

# ARIA



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## Dame Kiri comments . . .

My 70th year so far has been nothing but fun, laughter and celebrations with dear friends - definitely a year to remember. I cannot think of a year that has been this joyful. All my friends (and I do not have a large number) have been making sure that my 70th birthday would be just as I wanted it to be – full of love and sharing of a lifetime of great memories. I can't thank that handful of very special friends enough.

To perform on the stage of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden on my 70th birthday was surreal and VERY special as was the surprise appearance of CARSON from Downton Abbey when he wheeled the birthday cake on stage afterwards. My children were here for the celebrations and I think they had a very nice time catching up with all their old school friends... then we all managed to catch the FLU !

Other highlights have included being welcomed publically as a guest in the Australian Parliament, my international concerts schedule which included a very enjoyable recital tour of Australia and NZ and discovering a lovely 8-year old Cabernet Merlot wine in Napier. Securing a few cases for the ongoing celebrations was mandatory.

Meanwhile much was happening on the Foundation fronts:

- I was delighted when Nicholas Payne accepted my invitation to become a Trustee of the UK Foundation. Nicholas is a good friend and has worked in opera since he joined the Royal Opera House Covent Garden in 1968.
- It was very pleasing that the Foundation was able to play a significant role in securing the appointment of Håkan Hagegård, one of the world's finest baritones, to the teaching staff for the 2015 NZ Opera School. As well as being

"TO PERFORM ON THE STAGE OF THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE, COVENT GARDEN ON MY 70TH BIRTHDAY WAS SURREAL AND VERY SPECIAL AS WAS THE SURPRISE APPEARANCE OF CARSON FROM DOWNTON ABBEY..."

a wonderful Baritone he is a very dear friend. You may remember he played the part of Papageno in the beautiful Bergman *Magic Flute* – the whole Opera world fell in love with him. I was thrilled to perform with Hakan on many occasions. During one performance I flicked my fan too close to his face – it made a slice to the eye – I was devastated but as with things on stage they can go wrong and Hakan did forgive me but I was very nervous for the rest of the performance.

- I have just returned from the International Academy of Voice in Cardiff having spent two days there. I heard many very fine voices. They are just starting their first term so I think there will be a marked difference when I return in a few months. Kawiti Waetford was of course first on my list and he is singing beautifully – his voice has improved so much the top has expanded to a very brilliant hi baritone. Christie Cook was also there and I found that even with a few short lessons from Dennis O'Neill she has improved a lot. Sometimes I have to remember to not get too emotional with these young ones as I so want them to do well.

Finally, thank you for your continued support and help for all those young singers to realize their dreams. I extend my best wishes to you and your families for a very Happy Christmas and New Year.

PHOTO: BOB CURTIS



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## Jonathan Abernethy wins 2014 Opera Awards

Earlier this month NZ tenor Jonathan Abernethy was named as the winner of the 2014 Opera Awards (Australia).

The Awards include the Youth Music Foundation of Australia Award of A\$30,000, the Armstrong-Martin Scholarship of A\$4,500 and entry to the Britten-Pears Young Artist Programme which gives artists the opportunity to participate in a high-calibre international masterclass course or opera production led by eminent musicians in the UK.

In 2011 Jonathan was the winner of the Joan F Stevens and Opera Australia Awards at the New Zealand Singing School in Napier which ultimately led to an invitation to join the prestigious Opera Australia Moffatt Oxenbould Young Artist Programme in Sydney. While with Opera Australia, he has sung many roles including the parts of Don Ottavio in *Oz Opera's Don Giovanni*, Ruiz in *Il Trovatore* and Normanno in *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

Jonathan's performance as Fenton in the recent production of *Falstaff* received excellent review – 'Much in demand lovely soprano Taryn Fiebig shines as Alice's daughter Nannetta, her voice sweet and pure is particularly beguiling, especially for her handsome suitor Fenton, played with great tenderness by Jonathon Abernethy. His lyrical tenor voice is a superb instrument, one in which art meets the heart, in a style that is pure, natural and clear, his exquisite phrasing born of musical intelligence. This young man exhibits true staying power. His aria in Act 3 *Dal labbro il canto*, or Fenton's aria, was quite breathtaking.'

Prior to his move to Sydney with Opera Australia, he studied with Isabel Cunningham and Professor Terence Dennis from the renowned vocal studies department of Otago University's School of Music.

Jonathan has been supported by the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation since 2011 through regular mentoring by Dame Kiri and a series of



tuition and travel grants that has allowed him to continue tuition with Isabel Cunningham.

Obviously thrilled with this latest success Jonathan shared his feelings with *Aria* – "I am overwhelmed and delighted to have received the Opera Award which has come as a wonderful surprise at a pivotal stage in my career. Over the past two years with Opera Australia I have learned valuable lessons in stagecraft, music, and performance that would have been hard to attain elsewhere.

"This award will allow me to evaluate my position, and then spend dedicated time overseas working on skills that will solidify my vocal technique and build on the base I have established in the Young Artist programme at Opera Australia. In essence the time spent in the next few years working to achieve the ideal technique for my voice will ensure my vocal longevity and will provide a foundation that should help me achieve an Operatic singing career. Some of this can only be achieved by taking time out from 'work' in order to give me the time to work on these skills.

"I am extremely grateful to my mentors and supporters and all those involved in the Opera Award and its sponsors. This award will augment the support I already receive from the Dame Kiri Te Konawa Foundation.

I'd like to thank my supporters and mentors here at Opera Australia specifically Lyndon Terracini, Tony Legge, and language coach Nicole Dorigo and OA coaching staff. I'd also like to thank in particular Dame Kiri for the one on one masterclasses in May during her recent Tour of Australia and New Zealand, with Professor Terence Dennis and Isabel Cunningham."

In 2015, Jonathan's performances for Opera Australia will include Tamino in *The Magic Flute* and Lerma in *Don Carlos*.



## New website for the Foundation

The Foundation will be starting 2015 with a new-look website. Our new site will make better use of the Foundation's rich range of images of the singers we support, and of Dame Kiri throughout her career. The site will be easy to navigate, and include regular updates on 'our' singers, and from our new Twitter account. It will also feature the updated brand produced for us by leading Auckland design agency, Hawkins&Co.

"The Foundation recognises that many visitors to the site now access it through their smartphone or tablet," says Tom Park of Web Torque, the web design and development company that is working with the Foundation. "That's why the site will be fully 'responsive'; it will look attractive and functional however you access it."

## Phillip Rhodes making his mark

London-based baritone, Phillip Rhodes, began the 2014-15 Season in New Zealand where he made his debut as Enrico *Lucia di Lammermoor* with the Auckland Opera Studio, winning exceptional reviews. He returns to the UK for performances in English National Opera's new opera by Tansy Davies, *Between Worlds* to be directed by Deborah Warner, and appears with his mentor, Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, in recital appearances throughout the season.

Recent highlights include his debut as Count de Luna *Il Trovatore* at Dorset Festival Opera,

and his debut at Opera North as Aeneas *Dido and Aeneas* where he also covered the roles of Iago *Otello* and Balstrode *Peter Grimes*. At Opera North, he went on to sing the role of Marcello in *La Boheme*, a role he also sang with New Zealand Opera in Christchurch.

The future looks bright for Phillip in the United Kingdom and abroad. Supported by the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation he returns to New Zealand Opera in the spring of 2015 for the role of Puccini's evil villain Scarpia in their new production of *Tosca*.



## Andri Róbertsson reports from Switzerland

*Twenty four year-old Icelandic bass-baritone Andri Róbertsson was nominated as the 'Brightest Hope in Classical Music' at the 2013 Icelandic Music Awards.*

He had caught Dame Kiri's attention 3 years earlier and was invited to attend several master classes with her as well as singing as her guest at special concerts. Dame Kiri continued to mentor him over the next 3 years including his attendance at the 2009 Solti Te Kanawa Accademia di bel canto.

In 2013 when Andri was offered an opportunity to attend the National Opera Studio the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation (UK) agreed to support him with a Tuition Scholarship to cover his tuition fees.



PHOTO: CARLO SCHULLER

"I am at the Opera Studio in Zürich this year. They work you very hard here so I am busy. This year I am doing Der König in a children's opera called Die Gänsemagd, Brabantische Edle in Lohengrin and Sprecher in Die Zauberflöte. I am also in a new modern opera called Fülle. And on top of that I am covering both Figaro in Le Nozze and Dulcamara in L'elisir d'Amore. And then I am travelling to Amsterdam, Valence, Paris and other places doing a revival of the Bach show I did at the Aix en Provence festival in the summer.

The Aix en Provence festival have also made me a HSBC Laureate of the festival, so I have a three year contract with them, including recitals and publishing of a CD. They also want to create a long term relationship with me like that, which is good.

The lessons I had with Janice Chapman in the spring, with financial support of the Foundation, were really good and have helped me forward in my singing I feel. So I am busy, which is good! My grandma always tells me not to complain when I have too much to do, because that's better than to have nothing to do!"

## James Ioelu at home in The Big Apple

I write from New York City where I am currently in the thick of auditioning for artists program with some of the most amazing houses in the world. It's mind-blowing to see extremely talented singers from every imaginable destination flock to auditions rooms all around NYC to test their mettle against their fellow singers to see if they have a shot in the city of dreams.

It may sound idyllic, maybe even a little romantic. However, getting here has been a long journey filled with many life lessons. As I write, I think of a quote I had seen recently written by Dame Kiri herself; talent is not enough. This is perhaps the most glaring reality when one first steps out from the sanctuary of their music conservatory, into the real world of auditions. It's much more than having a good voice, and a natural aptitude; it's networking, finding funding to travel to auditions and professional development, publicity, making valuable connections and fostering them, obsessively paying attention to vocal health, and learning how to make an impression when you are given 15 minutes in a room to impress a panel of judges who are



PHOTO: ALICIA KHOO

likely to see many other highly trained and experienced singers. It's daunting but at the same time exhilarating in the sense that this is a profession where excellence is a prerequisite and nothing less than brilliance is demanded.

Since completing my Masters in Voice at Manhattan School of Music in mid-2013, I have embarked on a path that is typically taken by young opera singers in the

*Continued overleaf*



## Bianca Andrew embarks on her musical journey

In the last edition of Aria we reported that the young NZ mezzo soprano Bianca Andrew had received a Foundation tuition grant. She subsequently received another award in the form of the Kiri Te Kanawa Scholarship as the singer judged to have outstanding potential which was awarded by Kathryn Harries (Chief Judge of the 2014 Lexus Song Quest) following the Lexus masterclass tour. Armed with these two awards Bianca moved to London to commence an Artist Masters in vocal performance at the Guildhall where she is studying with renowned soprano Yvonne Kenny.

You can read Bianca's first letter from the UK in which she describes her arrival in London, the first term at the Guildhall and the many emotions she experienced after leaving NZ – follow this link, [us8.campaign-archive2.com](http://us8.campaign-archive2.com)

Bianca was also the subject of a Television New Zealand high profile interview in which she explains how she became interested in and focused on a career in opera. Follow this link to view the interview, <http://tvnz.co.nz/sunday-news/brava-bianca>



embryonic stages of a career. I have worked on a number of operas and independent projects, used this period for intensive professional development, and I have also had success in a number of competitions throughout Australasia. These activities were strategically geared towards preparing me to return to New York, to be in prime condition to audition.

Notably, I have been working very closely with my teacher Madame Virginia Zeani, one of the great singers of her own era who, despite being in her late 80s, continues to work with selected students to impart her insights into this beautiful art form, and is especially gifted in teaching vocal technique. She has profoundly affected the way that I sing, and renewed my own love in the old Italian style of singing. I have also returned to see my other teacher, Maitland Peters, in New York who specializes in opening up the voice. With the support of Creative New Zealand and the Margaret and John Hunn Trust, I have also been fortunate to travel to Europe for coaching and language work – also key ingredients for success!

Since the last update I was fortunate to win the NZ Aria, place second in the Sydney

Eisteddfod as well as most recently placing second in the Joan Sutherland and Richard Bonyngé Bel Canto Competition. I also had the great pleasure in singing with both Marlena Devoe and Phillip Rhodes whom I admire very much as well as the music students from the University of Auckland in a production of Lucia di Lammermoor with the Auckland Opera Studio and the Auckland Chamber Orchestra. In late 2013, I was also privileged to travel to Rome and Monte Cassino to sing the role of Bruno, in Michael Williams' *The Juniper Passion*.

Looking forward to the next couple of months, I am fortunate to be spending some time with Dame Kiri in London as I continue on to the European leg of my auditions tour. At this particular point in my career, I can see that paying particular attention to those who are experienced and successful is crucial to laying solid foundations.

I have found that while there seems to be a lot of support for formal study, less attention is paid to the period that follows. That the foundation offers mentoring and advice as part of the support it gives to young artists, is very much welcomed and appreciated!

## To tweet, perchance to talk to the world

Opera is big on Twitter. Singers use it to connect with other singers, reviews are debated with critics, and companies use it to promote their productions. The Royal Opera House has over 110,000 followers globally while Metropolitan Opera, has 120,000 followers. NZ Opera is heading towards 5,000 followers.

That's why in 2015, you'll find the Foundation on Twitter. We'll be using Twitter to keep up to date with many of our grantees who use, and to keep our followers informed about what is happening in the world of opera. Our Twitter handle is @Kiri\_TeKanawa - or search Te Kanawa Foundation. Our account is currently locked until we are ready to launch, but if you are on Twitter and you are interested send us a follower request.

Our tweets will also post automatically to our new website, so if you're not using Twitter, you'll still be able to see who we're tweeting with, what we're talking about, and link to the opera stories we think are of interest to opera lovers.



## Kawiti Waetford's letter from Cardiff

After a surprisingly beautiful, yet short, British summer we are now back into the start of another academic year here at the Wales International Academy of Voice in Cardiff, feeling yet again the cold creeping tendrils of winter coming on. This year's intake includes international student from Lithuania, Germany, Ireland, Australian, China, New Zealand (including Fredi Jones, Christie Cook, and Andrew Grenon), and of course students from the United Kingdom itself.

This semester's visiting faculty includes: Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, Gareth Jones (conductor & coach, Welsh National Opera), Julian Smith, Susan Bullock, Tina Ruta (Italian language coach), Anthony Negus (coach & conductor, and Wagner specialist), Andrew Greenwood (conductor & coach), Julie Pasturaud (French language coach), Joyce Fieldsend, Marco Canepa (Italian coach), Ryland Davies, Tanya Harrison (Russian/Czech language), Jacqueline Pischorn (German language), Della Jones (Welsh soprano & coach).

As most young singers who leave New Zealand to further their studies overseas know, getting permission to stay in whatever country they have moved to is one of the biggest issues we face. I had two options; return to NZ to wait and apply for a two-year Youth Mobility Visa, after which time I would have to return to NZ anyway; or make an application for further leave to remain in the UK as a dependant of an ancestry visa holder. So I chose to remain in the UK with my partner Jess, in order to apply for the latter. The information provided by the UK Home Office on immigration laws is vast, convoluted and confusing, and I spent hours researching and checking through what applications to fill out and how. I am extremely grateful to both trustee member Chris Welch and the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation UK for putting me in touch with immigration law firm Fragomen LLP, and the financial assistance provided to me to receive their help. Without this assistance, to ensure that I met every criterion and correctly filled in every detail of the application, I do know that I would not have been successful and my application approved. As it stands

PHOTO: Cardiff International Academy of Voice students pictured with Academy Director Dennis O'Neill and staff following a recent concert. Kawiti is in the back row. Other New Zealanders in the photos are Alexander Wilson – tenor and 3rd in 2012 Lexus Song Quest (back row beside Kawiti) and Isabella Moore – soprano – winner 2014 Lexus Song Quest (far left middle row).

Continued overleaf

I now have the right to live and work in the UK for the next five years, to build and develop my career, and give it the best possible chance I can – thank you.

In addition, I would also like to thank the Foundation for the grant I was given to attend the Wales International Academy of Voice Summer School towards the end of August. This week of intensive lessons provided a good transition between the lessons Dennis O'Neill had very generously been giving me over the summer period, and the coming academic year. These helped me to get back into shape following the severe antibiotic reaction that I had last semester, inhibiting me from singing for a number of weeks. Students from several nations including Russia, Spain, Brazil, Ukraine, New Zealand, Germany, Mexico, America, and the UK attended this school, providing a great scope of young singers from whom I could learn and observe. This was a fantastic opportunity to put into practice all that I had been working on with Dennis, and I was thrilled to find that my voice and technique had radically improved, along with my faculties for critical analysis.

In September I accompanied Dame Kiri to Holland, where she was invited to adjudicate the International Vocal Competition 2014 in 's-Hertogenbosch. This was an amazing opportunity to observe a high-level international singing competition with young singers from all over the world, being exposed to a range of different repertoire, and to see how this particular competition was run. Dame Kiri introduced me to a number of interesting and important people, including Wagnerian tenor, Siegfried Jerusalem;

artistic consultant for both the Salzburg Festival and Lyric Opera Chicago, Evamaria Wieser; Dutch mezzosoprano, Anne Gjevang; Irish conductor, Kenneth Montgomery; and director of the Vienna State Opera and artistic advisor to the Metropolitan Opera, Dr. Ioan Holender.

It was also my first time to the Netherlands, and on an afternoon off we took a trip to the town of Kleve, also my first time to Germany. After fifteen days being immersed in the competition, making new friends and being invited back to stay, I feel inspired to enter in the next round of the bi-annual competition – leaving time enough to improve my Dutch!

I am thoroughly looking forward to my second year at WIAV working with Dennis and his faculty to develop my vocal technique and performance skills further and build upon the progress I have made thus far. Once again, my deepest thanks goes to Dame Kiri and the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation for your unwavering support, and the great efforts you make in nurturing and supporting other young singers.

To David and Corina Silich and The James Wallace Arts Trust whose generous contributions have made it possible for me to continue my studies, I cannot thank enough. To the Ngarimu VC and Māori Battalion Fund Board and the multitude of people back home who have supported me and continue to support me in my journey, I humbly thank you – *E kore aku mihi āroha e mutu kei aku toa takitini.*

HEI KONĀ MAI RĀ I ROTO I AKU MIHI NUI,  
I AKU MIHI ĀROHA.

NĀKU ITI NOA,  
KAWITI WAETFORD



## Talent is a gift.

*“Those who have been blessed with talent deserve the opportunity to nurture and develop it to full potential. My passion is to see young people succeed and it is such a joy to see Foundation recipients progress along the difficult journey which is a career in music.”*

DAME KIRI TE KANAWA

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

**YOUR DONATIONS ARE IMPORTANT**  
Donations to the Foundation of any size are always welcome and very important for the continued aim of supporting talented singers and musicians.

New Zealanders who make donations to the Foundation can claim a 33.3% tax rebate, up to a maximum equal to their annual taxable income. By way of example – Gerry donates \$2400 and receives \$800 back; Anne donates \$15,000 and receives \$5,000 back.

The Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation is a registered charitable trust (CC 34307) which offers a range of opportunities to support its work. Further information about how to make a donation can be obtained from the Foundation office – see contact details at the end of this newsletter.

## Renowned Baritone joins faculty for 2015 NZ Opera School

*The Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation has been the principle sponsor of the annual NZ Opera School since 2012.*

Every year, up to 22 students gather in the historic buildings of Wanganui Collegiate with internationally renowned tutors for an intensive two weeks of study and performance, both at the college and in Wanganui's arts and recreational venues.

Speaking about the Foundation's decision to support the School, Dame Kiri said "There no substitute for hearing how it all works from those who have performed at the very highest level. For that reason we were delighted to work with the School to secure Dennis O'Neill, a wonderful singing teacher, to add his world-renowned skills to the tuition on offer at the 2014 School. Now we are very excited to assist in bringing Håkan Hagagard to this years'



School. He is a very dear friend and a wonderful baritone whom I have known for nearly 40 years as a performer and a colleague. I was thrilled to perform with him on many occasions. You may remember he played the part of Papageno in the beautiful Bergman Magic Flute - the whole Opera world fell in love with him. His singing has always been of the highest level and now he is passing on all that skill, stage experience and advice to the next generation. I know students and tutors will benefit greatly from his presence in Wanganui."

The 2015 NZ Opera School will be held in Wanganui from January 5 – 19. The finale concert 'Great Opera Moments 2015' which will be presented by the Foundation will be held on January 17 at the Royal Wanganui Opera House.

## UK FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS ANNOUNCED

*The Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music recently announced their nominations for the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation (UK) scholarships which carry a grant of £10,000.*

*The scholarships are awarded in conjunction with Dame Kiri. The winners for 2014/15 are:*



**Céline Forrest** is a 24 year-old Welsh Soprano who has just completed her first year on the Royal Academy's Opera Programme, having previously completed her undergraduate degree at the Academy. She studies with Iain Ledingham and Julie Julie Kennard, who say 'Celine is a singer with formidable potential which is now being reached. Her career is going and will go from strength to strength.'

*Here are extracts from a letter just received from Celine...*

"I was absolutely delighted to hear that I am the recipient of this prestigious award. For a long time I have very much admired Dame Kiri Te Kanawa's work and it really is an honour to be supported by her foundation.

This is my sixth year of study at the Academy. After growing up in Swansea, where I developed a love of classical singing and joined the Welsh National Youth Opera for several operas including the title role in *The Sleeper* by Stephen Deazley.

This year has been a busy one for me. I have just completed the title role in the Academy's production of Puccini's 'Suor Angelica'. I had a great time studying the role, and it does seem a perfect one for me to perform because it suits my voice type. The challenge of the performances really excited me and the run went extremely well. Opera has always been a love of mine, and the highlight of the last academic year at the Academy for me was playing the role 'Female Chorus' in Britten's

*The Rape of Lucretia*, which I very much enjoyed.

I have been lucky enough to win several competitions this year including the Richard Lewis Award and as a result, I had the opportunity to perform a full son recital which was a great achievement for me. Also I won the Pavarotti Prize at the Academy which really was an honour. I have also been chosen to be Wales' representative at the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World competition next June, the BBC Welsh Singers Competition earlier this year. Competing in such a prestigious event is both a very exciting and daunting prospect and I look forward to it immensely.

Without the generous support from organisations such as the Foundation it would not be possible for me to achieve all of these incredible opportunities and fulfil my true potential. I am hugely grateful for you choosing me this year and hope that I can live up to your faith in my ability."



**Nicholas Payne  
joins UK  
Foundation**

Dame Kiri is delighted to announce the appointment of Nicholas Payne as a trustee of the UK Foundation. "I am particularly pleased that Nicholas agreed to accept my invitation – he is a good friend and colleague and I know his vast experience working with opera will be a big plus for the Foundation."

Nicholas Payne has worked in opera since he joined the Royal Opera House Covent Garden in 1968 for the final two years of the Webster/Solti period. After a spell at the Arts Council of Great Britain during the early 1970s, he worked for four different UK opera companies over 27 consecutive years. At Welsh National Opera in Cardiff, his responsibilities included finance, labour relations, marketing, planning and programmes. He was then appointed General Director of Leeds-based Opera North, a company which he built up over a ten year period. He returned to London as Director of the Royal Opera Covent Garden during the 1990s. He was subsequently appointed General Director of English National Opera at the London Coliseum.

Throughout this time he was concerned with providing opportunities to develop singers, conductors and production teams, as well as being responsible for managing the business.

Since 2003, he has been Director of Opera Europa, for which he has built up services and a membership of 155 opera companies and opera festivals from 37 countries and has established it as the leading professional opera association in Europe. During this time he has established professional contacts throughout the operatic world and has written and broadcast regularly on operatic and general arts subjects.

He has served on the jury for AsLiCo's competition for young European singers in Como, the Belvedere in Vienna, Neue Stimmen in Germany, the Competizione dell'Opera in Dresden and Moscow, and as chairman of the jury for the Kathleen Ferrier competition in London, the International Festival of Operatic Singers in Tirana, Albania and the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World 2013.



### **Sofia Larsson**

*UK soprano Sofia Larsson joined the Royal College of Music International Opera School, where she studied with Dinah Harris and received the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation (UK) Scholarship and a Helen Marjorie Tonks Award.*

As the Drapers' Baroness de Turckheim Vocal Scholar she completed her postgraduate studies at the Royal Academy of Music with Distinction and DipRAM in July 2013, studying with Philip Dohan and Audrey Hyland, after completing the ENO Opera Works training programme in 2011 and gaining a first-class honours degree in Music from King's College London in 2009. Recent operatic roles include Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* (RCMIOS), cover Tartagliana in Jonathan Dove's *The Little Green Swallow* (British Youth Opera), Zerlina and Despina (Winterbourne Opera), Bastienne in Mozart's *Bastien und Bastienne* (Grove Park Music Festival), Susan in Berkeley's *A Dinner Engagement* (Waistcoat Opera), Mother in Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors* and Girl in D'heudieres & Evans's *Poison Garden* (Grimeborn Opera). Sofia performed the role of Deuxième Esprit in Massenet's *Cendrillon* and

was in the chorus of *Die Zauberflöte* for Royal Academy Opera.

Winner of the 2012 Elena Gerhardt Lieder Prize and a member of Song Circle at the Royal Academy of Music, Sofia is a keen recitalist. She has performed in Oxford's Christchurch Cathedral and Holywell Music Room as part of the Oxford Lieder Festival, Bristol's Colston Hall, Bath's Guildhall, Petersfield's Festival Hall, London's Queens' Gate Terrace and Charlton House. In Summer 2013 Sofia was a Britten-Pears Young Artist in Aldeburgh where she worked on Schubert song with Christoph Prégardien, Malcolm Martineau and Richard Stokes. At the Royal Academy of Music, Sofia was awarded the Amanda von Lob Memorial Prize, the Andrew Sykes Prize and the Helen Eames Prize.

<http://www.sofialarssonsoprano.com/>



**Professor Jack Richards**  
– a generous Patron

## 2015 NZ Singing School will have a special focus

*The focus on the need to convey the story in a song ('inhabiting the text') will permeate all aspects of the 2015 IFAC Handa New Zealand Singing School being held in Hastings from January 7 – 17. This includes a strong focus on English diction and Italian text. Classes, lectures, ensembles and massed singing will strongly support this focus.*

The Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation has previously supported the School and will once again present the Festival of Song performance programme. Announcing the sponsorship arrangement Dame Kiri said "the Foundation's motivation for supporting the Festival of Song was to show its' support for this important live-in school which provides an essential vehicle for young New Zealand singers to develop their skills in the presence of their peers and to experience their own live performances.

We see the School as an invaluable experience to support our primary aim of identifying and assisting New Zealand singers of recognisable ability to complete advanced classical vocal studies and ultimately develop international careers.

I am delighted to know that the theme for the 2015 School is "Inhabiting the Text" because it demands that young singers explore layers of verbal communication, the very meaning behind the music, which is the essence of vocal art"

The concert series allows all students to perform to the public during the course of the School. Rehearsed items reflecting the best performances of oratorio, classical song and musical theatre will be presented to the public. These concerts include a mixture of informal 'on campus' concerts featuring students' own choice of items, plus formal concerts in venues off campus. The final concert on January 17 at the Napier Municipal Theatre will feature soloists, ensembles and full chorus items

Professor Jack Richards is an internationally renowned Linguist specialising in second and foreign language teaching with a long history of supporting the arts. His generosity was recently recognised by the NZ Arts Foundation who awarded him the 2014 Award for Patronage.

Professor Richards has a keen interest in the arts, particularly, in music, having studied piano for many years. He has been an enthusiastic supporter of the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation since 2011 following a meeting with Dame Kiri when she outlined her vision for assisting young NZ singers focused on creating their own international careers. In 2013 he was named a Patron of the Foundation.

At that time he said "Patronage can play a crucial role in helping people to achieve their potential – as it did for me when I was a Ph.D. student. I often get requests for support from young singers who are focused on overseas study. In the past I have had to make decisions that were difficult for me to make without proper advice. I was therefore delighted when Dame Kiri invited me to work with her through her Foundation, since I can rely on her and the Foundation to make informed decisions about the kind of support best suited for emerging opera singer's needs.

## Oliver Sewell – the tenor who knows all the dance steps

*Young NZ tenor Oliver Sewell was awarded a Foundation grant earlier this year to support his studies towards a Masters in Classical Voice at the Manhattan School of Music.*

**After settling in he sent us this letter...**

It has been a month since I left New Zealand and I am now fully settled into New York life: I have an apartment, a routine and I even have a proper bed (I slept on an air mattress for three weeks!).

I have just finished my third week of school. My average day starts with a coaching around 9am and it is followed by classes up until around 7pm. Each week I have three hours of Italian, three hours of English diction, three hours of theory, three hours of aural training, two hours of dance lessons, three to four coachings, four hours in Dona Vaughn's opera workshop and four hours with Warren Jones. My lessons with my voice teacher, Ashley Putnam, are going



well and we are making good progress already. The course is exceptionally well organised and very thorough; I can now do a convincing Viennese Waltz thanks to my dance teacher.

Before classes start at the Manhattan School of Music all the singing students are required to audition for special ensemble classes. Out of these classes Warren Jones' vocal accompanying ensemble and the Opera Studio are the two most coveted. The hugely celebrated collaborative pianist Warren Jones (who I believe Dame Kiri has worked with) has only four students a year and he accepts a further seven singers (of which I am pleased to say I am now one) into his studio to collaborate with his piano students. Warren is

"Singers who receive the Foundation's financial support can not only count on Dame Kiri's mentoring and advice, but also benefit from the guidance that is available through her colleagues – world class singers and voice coaches. I was fortunate to witness this unique type of mentoring in action when I spent a day at Dame Kiri's home. On that occasion she had a small group of students and was joined by some of her professional colleagues to share their knowledge and experience with the next generation of opera singers. It was an inspiring experience. By contributing to the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation I am able to provide financial support safe in the knowledge that it will have a greater impact than anything I could offer on my own."

*Continued overleaf*

Oliver Sewell – the tenor who knows all the dance steps *continued*

a truly inspiring musician and person. I am beyond pleased to have the opportunity to work with him and I am the butt of a lot of tenor envy in the school, as I am the only tenor to be accepted into Warren's class.

I have been accepted into the Opera Studio and I have been cast as Francis Flute from Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in addition to that I have also been cast to sing the tenor solo part in Mozart's *Mass in C minor*."

**Just prior to going to print Oliver sent another update which included the following news:**

"Thanksgiving break has come to an end and a break was much appreciated: the last month was extremely busy with a number

of concerts including the end of term concert with Warren Jones class. Warren had me working straight away and asked me to learn, and sing for his concert, two of the hardest arias I have ever attempted ('Povero Ernesto' from *Don Pasquale* and 'Languir per una bella' from *Rossini's L'italiana in Algeri*). I am happy to say that I survived and sang well in the concert and now I have two impressive arias in my repertoire. The following week I sang the tenor solo parts in Mozart's *Mass in C Minor*. It was a real pleasure to sing with one of the school's orchestras under the baton of Kent Tritle (Director of St John the Divine Cathedral). In between these two performances I also had the pleasure of taking part in a Masterclass with the soprano Diana Soviero."



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Further information about how to make a donation is on the website or contact the Foundation for details.

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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.*

It is believed that the contents of this newsletter are a full and fair representation. Interested parties should make their own enquiries to satisfy themselves on all aspects.

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**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, their  
families and the  
young singers  
that we are  
privileged to work  
with and support

May the joy and peace of  
Christmas be with you throughout  
this wonderful season and may  
2015 bring you continuing  
good health and happiness