in association with the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation. The scholarship is awarded annually to NZ singers who meet clearly defined criteria and includes 12 months' accommodation at the League's London House (current value \$14,000).

Acknowledging the award at the time it was awarded Madison said "I am just over the moon!!! This award will make a huge difference for my 2021-22 plans and I appreciate it immensely. Many thanks to the Victoria League for this generosity and to the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation for their tireless efforts in helping young singers".

Congratulating Madison on receiving the award David van Schaardenburg (Chair of the Victoria League Trust) said "the League is delighted to continue our collaboration with Dame Kiri's foundation and congratulate Madison on achieving this award. We wish her continuing success in the future".

Previous winners of the award include James Ioelu, Kieran Rayner, Katherine McIndoe and Harry Grigg.



Eliza Boom, Madison Nonoo, Katherine McIndoe & Filipe Manu enjoying Dame Kiri's hospitality with her coaching colleagues

New trustee appointed

Dame Kiri was obviously very pleased when she announced the appointment of Robert Wiremu as a new Foundation trustee.

"I have enjoyed an association with Robert that spans more than 20 years so I was delighted when he accepted the invitation to join our dedicated and highly regarded team of Trustees. We know that his knowledge, expertise and holistic approach will be invaluable in our support of young New Zealand opera singers, particularly as the world we are now experiencing is and will continue to be a "moving feast" for these singers.

Well known in music circles as an experienced baritone, chorister, soloist and recording artist Robert is in constant demand as a teacher, repertoire coach, vocal consultant, adjudicator and artistic advisor – all the skills that will be so necessary in his new trustee role.

I'm really looking forward to working with him - he joins a marvellous group of trustees all with professional experience and expertise in a wide range of related areas. Most of whom have been with me since the Foundations were created in 2004."

Report from London

UK Foundation trustee Gillian Newson is the person who has most regular contact in the UK with the singers we support – there for them in good times and in bad, to hear their good and not-so-good life experiences. She shares her thoughts ...

'Dame Kiri's departure after so many years here in the UK, was marked by sadness from so many colleagues, who had been accustomed to her frequent forays to attend performances, whether in London, Lewes, Edinburgh, Leeds, Cardiff, as well as by the singers she invited to spend time at her home – collected from the train they spent the day enjoying Kiri's hospitality whilst being coached by Kiri and many of her professional colleagues. Feedback from singers selected to participate in these unique sessions has been inspiring.

Kiri's personal connection with the singers throughout the long drawn out months of the worldwide Covid crisis gave each of them added courage to confront the unknown variables of their careers – where would this ever end and would those longed for opera careers have enough 'traction' to survive? Who was going to be in the best place to learn the new communication skills needed to present their 'wares' to directors, casting agents, whilst the inevitable fall out from cancellations and in some unfortunate cases, illness, continued to make positive thinking a very hard reality to deal with – when one is 15,000 miles distant from hearth, family and comfort, I feel sure that the coffee dates on zoom with Kiri went some way to alleviating some anxieties.

No-one can say with any confidence that we are out of the worst of the pandemic, but tracking the activities of 'our singers' as they negotiate their way to accept an engagement in another country (almost requiring a doctorate in computer science to fill in forms, access information, and submit to endless, endless testing and waiting for results) fills me with hope and a great sense of pride. Just this week I have been in touch with Tom Atkins in Israel, Bianca Andrew in Frankfurt, Filipe Manu in Berne, Eliza Boom in Munich, Nardus Williams in Belgium, and Julien Van Mellaerts in Scotland – all sharing their excitement at being in rehearsals, waiting for that moment when the curtain rises and the conductor's baton signals that the performance will begin. Music is a balm for the soul, and we are so fortunate to be granted a glimpse of the joy it brings to us, either through many wonderful streamed concerts and recordings, but best of all, live performances featuring these exceptional young artists.

In a year when financial support has been needed more than ever the UK Foundation stepped up with grants to singers with exceptional potential and a range of UK organisations including:

- Birmingham Opera Company (new production of Rheingold):
- Opera Holland Park (Opera in Song recital series, curated by Julien Van Mellaerts)
- Royal Opera House (Cover award for Tosca)
- BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition (Main and Song Prizes)
- London Handel Festival (general funds)

News from singers supported by the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation



Katherine McIndoe – Gdańsk recital



Edward Laurenson (baritone)

Season's greetings from the beautiful Central Coast of New South Wales, Australia!

In just a few short weeks, I will be heading off to Los Angeles to record The Opera Mens' debut album with legendary producers: Hans Zimmer and Russell Emanuel! Although it has been challenging for the group to deal with so many delays due to Covid, we are hopeful everything will finally work out for us. Our plans are now finalized for an album with sensational music that we are confident you will enjoy!

I have several exciting projects in the works for next year, one of which will see me coming home to perform the lead role in a very exciting production. While the details are currently hush-hush, an announcement is expected shortly. As many of you are likely to recognise this as a role that is very close to my heart, I hope you are able to attend and share this special production with friends and family.

Finally, I'd like to thank Dame Kiri, the Foundation, and everyone for your ongoing support, especially over this difficult period. I wish you and your families the very best for your Christmas and New Year celebrations.

Katherine McIndoe (soprano)

I'm writing to you from London, where I have just finished my first term as a Junior Fellow at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. After finishing my time on the Opera Course at Guildhall in April, I spent the summer as a Young Artist at Garsington Opera: it was a thrill to be back onstage, and in an idyllic outdoor venue! After that, I was invited to perform a recital at the 'Women in Music' Festival in Gdańsk, Poland.

I prepared a programme of music by British and Polish female composers, and spent a wonderful week working with musicians in Gdańsk on the repertoire, and recording a recital in the historical Old City Hall – it was a particularly special (and slightly terrifying!) challenge to perform several contemporary songs in the Polish language... After that, I began my Fellowship at the Guildhall, a part-time position which allows me to continue my lessons with Yvonne Kenny and take part in masterclasses and coaching while I work on my own repertoire and auditions.

As part of my Fellowship, I'm really enjoying working with Guildhall composers on new vocal music, both performing it and assisting with running a collaborative project. From January, I will be joining English Touring Opera for their spring tour until June, covering Musetta and singing in the choruses of *La bohème* and *The Golden Cockerel*. I can't wait to get started on this great role, and to tour around the UK!

I'm not sure yet what will be next, but I'm so happy to be back working after a difficult time, and looking forward to the future (which will hopefully include a trip back to New Zealand and some singing at home). I hope you are all well, and I am sending all my love for a great start to 2022!



Julien Van Mellaerts, Count Almaviva – *Marriage of Figaro* – Opera Holland Park

Julien Van Mellaerts (baritone)

What a year! 2021 has been miraculous to say the least. It has been terrifying, exciting, unknown and hugely rewarding. Last night I sang my final performance of 2021, and have been reflecting on the year that was. Last night was my debut with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra singing Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on Christmas Carols* at the Royal Albert Hall. What an incredible night, and the perfect way to get in the Christmas spirit. Last week was also an incredibly exciting debut with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra singing Mahler's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen.

This year really has been remarkable. To think we started the New Year in lockdown, have had god knows how many thousands of PCR and lateral flow tests, and now every day we are allowed to perform is a miracle. It has by no means been an easy year, but it will definitely be one to remember. Some highlights have included my role debut as Count Almaviva in Opera Holland Park's *Le nozze di Figaro*, recitals in Barcelona/London/Oxford/Paris, curating and organising my own song series at Opera Holland Park called *Opera in Song* with Dylan Perez, jumping in at the Göttingen International Handel Festival where I had 5 days to learn the role of Garibaldi in *Rodelinda* before staging rehearsals started, a very exciting role debut as Duke of Nottingham in Roberto Devereux with Maestro Gary Matthewman in his maiden operatic conducting debut, and the release of my debut song disc with Champs Hill Records *Songs of Travel* and *Home* which has been incredibly well received. What a year!

We are still navigating the uncertainty and continual cancellations, but I want to stay focussed on the positives moving forward. I'm ready for a couple of weeks off and then am back to a full 2022. My first project of the new year is to record a new commission for baritone, piano and string quartet, that I have commissioned, with funding from Creative NZ, by Gareth Farr and Paul Horan. It is entitled *Where will they bury my bones* and it explores the idea of home, loss and love from afar. Our lives as New Zealanders miles away from home and our relationship with family, friends and the landscape. Something I am sure we can all relate to at this time. Benjamin Baker will lead the string quartet and James Baillieu will play the piano. This will be released on Radio NZ Concert as well as a video for their online platform.

I will return to the RCM to teach English Song again next month, then I will head to Israel to make my role and house debut as Silvio in *I Pagliacci* with the Israeli Opera. After that I have several recording projects, including a new vocal, choral and orchestral work with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, and another song CD of German Lieder with Lucy Colquhoun and Rowan Pierce. In April I will reprise the role of Count Almaviva in a new festival called *Ibiza Clasica* with the Verbier Festival Chamber Orchestra conducted by Christoph Koncz, in association with the Verbier Festival.

I will tour France in May and June with Ensemble Aedes and Les Siècles Orchestra singing Brahms *Ein Deutsches Requiem*, then our second season of *Opera in Song* at Opera Holland Park is at the end of June, and returning again to the Verbier Festival where I will sing Masetto in *Don Giovanni*. Further offers are coming in and I am really excited about sharing more with you in due course.

I have to say a massive thanks to everyone in the KTKF for your continuous support of all our endeavours. To have gotten us through the incredible difficulties of 2020, we are really here because of you. Your support means the world to us. You believed in us when we could scarcely believe in ourselves, and because of that we have kept working and come out the other side stronger and more resilient than before. Thank you Kiri, Gillian, all the trustees here in the UK and back home in NZ. Merry Christmas to you all, and I hope to see you all again soon!



Anthony Schneider, Panas – *The Night before Christmas* by Rimsky Korsakov

Anthony Schneider (bass)

2021 was a radically different year for me than 2020 was. It started off in lockdown, which I was used to by then in Frankfurt. However, I was also part of a video project by the opera where we played different scenes broadly adhering to the subject of "Home-schooling"! It was quite a lot of fun to do, and a nice project to work on, even though we couldn't have an audience.

The summer turned out to be an absolutely wonderful experience! I sang my first ever Wagner opera at the Tiroler Festspiele Erl, portraying the brutal giant Fafner in "*Das Rheingold*". I had almost forgotten what it was like to be going to rehearsals every day, chit-chatting with friends and colleagues, and generally feeling part of something bigger than myself. The festival is located among Tirolean Alps, lakes, and stunning outdoor scenery, which also enhanced the joyfulness of the summer. All in all I became reinvigorated by the joy of singing and being on stage again!

In the autumn I sang the role of Ibn-Hakia in *Iolanta*, which was quite a challenge for me!! It sits very high and is more of a baritone role, but with the help of coaches and friends' support I managed to even exceed my own expectations! Currently I am singing Panas in "*The Night before Christmas*" by Rimsky Korsakov, which is a beautiful winter production.

The coming year will bring many new challenges, including two new Wagner roles: King Heinrich in "*Lohengrin*" and Hunding in "*Die Walküre*". Heinrich in particular is quite a long role with sustained high singing, so I'm glad that I have made progress in that part of my voice through the *Iolanta* learning process. Another highlight will be a return to Houston Grand Opera to sing Sarastro in "*The Magic Flute*", which was originally slated for March 2020. And finally, a break from all the German with Cirillo in "*Fedora*" at Oper Frankfurt once more.

In summary it's been a year of new beginnings and overcoming challenges, and as ever I've been so grateful for the support of the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation, particularly during the "dark days" of 2020! All my merriest of greetings to you all from Frankfurt!"

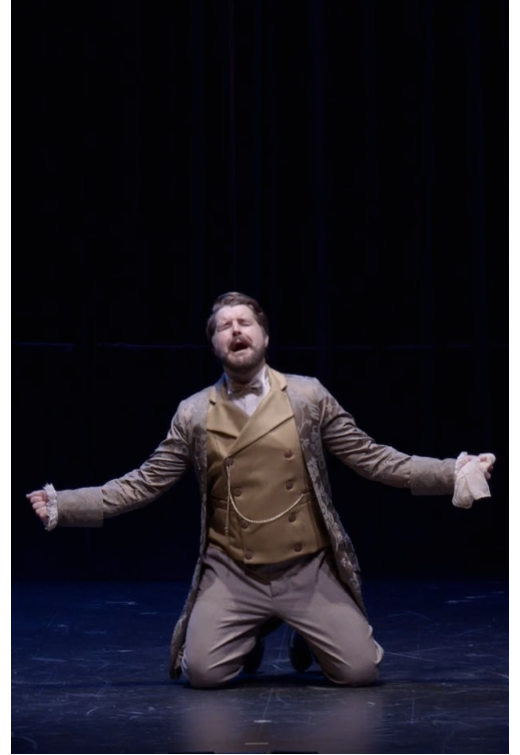


Harry Grigg, 2021 recital

Harry Grigg (tenor)

Before I began writing this update, I went back and had a look at what I had written last year. It is such a relief that I can say that this year has been a marked improvement! For the first half of 2021 I was wrapping up the first year of my masters at RCM. It was fantastic to be back in a rehearsal room and performing with colleagues again. Since September it has been all go. I had an absolute blast playing Monostatos in a pretty radical production of *The Magic Flute*, and have been singing at St John's Hyde Park as one of their five choral scholars.

I also recently won the Maureen Lehane Vocal Award here in London, which was particularly special as I got to sing some *Sings Harry* in my programme.... A marvellous way to finish the year. Looking forward to the year ahead, I am currently preparing scenes from *Albert Herring* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for next term, as well as repertoire for my final recital and various in house concerts. It is such a joy to be back making music in London. I miss New Zealand and hope you all make the most of the wonderful sunny weather over what might be a slightly different Christmas for some. Meri Kirihimete to all!



Oliver Sewell, *Don Ottavio* 2021

Oliver Sewell (tenor)

"2021 has been a good year even if it was not exactly in the hemisphere that I would have expected – I based myself in my home town of Christchurch. Much to my disappointment I did not go to Europe either to relocate or for auditions, which had been on the cards this year (after being delayed in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic). It was a hard decision to make, but the combination of the difficulty and cost of securing a spot in MIQ following an overseas trip, and the stability of relatively steady work in NZ, meant I stayed in New Zealand and did my best to make the most of the opportunities here.

On a more positive note, I had an enjoyable year of singing throughout New Zealand. The highlights for 2021 were being able to perform in *Don Giovanni* with Wellington Opera and *Fidelio* with the APO. It was so nice to be in a rehearsal room again and, of course, being on stage bringing opera to New Zealand audiences. I also had numerous concerts and recitals throughout the rest of NZ which kept me busy. I got very lucky a few times with Covid-19 lockdowns happening the day after some bigger projects had just finished (and in one instance the Covid-19 lockdown cell-phone alert going off during the tail-end of a concert in Matakana!).

Looking ahead I have quite an interesting year planned for 2022. The most notable concerts for now are *La Traviata* with Wellington Opera, *Die Zauberflöte* in Napier with Festival Opera and a concert of early New Zealand songs with New Zealand Opera called *The Call of the Huia* which is to be performed in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch.

As a result of the uncertainty presented by Covid-19 I am, at present, not planning on relocating to Europe in 2022. However, I have kept two two-month blocks free for at least one audition trip next year so I can keep my horse in the race. Anyway I am keeping my head up and looking forward to being able to carry on down this wild path!"



Kudrjaspy in *Katya Kabanova* at Glyndebourne

Thomas Atkins (tenor)

Despite restrictions very much still a factor, it has been wonderful being back at work for the majority of this past year. Glyndebourne was as beautiful as ever during the summer and the performances of *Katya Kabanova* were amazingly well received by audiences that obviously couldn't wait to get back in the theatre. I then had to spend two weeks in Italy (oh if I have to...) so that I would be allowed to enter Germany for performances of *Otello* at the Bayerische Staatsoper. Following this was a couple of months in Paris to sing *Steuermann* in *Der fliegende Holländer* at Opéra National de Paris and I am writing this in sunny Tel Aviv as I rehearse *Onegin* for which I am playing Lensky.

I head to Oslo in the new year for a production of *Jenůfa* (fingers crossed the house will be able to open again by this time) and then to finish the season I am finally back at home for another *Onegin* this time at Opera Holland Park.

But now we get to the most important news of all... Lizzie and I are expecting a baby next year! We are both thrilled and can't wait for the little one to arrive. Merry Christmas all!

RICHARD HUBERT SMITH



Eliza Boom, Marietta in *Il Signor Bruschino*, Rossini

Eliza Boom (soprano)

Hello from a cold and wet Munich! What a year it has been here at the Bayerische Staatsoper. I'm currently part way through my second season in the opera studio here, and loving every bit of it. Munich is so beautiful, and I am incredibly lucky to be surrounded by wonderful colleagues who have quickly become my family here.

Even though Covid made things difficult last season (we were closed to the public for 6 months), I was able to do a few new productions, several live streams, and once we opened up again, some terrific operas and roles on the main stage. A few highlights were Woglinde in *Das Rheingold*, singing the soprano lead in the world premiere of *Singularity* by Miroslav Srnka, and having the

opportunity to work with legendary Zubin Mehta, singing the Priestess in *Aida*. Aside from performances, I am working hard with the wonderful coaches and teachers here, and am excited to see the progress I have made over these 15 or so months.

This season I am being kept busy, currently preparing the First Lady in *Die Zauberflöte*, which will open in a week. In the new year I am involved in various operas, and as always, have a pile of new music to make my way through. We are all keeping our fingers crossed that we can stay open the whole season.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas, wherever you are.



James Ioelu, Leporello – *Don Giovanni* 2021, Wellington Opera

James Ioelu (bass-baritone)

It's been quite busy time for me since my last Aria update. One memorable conversation with Dame Kiri has shaped a vision of a way forward for me during these challenging times. Dame Kiri encouraged me to think innovatively about the craft and how I could use my talents. I've been honing my craft – working each day on my voice – and seeking out opportunities to perform and have an impact on others.

I have made my role debut in *Don Giovanni*, singing Leporello with Wellington Opera, and Don Fernando in *Fidelio* with the APO. I've also been performing at numerous home-grown concerts as I prepare roles and new arias. 2022 brings role debuts in *Die Zauberflöte*, *The Cunning Little Vixen*, my debut with Canberra Music Festival, the Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra, and Mozart's Requiem with Auckland Choral so far.

I've also developed a curriculum that I will implement in collaboration with an Auckland school in 2022 entitled "Finding a voice through classical music and performance". I've received a grant through Creative New Zealand - *Creatives in Schools* - to implement this innovative programme. The programme is designed to expose students to classical music and performance, nurture talent at the grassroots level, and support and build communities.

My goal is still to resume my international career once the environment is more settled and open. Still, for the moment, I'm happy building my profile and expanding my roles in the Southern hemisphere. I extend best wishes for Christmas and 2022.



ROBERT WORKMAN

Phillip Rhodes, *Snow-Maiden*

Phillip Rhodes (baritone)

I'll start by stating the obvious; It has been a strange year. One that has tested the nerves of many, given cause to be grateful for some, and lead to great pain and loss for others.

We cannot hide, from the fact that our chosen lifestyle is entrenched in luck and circumstance, yes, you can improve your luck, but no matter how much one can pour in their efforts, luck still plays a large part in what we do.

From hearing about an audition, managing to secure the audition, to who happens to be on the audition panel and how they are feeling by the time you walk in, to simply being what they are "looking for", ...let alone managing to be near your best when that audition finally comes. Now, even if you are lucky enough to land a role, add the new variant of luck, will the show actually go ahead? Will you manage to avoid having symptoms? (which means testing and isolating for most companies), and then there's actuality of contracting the virus, which could see your fees vanish with a cough and a splutter, and should heaven forbid you be so unlucky as to suffer long Covid.

When we add in the pandemic fears and anxieties that surround us today, one can see, even, that small chance to be lucky, completely swept away at the first hurdle.

I do acknowledge that I have been on the 'lucky' end of the spectrum. To make my debut as Ford (Falstaff) with Scottish Opera on the back of making my company debut as Peter in Hansel and Gretel, and then to be invited back to Opera North to sing Escamillo in their new Production of Carmen. While I share with you my good fortune I feel I should say, it did not come without its hardships, the long spell in a Covid restricted Scotland was extremely mentally, and emotionally taxing.

With Covid testing every day, arriving for work at singular times, working in masks every day until opening night, sitting meters apart in a designated area, constantly being told to step

back from one another, eliminating social activities, and opting not to come home during the entire contract for fear of catching Covid and losing part or all of the contract... it seemed that there was no escape from the world outside, and became an even lonelier world than usual.

Part of the allure of a career in performance, for me, is that feeling of escaping the 'every day'. That feeling of freedom, which we hope to bring to our audience, it is hard to achieve in a room full of masks, reminding you of exactly where you are at every turn, at every second of the day.

As I settle back home after almost 8 months away I reflect on the reasons why, and how I have fallen on the right side of luck, and it comes down to the support of the good people back home, the Kiwi spirit that looks out for others, and allows us to endure. the support of the Foundation has been a large part of that 'luck'. A promise was made many years ago and I am so grateful, especially during the hardships of the last year, for that promise, and the enduring support, giving me the opportunity to remain in good vocal shape during the closures, also, giving me the mental and emotional boost I needed to call upon when times seemed unbearable, the ability to say 'Come on now! THEY believe you can do it! AND, they put their money where their mouth is! Now what are YOU going to do?!'

There were times when working in this profession no longer felt worth the effort of battling the overwhelming loneliness that has accompanied it this last year. Yet, the voice of reason was there, with a simple message, 'yes, we know it's hard now, but hang tough, we are with you!' And as I reflect on a tough year, I find myself now, in a state of happiness. Happy to have overcome, happy to have battled through, happy to realise I have good people by my side, that knew I could and would, get through. that happiness brings hope. It's a good place to be. I wish you all a merry Christmas, and may you have a wonderful 2022.



Kieran Rayner as *The Forester* in *The Cunning Little Vixen* for Longborough Festival Opera'

Kieran Rayner (baritone)

Greetings from London! While locked down by Covid cancellations during the first months of 2021, I completed an online coaching and mentoring foundation course, skills which I am already finding useful. I am especially grateful for the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation's ongoing support and guidance, which was vital to get me through this really tough time.

Then, cautiously, the singing world began to pick up again. From March onwards I rehearsed and performed in Garsington's glorious production of R. Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* (available to view online) as Der Notar. Immediately afterwards, I made my principal debut at Longborough Festival Opera as *The Forester* in Janacek's *The Cunning Little Vixen*, with my close friend and fellow KTKF alumna Julieth Lozano as the Vixen. This was the fourth time I'd played this leading role, and the most meaningful - having just come out of lockdown and dealing with the sudden death (at 32) of my best school friend from cancer, this was an extraordinarily healing and cathartic opera. I couldn't have asked for a more meaningful return to the stage.

I'm very fortunate to be one of six singers chosen for the Britten Pears Young Artist Platform 2021-22 - alongside another member of the KTKF family Madison Nonoa. We've had several inspiring workshops already, with more to come next year.

Other highlights included playing Louisiana Gentleman-pirate Pierre Lafitte (a real historical figure) in Amy Beach's *Cabildo* at the prestigious historic venue Wilton's Music Hall, again alongside Julieth;

two recitals with the London Song Festival - Warlock Songs in July, and Pauline Viardot songs in December. In October I spent three weeks in Glasgow speed-learning large quantities of music, dialogue and choreography to cover the main baritone roles in Scottish Opera's Gilbert & Sullivan tour; straight after, I rushed back to London for the Final of the International Handel Singing Competition (still available to watch on YouTube!). Now, I'm still recovering from five live-streamed performances last week of *Bambino*, a wonderfully colourful and uplifting opera for infants (yes!) with Scottish Opera. I'm also delighted to tell you that I have signed with an agent, Robert Gilder of Robert Gilder & Co.

Engagements for next year include Baron Duphol in Viardot's *Cendrillon* for a Dorset festival, and three separate new opera projects from January - March. Then I play the doomed heroine's father in Sophie's *Passion*, a stunning new play about a WWII anti-Nazi activist, in which I also sing arias from Bach's *St Matthew Passion*. For the Aldeburgh Festival in June, fellow Kiwi Bradley Wood (piano) and I perform a story-led recital of my own creation with a twist: the audience chooses the direction of the narrative, influencing which pieces are performed. I have summer opera contracts in the pipeline too, plus I've had some exciting auditions that I can't say much about yet - watch this space!

I hope that, despite all our continuing challenges, it is onwards and upwards from here for us and the industry as a whole.

Meri Kirihimete kia tātou! Ngā mihi.



Jonathan Abernethy (tenor)

The past year has, was and still is fairly trepidatious with so many last minute changes and regulations moving on a somewhat weekly basis, especially pertaining to our line of work! A concert I was meant to do in Salzburg in January, as part of the Mozart week, also fell by the wayside as my daughter Madelyn decided she was requiring a no less than spectacular entrance to the world. In the months that followed I was grateful for the lockdowns as it meant spending so much time with her and my wife Anna in the early days.

Last season came to an end for me with a new production of "Dialogues des Carmelites" by director Klaus Guth with my Fest company Opera Frankfurt (I performed the roles of Chevalier de la Force and the L'aumonier).

This Frankfurt season has started in a fury; already I've done three role debuts and the rest of the season will see several more. Certainly a highlight for the season will be performing alongside my wife in Sydney (a production of "Oronthea" with Pinchgut Opera, and an Easter performance of Bach Mass in B minor with Sydney Philharmonia Choirs).



Bianca Andrew as the Tsarina in *The Night Before Christmas* Oper Frankfurt

PHOTO: MONIKA RITTERSHAUS

Bianca Andrew

I am writing this update from my home in Germany during a busy festive season of performances at Oper Frankfurt. Right now, I am singing the role of the Tsarina in a delightful new production of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *The Night Before Christmas*, directed by Christof Loy. Our show has everything you could want after a year like this - it is full of colour, snow, magic, stars and exquisite dance scenes. At the same time, I have also made my debut as Adalgisa in Bellini's *Norma*, which is my most significant role to date and one of the most beautiful pieces I have ever sung. While I have spent the past few months preparing the role on my own, I only got one rehearsal on stage before my performance - and no rehearsal with the orchestra! Thankfully I had the support of wonderful colleagues on stage who had done the production many times before, and a very sympathetic conductor - in the end, it was a wonderful experience despite the stress. In this Christmas week, I have performances of *Norma* and the Rimsky-Korsakov opera almost every evening except the 24th - but new lockdown restrictions have just been announced in Germany, and it seems this week may be our last chance to perform for a while, so I will be savouring every moment.

Earlier this year I was able to return home to New Zealand for three months to perform the role of Cherubino with New Zealand Opera.

I am sure many readers of the *Aria* Newsletter will have seen this fantastic production. It was an honour to return home to sing with our national opera company, and to perform again without masks or distancing after the year of restrictions we had experienced in Europe. Dame Kiri and Trustees of the Foundation were present at our performances, which meant a great deal to us all on stage.

When I returned to Frankfurt after my time back home, I competed in the Anny Schlemm Prize, a competition for current and previous members of the Opernstudio of Oper Frankfurt. Competitions are always terrifying, and I was extra nervous because I'd not sung for the management of my theatre for over eight months due to all the lockdowns here. I was therefore overjoyed when my name was called out as the winner of the prize.

I am extremely grateful for every opportunity I've had to make music and perform during this past year. I wish all the friends and supporters of Dame Kiri and her Foundation the very best for a healthy Christmas and hopefully a much brighter 2022 for us all!



Natasha Wilson, Zerlina, *Don Giovanni* - Wellington Opera

Natasha Wilson (soprano)

This year has gone by so quickly. I was very fortunate to have a very busy first half of 2021, where I performed a number of roles for companies in Aotearoa. Although Covid-19 put a halt on many things throughout 2021, for so many of us, I'm grateful for the opportunities I have had whilst being home; performing Marzeline with the APO, and Zerlina with Wellington Opera, as well as premiering two new works, both by New Zealanders, with NZ Opera; *Ihiti 'Avei'a*, and *Red!* Although the latter half of 2021 was relatively full for, the reality of Covid-19 is a sobering reminder to not take anything for granted, let alone performing for an audience. I'm so grateful for the support of the foundation throughout this year, and I look forward to performing in New Zealand in the new year.

We need your help, to help them to live their dreams

Donations and bequests to the Foundation of any size are always welcome and very important for the continued aim of supporting young singers who have exceptional talent.

The Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation (CC 34307) and The Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation (UK) (1098213) are registered charitable trusts which offer a wide range of opportunities to support their work. Further details about how to make a donation or leave a bequest in your will can be obtained from the Foundation office – see contact details at the end of this newsletter or visit www.kiritekanawa.org.

We remind donors that the banks no longer accept cheques as a method of payment. There are other convenient ways to make donations electronically including direct debit, automatic regular payments, direct credit and telephone banking.

For all these arrangements you will need to know the Foundation's bank account details – Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation - BNZ – 0112452 – 000.

Further details are on our website www.kiritekanawa.org

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KIRI TE KANAWA FOUNDATION
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The next issue of Aria will feature more news about the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation. If you want information about the Foundation please contact us. However, if you do not wish to receive further editions of Aria please advise us by sending an email.

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