

# ARIA



## Dame Kiri comments ...

I've heard only great reports from our trustees and the tutors who led the first module of The Kiri Programme (reported on later in this newsletter). Kathryn Harries (Programme Director) told me she was very pleased both with the selection of singers the tutors had to work with, and with the organisation of the module. The six talented and highly-motivated young singers all worked very hard throughout the week learning not only from the tutors but from each other. Now everyone is looking forward to the second module in December.

During a recent visit to Australia I was invited by the Melba Opera Trust to give a master-class to 4 students – these singers were well into their careers, one was a very young bass baritone. They all sang well but obviously they have a lot more to learn which got me thinking. Looking back I have always felt that I should have learned more but there was never enough time – so much travel, learning new roles, arriving at new opera houses, feeling jet lag (but never having to admit to it), working with new colleagues, new conductors and finding accommodation that was suitable. How do you tell a young singer all this in the time allotted for a master-class?

After the Melbourne master-class I gave recitals in Bendigo and Ballarat – recalling that it was 50 years (almost to the day) where my career started – having won the Melbourne Sun Aria in 1966. Hmmm....

I'm asked regularly to give advice to aspiring opera singers. These days I have to be brutally honest and say the singing profession that I knew and worked in is

no longer there and the opportunities for young singers are much less with far more competition than I had. You have to be the stand out from the start, have the voice, languages, style, interpretation, looks, repertoire, maturity, etc. And you will need the right visa, accommodation and a singing teacher who is right for you plus £30,000 sterling minimum per year for perhaps 4 years of study. I now say to young singers considering an international career – make sure this is truly what you want to do and remember this profession chooses you – not the other way around.

I've had regular contact with the singers we are supporting in the UK. James Ioelu, Phillip Rhodes, Thomas Atkins, Kieran Rayner, Julien Van Mellaerts, Jonathan Abernethy, Bianca Andrew and Edward Laurenson are all working incredibly hard. Each and every one of them is on a mission and totally focused on their goals. I'm so very proud of them all and you will be too when you read their news.

Finally a personal experience that I'd like to share. On my way back to the UK I met my son & daughter in Japan to celebrate their respective birthdays. When I arrived at my hotel I noticed I'd lost my wallet (obviously in the taxi) which had EVERYTHING in it! I was considering my next move when the taxi driver returned it to the hotel – not a single card missing not a single dollar missing. Relaying this story later to a friend I had to say ..'only in Japan'. They are amazingly honest... once again most happy memories.

ISSUE 22 | DECEMBER 2016



CREDIT JOHN SWANNELL

## Welcome to the 22nd edition of Aria

### Featured in this issue . . .

The Kiri Programme – first module provided intensive tuition	2-3
Singers to listen for	4
2016-17 Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation (UK) Cover Awards announced	4
Two great antipodean sopranos have much in common	5
News in general	5
Singers supported by the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation	6-9

*“They are all extremely gifted, not only vocally but also with musicianship and dramatic skills that bode very well for the future.”*



The **KIRI**  
programme



ELIZA BOOM, KATHERINE MCINDOE, MADISON NONOA, NATASHA WILSON,  
JARVIS DAMS & FILIPE MANU.

## The Kiri Programme – first module provided intensive tuition

The top three places in the Dunedin Aria Competition finals in September went to young singers fresh from their first “module” of the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation’s new singer development programme. Tenor Filipe Manu took top honours, followed by sopranos Natasha Wilson and Madison Nonoa.

The Kiri Programme Administrator, Stephen Dee, says the results, and feedback from the first module, provided ‘proof of concept’ that a small group of talented and motivated singers, given intensive tuition and support from highly experienced and extremely competent coaches, will make fast progress. “This was the experience of all our young singers, each of whom grew in confidence during the week as they cracked technical problems, and improved their preparation and performance techniques. We couldn’t be happier both with our selection of the singers being given this unique opportunity and with the extraordinary group of tutors who have joined us for the Kiri Programme.”

According to Kiri Programme Director, Kathryn Harries, who is director of the National Opera Studio in London, all six singers selected by Dame Kiri and her panel to take part made “major strides” during their intensive week. “This programme has catapulted these six youngsters onto another plane of learning and application and they were hugely inspired and enthusiastic about the new tools we gave them.”



KATHRYN HARRIES (PROGRAMME DIRECTOR) & KATHERINE MCINDOE.



ELIZA BOOM WITH TERESA DESMARCHELIER (LANGUAGE COACH).



"They are all extremely gifted, not only vocally but also with musicianship and dramatic skills that bode very well for the future. They are very young and the aim of the module was to work at as high a level as possible in order to advance their vocal techniques, interpretative skills and awareness of the many demands of the profession.

"The main thrust of the week was the importance of working in the greatest detail on the text of songs and arias and paying absolute attention to the musical demands of the composers. Without this fundamental and vital work, singers make mistakes which rapidly become obstinate habits which, in turn, have to be painstakingly unlearned – and that is both intellectually and physically a complete waste of time and effort.

"To be given such high level information at this stage in their development is essential if they are to progress safely at overseas conservatoires and on young artist programmes. Too many singers lack this vital information about practice strategies, minutely detailed examination of the text and the music, dedicated hours in front of a mirror to perfect vocal technique and the delivery of text correctly and on support."

One of the participants, soprano Eliza Boom, says the week will change the way she approaches all her music, a sentiment echoed by Wellingtonian participant Katherine McIndoe. "It's going to change the way a lot of us learn our music, giving us the tools to prepare more effectively for the work we are going to do ourselves."

"It was a phenomenal experience," says Hamilton baritone Jarvis Dams. "An amazing opportunity". He says the tools learned in the module will allow the young singers to study when they don't have coaches, and in their own time. "It was all about being self-sufficient, becoming your own teacher, and that is truly unique. All six of us agreed that was something we've never experienced in our lives, to be given the tools to be your own coach. With the individual plans and support, this is a truly unique programme."

As the five modules advance between now and next July, the international and New Zealand-based tutors will range across the business, musical, language and personal skills needed to succeed in what Dame Kiri has called an increasingly tough career.

The overarching theme of the next module in December will be dramatic interpretation and stagecraft. It will be under the direction of one of the world's leading stage directors of opera, Chuck Hudson, who is being flown from the USA by the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation.

"Dame Kiri has given these six singers the chance of a lifetime," says Kathryn Harries. "She should be applauded for her dedication to the development of New Zealand vocal talent – it's extraordinary."

*"To be given such high level information at this stage in their development is essential if they are to progress safely at overseas conservatoires and on young artist programmes."*



MADISON NONOA, JARVIS DAMS & FILIPE MANU.



NATASHA WILSON WITH LANGUAGE COACH TERESA DESMARCHELIER.



Jarvis Dams, Katherine McIndoe, Anna Dowsley & Jonathan Abernethy.

PHOTO: MIKE HISON

## Singers to listen for

*Earlier this year the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation, in partnership with the Rotary Club of Wellington, hosted a very special concert at St Andrews on the Terrace in Wellington. John Boshier, Director of Rotary Club of Wellington filed this report.*

The concert whilst being a celebration of young singing talent was also a unique fundraiser for medical research and for the Foundation itself. It was an outstanding success, with a capacity audience enjoying wonderful music and giving generously to the charity, the Gillies McIndoe Research Institute for cancer.

The initial 'Singers to Listen For' concert staged in 2015 was the brainchild of Rodney Macann (a Foundation trustee) and was so successful that a second concert was developed.

There was a great deal of interest in Jonathan Abernethy, tenor, as he hadn't sung in his home town for a number of years and he exceeded all expectations with singing that was unfailingly stylish, beautiful to listen to and with spectacular high notes such as the high C in the great aria from Gounod's Faust. He had a superb partner in Anna Dowsley, soprano who displayed all the stagecraft and loveliness of voice that one could expect from a young singer who has already sung a number of major roles with Opera Australia. Their love duet from the Berlioz opera 'The Trojans' was the centrepiece of the evening.

However, Katherine MacIndoe, soprano and Jarvis Dams, baritone (both selected for The Kiri Programme) were by no means the support act to the more experienced singers. They brought their own totally memorable moments and again, unfailingly lovely singing. Jarvis brought the house down with a powerful, characterful and communicative "largo al Factotum" from Rossini's Barber of Seville. Katherine, known for her high intelligence, delighted with a wonderfully over the top melodramatic aria about 'Prima Donnas to die for' and again there were exquisite ensembles with Mozart's sublime trio from *Così fan tutte* – another "never sung better moment". Terence Dennis New Zealand's master accompanist (a Foundation Trustee) was in his element, the perfect partner to the young singers, providing his own moments of delight and giving them the freedom to share their great talents. Rodney amused the audience with some recollections of well-known conductors he'd worked with, and showed that the old man still had a note or two left with his rendition of "Some Enchanted Evening" which seemed to sum it all up.

A capacity audience of 200 enjoyed pre-concert refreshments and a charity auction to assist The Kiri Programme. An original oil painting by Dame Kiri and the cover of her shooting script from *Downton Abbey* were sold in the auction; raising over \$9,700 for the Foundation.

The Gillies McIndoe Research Institute for Cancer was the charity which benefitted from the concert through ticket sales. The Institute was represented at the concert by its Director Dr Swee Tan and Mrs Tan. The singers were sponsored by Lexus of Wellington.

## 2016-17 KIRI TE KANAWA FOUNDATION (UK) COVER AWARDS ANNOUNCED

In 2014 in recognition of Dame Kiri's 70th birthday and her long professional association with Covent Garden the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation (UK) announced a grant of £70,000 to be used by The Royal Opera House to allow selected artists to take on cover roles where ROH might not normally have a cover in place. The two singers selected for the 2016-17 season Cover Awards are:



**Armenian tenor Liparit Avetisyan** makes his Royal Opera debut in the 2016/17 Season as Alfredo Germont (*La traviata*).

Avetisyan was born in Yerevan and studied at the Tchaikovsky Moscow State Conservatory and the Komitas State Conservatory, Yerevan. His many roles with Armenian National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet include Alfredo and Don José (*Carmen*). He regularly performs in concert with the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra, in roles including the Duke of Mantua (*Rigoletto*), Rodolfo (*La bohème*) and in Verdi's Requiem, Mozart's Requiem and *Das Lied von der Erde*. Engagements elsewhere include Don José in China, Des Grieux (*Manon*) in Moscow and Count Almaviva (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*) for Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Moscow Music Theatre. Other roles in his repertory include Nemorino (*L'elisir d'amore*), Werther, Lensky (*Eugene Onegin*) and Young Gypsy (Aleko).

**British soprano Meeta Raval** made her Royal Opera debut in 2015 as Girl (*Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*). She studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, the Royal Academy of Music and the National Opera Studio. She was a finalist in the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition in 2011, and is the winner of the Dame Eva Turner Prize for 'Soprano with Dramatic Potential'. Her operatic engagements include Cio-Cio-San (*Madama Butterfly*) for English National Opera, Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*), Lisa (*The Queen of Spades*) and Ortlinde (*Die Walküre*) for Opera North, Nedda (*Pagliacci*) for Welsh National Opera and Countess Almaviva (*Le nozze di Figaro*) for the RAM under Colin Davis. In November 2016 Raval is covering the role of Manon (*Manon Lescaut*).



Dame Kiri with masterclass students

PHOTO: DANIELE FRANCESCA MARTINIE

## Two great antipodean sopranos have much in common

With Melbourne's magnificent Cranlana estate bathed in the first sunlight of spring, the stage was set for a master class with Dame Kiri Te Kanawa and the singers from Australia's Melba Opera Trust. And beyond the lovely synergy of Dame Kiri having played Dame Nellie in the British TV drama *Downton Abbey*, these two great antipodean sopranos, despite being separated by nearly a century, have much more in common: a passionate belief in the need for the stars of opera's future to be "more than a voice".

Dame Kiri shared her international experience and encouragement with the four singers chosen: current Melba scholars Tim Newton (bass) and Bronwyn Douglass (mezzo-soprano), as well as alumna Fiona Jopson (soprano) and guest Lee Abrahmsen (soprano). Another connection of the day was that both Fiona and Lee are past winners of *The Herald Sun Aria*, Australia's most famous vocal competition, as was Dame Kiri herself at the start of her illustrious career.

Singers and invited audience members alike were captivated by Dame Kiri's energy and enthusiasm in conveying the essence of good singing to the participants. With great care, Dame Kiri showed how to invest the words with meaning and to bring their characters to life. Of course, the need to sing with polish, flair and musicianship was not forgotten: Dame Kiri was keen to ensure that the composers' intentions were met. Though understandably awestruck by an operatic legend, the four singers were captivated and engaged by what Dame Kiri had to say and grateful for her generosity and support.

Another highlight for Melba Opera Trust's singers was the chance to share an informal lunch with Dame Kiri. This unique opportunity to learn about her career was invaluable. Dame Kiri spoke candidly about how much the opera industry has changed over her lifetime; opportunities are few and are keenly contested. Singers need to be artistically prepared, but they also need to have the business and personal skills to survive in this highly competitive career. Dame Kiri's insights and advice reinforced the value of Melba Opera Trust's own three-pronged approach to young singers' development through its' scholarship, mentor and performance programs. By giving singers access to practical business skills such as financial, legal and media training, as well as negotiating, personal styling and performance anxiety coaching – and much, much more – Melba Opera Trust's personifies its' model's own life. The relevance of Dame Nellie's philosophy today was echoed by Dame Kiri.

It was a great honour to welcome Dame Kiri to Melba Opera Trust's series of master classes and we look forward to future collaborative opportunities with the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation – two organisations doing so much to ensure the future of opera's youngest and brightest from this part of the world.

*Review supplied by Melba Opera Trust*

## NEWS IN GENERAL

### The Foundation has been a significant supporter of the Lexus Song Quest

and associated masterclasses since 2012. The 2016 Lexus Song Quest was recently won by baritone Benson Wilson. Runner-up was tenor Filipe Manu. Soprano Madison Nonoa took placed 3rd place and was also awarded the \$15,000 Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation scholarship 'for the singer who shows the most promise'.

### A grant from the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation (UK) for Bass, Blaise Malaba

(Democratic Republic of Congo), enabled him to attend the MA Opera Performance course at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. Angela Livingstone (Head of Opera, Vocal Performance and Choral Conducting) comments ... 'We are thrilled to have him and he has settled in very quickly and is very much part of the little "company" which is the opera course. Currently Blaise is working on opera scenes, as well as preparing the final scene from *Onegin* for our Gala concert with WNO in December. In early November, he will begin production rehearsals singing the role of Somnus in *Semele*. We have four shows in college in early February and then a tour of Wales. A busy term for him, but Blaise is rising to every challenge with great enthusiasm and brings good humour and a strong sense of team spirit to his work.'

### The Kiri Programme generates enthusiastic financial support

When the Foundation Trustees endorsed the Kiri Programme project they did so knowing that it carried a significant financial commitment but were happy to underwrite the budget because they agreed the idea was too important to drop. Their decision was subsequently endorsed by the response to Dame Kiri's letter inviting financial support. To date almost \$80,000 has been received from individuals & trusts who obviously believe the Kiri Programme is important and heading in the right direction. One of the first donations came from the John and Margaret Hunn Education Trust which shares the Foundation's objective of identifying and supporting outstanding young New Zealanders who have the potential to develop careers as opera singers. We were delighted to learn that the Trust has been active in the past providing additional funding for some of the singers currently being supported by the Foundation. Both organisations look forward to future collaboration.

Continuing financial help is required to ensure the long-term viability of the Kiri Programme. Donations of any size are welcome and will qualify for tax deductibility within the allowances set out in the current New Zealand tax legislation. For further information about how to make a donation see contact details at the end of this newsletter.

## Singers supported by the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation



### James Ioelu

Since completing my apprenticeship with the National Opera Studio, I have been very busy in New Zealand with four months of continuous work. Like most New Zealand singers, moving to either the U.K. or America, visas are an important step in that process. The Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation (UK) has supported me through this complex process, led by Deborah Sanders. Everything has been sent off so I now I just have to wait for the final verdict.

Filling in time back in New Zealand was not a problem – I debuted with New Zealand Opera singing the role of Marchese in their production of *La Traviata*. Then I sang the role of Montano (*Otello*) with the APO followed almost immediately by rehearsals for Handel's opera *Oreste* (singing King Toante), which was a treat as it is so rarely performed. I wrapped up the 2015/16 season singing again with NZ Opera in their acclaimed production of *Sweeney Todd*.

It's great to be heading back to London with a few more roles on my resume! Outside of productions, I sang a number of concerts including a very special recital for the Victoria League Trust where I sang as a thank you for their support during my residency at the National Opera Studio. We were lucky to have Dame Kiri present and it was such a wonderful occasion.

Back in London I've begun auditioning for projects next year including the bass soloist role in *The Messiah* with Auckland Choral. This week I will also be visiting Dame Kiri, who has (once again!) offered support during this period of auditioning.

If things go to plan I will return in the New Year to continue "breaking into" the UK market: like any business, it requires not only a marketable product but lots of networking, and a bit of luck! It goes without saying that the support I have received and continue to receive from the Foundation is a huge help in this time of growth and transition in my career. I am as always most grateful!



### Bianca Andrew

During my final year at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama I sang the role of Philomène in Martinu's opera *Alexandre Bis*, and, in a double bill of Stravinsky's *Mavra* and Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta*. Next term we are presenting a brand new opera, *The Tale of Januarie* by Julian Philips and Stephen Plaice. I am also delighted to have been selected to sing the title role in Handel's *Radamisto*.

Earlier this year I was the winner of the Song Prize in the Ferrier Awards, and am about to head off on a Samling Foundation Artist Residency to work with Malcolm Martineau and Angelika Kirschlager and then with Dame Ann Murray and Eugene Asti in the Ferrier Awards Masterclasses, and with Sir Thomas Allen at the Wigmore Hall as part of the Samling Foundation's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations.

As part of my continuing professional singing work I'm very excited to be singing the role of Meg Page with the Cambridge Philharmonic Orchestra and conductor Timothy Redmond in a semi-staged performance of Verdi's *Falstaff* in December. Back in New Zealand for Christmas I will be singing in the Auckland Choral Society's production of *The Messiah* and to see my family – including my new baby brother or sister who is due to be born in late November!

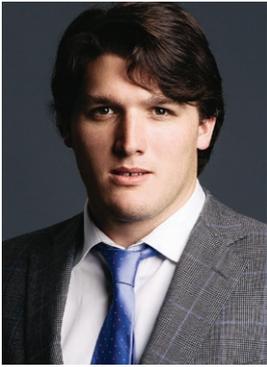
2017 includes a performance of Thomas Adès' *America: A Prophecy* in May, graduation from the Opera Studies programme at Guildhall and a trip home to join the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra and Giordano Bellincampi in a performance of Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*, as the Madrigal Singer.

Looking out past graduation from a conservatoire programme into the big, wide world of freelance work is terribly daunting, which is why I feel very fortunate to receive mentorship and support from Dame Kiri and her Foundation. I am also grateful to the many Kiwi singers, conductors and coaches who continue to give me advice and guidance whenever I need it.

### STOP PRESS

**Just prior to Aria going to press Deborah Sanders (who has been working on James's behalf) announced:**

"James has landed his first job from his first audition! James sang for Iford Arts last week, and they asked for three arias (instead of the usual two) – often a good sign. He has just been offered the role of Colline in their summer festival production of *La Bohème* in May 2017. Additionally the company has asked him to audition next week for the creative team who will produce the company's second production in the season, and he sings for the role of Zebul *Jephth*; they have already expressed interest in him for the role so I hope we'll see him singing two roles at the Festival next May. Indications are that his UK visa will be approved in the New Year, and in that event James can look forward to continuing his career in the UK."



## Jonathan Abernethy

2016 has been a strange and exciting year for me; I performed my first Messiah with Sydney Philharmonia Choirs at the Sydney Opera House before starting back with Opera Australia. I was excited to be covering leading roles in two new productions, the first of which was *The Pearlfishers* and secondly *Così fan tutte*. These productions called for hard study of the roles as both are dramatically and vocally demanding. I was fortunate that in both cases I was able to create the roles from scratch on the floor with both directors (Michael Gow and Sir David McVicar) and conductor (Guillaume Tourniaire) due to the late arrival of the artists scheduled to perform the season, a challenging and rare opportunity that certainly helped me prepare these roles for years to come.

What started out as a normal year turned into three debut performances in every opera I was involved in... and at fairly late notice. The first time being called in straight from dinner, after the show had started! More recently I was called in from my travels in Berlin to Perth for the West Australian Opera season of the *Pearlfishers*. I landed on the morning of the final dress rehearsal, two days before opening night and then completed the six show season.

It's been an exhilarating year working with so many new people and companies and performing new music. It's been a privilege to work with Opera Australia, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra and West Australian Opera. Next year I'm looking forward to new roles in NZ with NZ Opera and the NZSO as well as heading back to Festival d'Aix-en-Provence for the 2017 summer season.



## Anthony Schneider

This is my final year at the Academy of Vocal Arts, and I'm very excited about the musical opportunities coming my way. I'm currently immersed in a production of *Rigoletto* in the role of Sparafucile, the assassin. It is a relatively short role, but is absolutely crucial to the plot development, and I really enjoy fine tuning the physicality and vocalism of the character in order to make the most of my time on stage.

In May of next year, I have been cast to sing Sarastro in *The Magic Flute*, which is a great way to finish my four years at AVA as this is the first opera I ever saw live! We're currently in the midst of audition season, which means frequent trips to New York City. It's been going well so far, having received grants from the Metropolitan Opera National Council the Gerda Lissner Art Song Competition, the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation and second prize at the Giargiari Bel Canto Competition.

November sees me taking the next steps on my journey to becoming a world class performer – singing for Young Artist Programmes for some of the top opera houses in the US. Then I'm off to France for two months for the production of *Candide*, doing several small roles.



Guildhall Graduation

## Edward Laurenson

The colder days are setting in, temperatures have started to drop quite sharply and the sunshine is slowly disappearing, as I head into my third year in London. I have now finished my second year at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and completed my Master of Performance. My final results arrived in the post last weekend, and I am thrilled to be graduating with Distinction! I am so proud to have achieved this, and want to thank everyone for all their help over the last two years, especially my financial supporters and teachers.

My plan for this year is to stay on in London in order to take advantage of the opportunities to learn privately, prepare and consolidate new repertoire and roles, and cast the net as wide as possible in auditioning with leading opera programmes and professional performance prospects across Europe.

Having access to my current teachers and coaches on a private basis will allow me to continue to develop my vocal technique, and further strengthen my connections with key people in the industry. I am immensely grateful for the continued support that is helping to make this possible.

Last year was an incredible period of growth in terms of my vocal technique and artistic development. Working closely with so many world-renowned teachers on a weekly basis has enabled me to develop my craft, and has provided me with countless opportunities that I feel very fortunate to have been able to experience.

My lessons with Yvonne Kenny (distinguished Australian soprano and teacher) continue to be extremely valuable and I have made significant progress in my vocal development as a consequence of several breakthroughs. Yvonne has also been helpful in preparing me for a number of auditions and competitions this year, with many of these being in front of some of the most influential people in opera here in the UK.

Dame Kiri Te Kanawa has been very generous with her time and I'd like to especially acknowledge the help she gave me in preparing for my National Opera Studio audition. Her encouragement and guidance as I approached the end of my studies at the Guildhall and started to plan my third year in London, comprising private tuition with leading tutors, coaches and professionals in the world of opera, and auditioning for leading young artist programmes, studios, and professional performance opportunities have been very much appreciated.



Giorgio Germont in La Traviata with Madeleine Pierard

## Phillip Rhodes

Recently looking at my outbox I realised that it had been some time since I last touched base with Dame Kiri and the Foundation – despite it seeming like only weeks ago! Again this is a true indicator of the wisdom garnered and passed down by the Dame, and many of her contemporaries, 'It all moves very fast once it gets going, you must always try get back to your teacher!'

Earlier this year I spent seven months on the road with only seven weeks at home. The season kicking off with Andrea Chenier at Opera North, singing the Role of Roucher, and Covering the Role of Gerard. This was a wonderful production and I was very fortunate to sing the role of Gerard in the orchestral dress. I have been fairly insistent about taking cover roles during the last few years and have tried to create for my own development in the profession a pathway in order to continue to grow; covering has certainly allowed me to do that, all the while putting future roles in my back pocket. It is hard work at the time but I know it will pay off further down the road.

More recently I made my debut as Giorgio Germont in the NZ Opera production of La Traviata. This production moved very quickly as I arrived a week later than expected, and I felt like a hamster running a little too fast on his wheel during the first week. Giorgio is not a large role in the sense of time on stage yet it is a very concentrated period requiring great drama, vocal control, and also close character relationships built with your colleagues on stage. I never felt like I quite managed to make up that time in order to create something extra special, however I am very proud of having made my debut in a role I would hope to sing many times over!

I continue to thank Dame Kiri and the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation for all they have done leading to this point and am grateful for all they do with young singers both home and abroad!



CREDIT: CHRIS CHRISTODOULOU

Julien Van Mellaerts (Centre) as Mr Gedge in Albert Herring – Royal College of Music International Opera School.

## Julien Van Mellaerts

New Zealand Baritone Julien Van Mellaerts has enjoyed a busy final year at the Royal College of Music International Opera School. Working for Opera Holland Park, as a Christine Collins Young Artist he played the role of Schaubard in their new production of *La bohème*. Not only the opportunity to cover for the main production, but also the chance to perform the opera in full with the City of London Sinfonia, on the main stage.

Next project was to work on 31 songs for the International Vocalisten Concours, 's-Hertogenbosch, in the Netherlands. With fellow Kiwi pianist, Somi Kim they competed in the Lied Duo category. With the generous support and mentorship of Dame Kiri, we had a hard task to prepare all the repertoire required for the competition. A good result – they emerged as semi-finalists and were invited back for next year's opera competition and the Lied Duo in 2018. After recitals in France, Spain and The Netherlands, it was back to London to start school again.

Being his final year of study he wanted to make the most of the opportunities and support that the college had to offer including the role of *Nardo* in *La Finta Giardiniera* by Mozart – a revival of a highly successful production from the Buxton Festival.

Last month he performed in a recital as part of the Oxford Lieder Festival, working with Dame Gwyneth Jones, and Sir Thomas Allen in masterclasses, through the college and the London Song Festival. Performances coming up include a series of Christmas concerts in Berlin with the Lebanese Philharmonic Orchestra, as their baritone soloist and Messiahs with the Orchestra of St Johns, in London and Oxford. Early next year he will be performing both the St John and St Matthew Passions in London, Oxford and Sheffield. Then the baritone soloist for Carmina Burana as part of the Aldeburgh Festival at Snape Maltings.

### STOP PRESS

**As Aria was about to go to press Phillip's manager Deborah Sanders announced that:**

- Phillip has been engaged by Opera North to sing his first Renato Un ballo in Maschera which has performances in February and March, 2018;
- In another role debut, he will sing his first Escamillo (*Carmen*) at the new Grange Festival in June next year. Other upcoming engagements include Peter Hansel und Gretel and in the same period Mizgir Snowmaiden, both productions at Opera North. He is already in rehearsal for these productions.
- Earlier this month Phillip visited Amsterdam to audition for conductor David Parry and stage director Stephen Barlow for a new production of Tosca for the Nederlandse Reispoer. I'm happy to say he was successful and has secured the role of Scarpia for this 2018 production.

"On top of all this, Phillip is on hold for a role in a UK festival for the summer 2018 and when it's confirmed he will be completely booked for the next two years taking him to the end of 2018. This makes me very happy and I hope that the excellent work he did and the highly positive impression he left at Covent Garden as the recipient of the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation – Royal Opera House Cover Award will culminate in an engagement for a principal role in the 2018-19 season" she said.



ROGER WAY PHOTOGRAPHY

Orestes rehearsal

## Tom Atkins

Having popped out the other end of the Guildhall School of Music & Drama earlier in the year, I found myself out in the “real world” armed with a few bits of paper certifying my ability as a musician and the best education a young singer could ever ask for. I was ready to take my first steps into the wonderful world of opera. And it certainly has been wonderful so far.

2016 has been a busy year for me and has been jam-packed with professional ‘firsts’. There is simply too much to tell in this short report but I’ll name a few highlights. My first step as a professional musician/entertainer/singer/opera-singer/classical-singer/whatever-you-may-call-it came in the form of a Chorus contract at Glyndebourne where I was a Jerwood Young Artist and found myself involved in four productions meaning 53 performances, five recitals and a cover show (*Vogelgesang, Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*) all in the space of a few months. Talk about jumping in the deep end!

My contract at Glyndebourne finished at the end of August, and a few days later I walked through the stage door of the Royal Opera House for the first time as a Jette Parker Young Artist. As you enter the building you can feel the wealth of talent, knowledge and experience buzzing in the air.

To say it’s inspiring is to understate it completely, but there’s no word I can find that correctly defines the feeling. The next year at the ROH promises to bring a whole host of incredible experiences, including four main stage productions (*Der Rosenkavalier, Adriana Lecouvreur, The Exterminating Angel* and *Otello*) as well as recitals and concerts. However, tomorrow has its own excitement as I have my first rehearsal for a ROH main stage production (Major Domo, *Der Rosenkavalier*) and will make my Royal Opera debut with the opening night of *Oreste (Pilade)* at Wilton’s Music Hall.

This career is one that is impossible to achieve without the support of others. We can be born with the talent and have the drive to succeed, but without a solid foundation and support network everything would quickly fall apart. My heart is overflowing with thanks to every single person that has helped me get to where I am today. Although I am only at the starting line of my career, I wouldn’t be here without the support I’ve been truly blessed to receive.



## Oliver Sewell

My time at Manhattan School of Music has come to an end. On reflection of my two years at MSM I am amazed at how incredible the education was. I learnt and grew so much more than I ever thought possible. As I begin the next chapter in my journey I feel truly confident that MSM has given me the tools I need to succeed. It was a great honour and surprise to be endorsed by the school and win the Stan Sesser Career Award at graduation awarded to a “an exceptional graduating student from the Graduate Program who has extraordinary potential for a career in opera”.

My visa extension (which allows me to stay in the USA until July 2017) has been approved and now it is time to focus on the audition season (I have applied to sing for a number of opera houses and young artist programs) and to identify and secure an appropriate agent to represent me. It is slow going but I am gradually making progress.



PHOTO: CLIVE BARDA

E’tienne – *English Eccentrics*

## Kieran Rayner

I am in my first term at the Royal College of Music International Opera School in London, as the Kiri Te Kanawa Scholar and I feel very lucky to be staying at the Victoria League Student House, courtesy of the Victoria League and Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation. I’m even in James Loelu’s old room! It is just a 10 minute cycle ride from the Royal College – an ideal location.

So much has happened since graduating from my Masters (with Distinction) at the RCM in July. During the summer break I travelled twice to Italy – to perform at ex-Covent Garden coach Robin Stapleton’s annual concert in Tuscany in the lovely village of Pereta and in September, I returned for a ten-day Masterclass Programme organised by Patricia Hurley and the Dame Malvina Major Foundation which included daily Italian language lessons, and coachings with NZ Opera’s Musical Director Wyn Davies. Through the week we gave 3 performances – the last at the NZ Ambassador’s residence in Rome. It was a privilege to represent New Zealand in this way.

Between these trips, I played six roles in British Youth Opera’s season of *English Eccentrics*, a comic opera by Australian Malcolm Williamson and I am now rehearsing the RCM’s next opera, Mozart’s *La Finta Giardiniera*. Alongside College commitments, I have been working with English Touring Opera, understudying roles in *Xerxes* and *La Calisto* (last year, I covered several roles in ETO’s *Werther* and *The Tales of Hoffmann*, and got last-minute call-ups for two performances, so they asked me back!). I have several UK oratorio and concert engagements before Christmas, and in the New Year, I play the main baritone role in the RCM’s spring opera, Handel’s *Faramondo*.

I have had invaluable opportunities in the UK so far (some of them thanks to Dame Kiri herself), but getting the jobs is only part of the challenge – as a student working my way up in the industry, much of this work is unpaid. Support from the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation and other benefactors has empowered me to grasp all of these opportunities, fully focusing on developing my craft, building up my CV, and forming professional connections for my future career. I could never sustain this without your aid. From the bottom of my heart, thank you.



# 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 2017 bring you continuing  
good health and happiness.

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

#### KIRI TE KANAWA FOUNDATION

ADMINISTRATOR: Paul Gleeson  
POSTAL ADDRESS: P O Box 38387, Howick,  
Auckland 2145, New Zealand  
TELEPHONE: +64 9 5349398  
MOBILE: +64 275 944534  
EMAIL: [foundation@kiritekanawa.org](mailto:foundation@kiritekanawa.org)  
WEBSITE: [www.kiritekanawa.org](http://www.kiritekanawa.org)

#### KIRI TE KANAWA FOUNDATION (UK)

C/- Gillian Newson  
23B Prince of Wales Mansions  
Prince of Wales Drive,  
London SW11 4BQ  
United Kingdom

#### KIRI TE KANAWA FOUNDATION SPONSORS



**MorrisonKent** Lawyers

*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. PRIVACY POLICY: Under the Privacy Act 1993 any address or information you supply us will be held in secure circumstances by the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation and used to communicate with you about the Foundation's events, associations and activities. Our mailing lists are available only to the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation and are not available to any third parties or organisations.

