

Rhapsody

News from the Dame Malvina Major Foundation



**Dame
Malvina
Major
Foundation**

A note from Dame Malvina



Another busy year! Thank goodness for the support I have around me ensuring the Dame Malvina Major Foundation keeps ticking. Without the wonderful and generous people on the Foundation's Trust Board, on our regional committees and funding our work, my vision to 'Share the Dream' with talented young artists would be going nowhere very fast.

I would like to give very special mention to Joan Egan who provided the means for us to launch the Dame Malvina Major Foundation Opera Studies Programme this year. I have been wanting for many years to give our most promising singers more support learning recitative – the sung conversations shared between performers before and after their arias, duets and quartets. It's so hard to practise in isolation but so important. I'm thrilled with how the inaugural programme went and grateful to New Zealand Opera for hosting the training and for Stuart Maunder and all the tutors for their input.


Our link with New Zealand Opera is a strong one and it brings me great pleasure to see familiar faces on stage

in their productions – singers who we've supported over many years returning home for leading roles. In *Carmen* earlier this year there were three former Dame Malvina Major Emerging Artists performing and next year's programme is bursting with DMMF artists.

But it is important for me that our support is not limited to the opera world. This year's Arts Excellence Awards included a conductor, a composer, a flautist and a concert pianist. Previous years have enjoyed similar diversity. We have such promising talent across the performing arts in New Zealand and I'm proud that the Dame Malvina Major Foundation is helping grow and develop this important sector.

If you're able to support us – now, or as a legacy – you will play a vital role in helping talented young performers get professional guidance. Perhaps you'd like to support a particular artist, programme or scholarship. We're very happy to talk with you about ways you can help. Please fill in the form at the back, call us on 04 384 9745, or visit our website www.dmmfoundation.org.nz.

Malvina Major



Wade Kernot as Zuniga in *Carmen* with Nino Surguladze and James Benjamin Rodgers.

Image: Marty Melville

DMMF artists return home to take leading roles

The Dame Malvina Major Foundation's 26-year investment in 'sharing the dream' is paying back dividends for local opera with many of the artists the Foundation has supported returning to star in New Zealand Opera's 2018 programme.

Sopranos Amelia Berry, Amina Edris and Marlena Devoe, baritones James Harrison and Julien Van Mellaerts, and tenors Tom Atkins, James Benjamin Rodgers and Pene Pati, will all take their turns on stage for New Zealand Opera's seasons of *Candide*, *Tosca*, *The Elixir of Love* and *La Bohème*.

Dame Malvina says it is hugely gratifying to see these singers reaching their potential and sharing their talents with New Zealand audiences.

"We have invested in them over many years and now they are back to take lead roles. I couldn't be prouder."

Bass Wade Kernot, who played Zuniga in New Zealand Opera's 2017 season of *Carmen*, says every Kiwi soloist in any of the recent New Zealand Opera productions he's been in has been given a leg up at some stage by the Dame Malvina Major Foundation.

A Dame Malvina Major Emerging Artist in 2004 and Young Artist in 2008 and Dame Malvina Mina Foley Scholarship recipient in 2010, Wade shared the stage with fellow Dame Malvina Major Foundation artists James Harrison, Amelia Berry and James Benjamin Rodgers. He says a highlight of

the season – alongside performing with a director he has always wanted to work with, returning to his favourite opera company and getting to work with his wife Emma Pearson – was reconnecting with old mates.

"In this cast were several old friends (all previous DMMF Emerging Artists!) some of whom I hadn't seen for many years. Catching up on the growth and development of these people as we trundle through the ups and downs of this funny job we have, reminiscing about times when we were all so painfully green as we started out and watching them all produce some fantastic performances as now grown-up professionals was a real joy.

"There have been two or three key people who during my career have sent me on the path I am on. Dame Malvina and the weight of support from the Dame Malvina Major Foundation is one of them. Without that backing I would not have the career I have now."

For details of New Zealand Opera's 2018 programme visit www.nzopera.com/2018-operas

Opera programme prepares Kiwi singers to converse on international stage

“Intense” is a word that crops up regularly in conversation with the participants of the inaugural Dame Malvina Major Foundation Opera Studies Programme. And it’s used to describe both the highlights and challenges of the fortnight spent at New Zealand Opera HQ in July this year.

Created by Dame Malvina, the new programme offers rare – and concentrated – language training for young New Zealand singers on the verge of international vocal studies. Six participants – sopranos Oriana Kershaw, Katherine McIndoe, Madison Nonoa and Sophie Sparrow; tenor Filipe Manu and baritone Clinton Fung – were selected for the first intake, with two additional singers – soprano Natasha Wilson and baritone Jonathan Evers – given scholarships to attend Patricia Hurley’s Italian for NZ Opera Singers Masterclasses and Concerts in Italy as part of the programme.

For Katherine McIndoe, the intense focus on language was invaluable, particularly the Italian classes with language coach Luca Manghi. She says that as a non-Italian speaker, it was challenging to get into the pure Italian vowels and to make sure the consonants don’t disrupt a beautiful bel canto line.

“It’s been a challenge, but it’s been great to have been in this intensive, immersive environment to work on that, it’s been something we need to learn. We’ve realised that language has to be the foundation of everything we’re doing. Once the language is right it gives you so much musically.”

Sophie Sparrow says that working with amazing coaches from New Zealand and Australia and having language classes every single day was a luxury. “Speaking Italian and French and German with Luca and Jennifer (Marten-Smith) and David (Kelly) – it becomes more and more familiar, and you hear it more. The more you hear it the better you can articulate it.”

A focus of the language training was on recitatives or ‘recits’ – a style of delivery used in operas in which singers adopt the rhythms of ordinary speech, conversing with other performers before and after their arias, duets and quartets. It’s an area of training Dame Malvina says is commonly overlooked but is crucial.

“The aim of this training is to help these singers learn recitatives and their importance in an opera. We want to help ensure their pronunciation – no matter what language the opera is in – is 100% correct.”

New Zealand Opera hosted the training at The Opera Centre in Parnell. General Director Stuart Maunder says New Zealand Opera was pleased to be able to give back to the Dame Malvina Major Foundation which has supported the company over many years. Stuart also provided tutelage in stagecraft as part of the programme and says working on language is all too rare these days.

“The language you’re singing in is one of the main tools you have as a singer. You’re using language to tell a story, so the more you can dissect it, get inside it, the more you’ll bring the music alive.”

For Oriana Kershaw, tutor Helen Medlyn’s sessions exploring how to get into character was a highlight – albeit a tough one.

“Helen got us to think hard about an emotion or event in our lives that could help us create the right emotion for our character. She explained it like a simmering pot with a lid on it – and you can’t let the lid come off. When we were working with Helen I was allowing my emotions to take over and I felt that lid almost come off. But that was OK, because it was all in a learning situation. Then when I was rehearsing for the final performance, my pot was just simmering. It was incredible – not allowing that inner emotion to boil over but being so much closer to feeling everything my character was feeling.

“This course that Dame Malvina Major has created is just phenomenal.”



The Dame Malvina Major Foundation Opera Studies Programme with New Zealand Opera was made possible by funding from Joan Egan and the Greenlea Foundation Trust. If you are interested in backing this programme or other development opportunities for talented young artists, please get in touch.

Tel: 04 384 9745

Email: info@dmmfoundation.org.nz

From left: Filipe Manu, Madison Nonoa, Clinton Fung, Luca Manghi, Jennifer Marten-Smith, Oriana Kershaw, Sophie Sparrow, Katherine McIndoe and David Kelly

Supporting young artists in their communities

Dame Malvina Major Foundation Arts Excellence Awards are just one of the ways the Foundation supports young artists at a grass roots level. Administered by our volunteer regional committees, the awards support young performing artists with a connection to their local community.



In 2017, more than \$21,000 was distributed to five young artists in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch, with more than \$100,000 distributed by the Taranaki committee with support from the TSB Community Trust.

Our regional committees also organise events to provide performance opportunities for young artists and build support for the work of the Foundation.

In May, the Christchurch committee and The Opera Foundation joined together

to host a fundraiser for soprano Anna Leese Guidi and her husband Stefano who has an aggressive form of Motor Neuron Disease. Philip Norman acted as Master of Ceremonies with the Christchurch City Choir and the Opera Club performing

alongside many artists including 13 year-old violinist Justin Hodges, mezzo-soprano Elisabeth Harris and pianist Bradley Wood.

In Wellington in August, more than 100 guests enjoyed a special gala concert in the Grand Hall of Parliament hosted by Hon. Christopher Finlayson. Mezzo soprano Bianca Andrew, soprano Oriana Kershaw and baritones Daniel O'Connor and Ben Reason delivered a wonderful selection of arias, accompanied and introduced by Bruce Greenfield. From Wagner to Sondheim the programme showcased the calibre of the talented singers and highlighted the value of the Dame Malvina Major Foundation supporting the careers of young performers.

The Auckland committee spread its wings in November to organise a fundraiser generously hosted by Willowbrook Park, a beautiful country estate in Hamilton. Sopranos Fiona Tibbles and Chelsea Dolman, bass/baritone Tavis Gravatt, accompanist Kim Naden, violinist Shauno Isomura and piano soloist Kent Isomura performed while guests enjoyed wine and food in the exquisite surroundings.

Above: Dame Malvina Major Foundation Christchurch Arts Excellence Award recipient, conductor Vincent Hardaker

Baritone claims New Zealand Aria win

Baritone Jarvis Dams secured the \$20,000 Dame Malvina Major Foundation first prize at the prestigious New Zealand Aria in Rotorua in October.

Accompanied by the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, the former Dame Malvina Major Foundation Emerging Artist performed Puccini's *Questo Amor* from *Edgar*.

Adjudicator Sharolyn Kimmorley says Jarvis's win came down to a complete performance which included his ability to communicate, suitability of repertoire and performance.

"Aside from the fact his voice sounded fantastic with the orchestra."

A finalist at two previous competitions, Jarvis says he's enjoyed the opportunity to come to the New Zealand Aria through the years and hear everyone develop.

"This competition has supported many great singers going overseas and I am so grateful to have had this opportunity and to the Dame Malvina Major Foundation for supporting this competition and making this a possibility!"



Image: Tony Whitehead



Performers at the Parliament event, from left: Bruce Greenfield, Bianca Andrew, Oriana Kershaw, Daniel O'Connor and Ben Reason

Share the dream

www.dmmfoundation.org.nz



By supporting the work of the Dame Malvina Major Foundation you can help us do more for young talented performers. As a registered charity we rely on and hugely value the support of our donors, sponsors and partners.

Yes, I would like to share the dream

- ☐ I would like to donate \$_____ to the Dame Malvina Major Foundation
- ☐ by cheque (payable to the Dame Malvina Major Foundation)
- ☐ by internet banking (A/C name: The Dame Malvina Major Foundation, A/C number: 06 0594 0077477 00.
Please use your surname as reference. Date deposited: / /)
- ☐ I would like to find out more about making a bequest
- ☐ I would like to discuss supporting a specific programme, scholarship or artist
- ☐ I would like to volunteer for a local committee
- ☐ Please send me updates about the Foundation and invitations to events.

Name _____ Email _____

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Please email your details to info@dmmfoundation.org.nz, phone 04 384 9745, or send this completed form to:
Trust Administrator, The Dame Malvina Major Foundation, PO Box 9976, Wellington 6141.

The Foundation is a registered charity, Charities Commission No. CC10225. Donations qualify for a 33% tax credit and are acknowledged with a receipt.

Grants and prizes 2017

Dame Malvina Major Fellow with New Zealand Opera
Baritone James Harrison

Dame Malvina Major Scholars with New Zealand Opera
Sopranos Eliza Boom and Olivia Sheat; bass-baritone James Henare

Arts Excellence Awards

Auckland: coloratura soprano Clare Hood; flautist Eva Ding

Taranaki with support from the TSB Community Trust:
to many individuals and groups associated with the performing arts

Wellington: composer and violinist Salina Fisher

Christchurch: conductor Vincent Hardaker; concert pianist Bradley Wood

Prizes in vocal competitions

New Zealand Aria, Rotorua, first prize: Jarvis Dams

Dame Malvina Major Foundation Christchurch Aria, first prize: soprano Eliza Boom

Dame Malvina Major Foundation Wellington Aria, first prize: soprano Madison Nonoa

Dame Malvina Major Foundation Dunedin Aria, first prize: soprano Natasha Wilson

Waikato University Aria Competitions (Greenlea Foundation Grants):
first prize: Felicity Tomkins; second prize: Calla Knudson-Hollebon; third prize: Blaire White

Scholarships

Dame Malvina Major Mina Foley Scholarship: tenor Jonathan Abernethy

Sir Howard Morrison Vocal Scholarship: to be awarded 2018

Cecily Maccoll High Achiever Award – Canterbury: flautist Matthew Lee

Alice Cole Piano Scholarship Auckland: Tony Chen

Peter Lees-Jeffries Memorial Scholarship: to be awarded 2018

Patricia Hurley's Masterclasses and Concerts for New Zealand Opera Singers in Italy:
soprano Natasha Wilson and baritone Jonathan Evers (selected as part of the Opera Studies Programme); soprano Marlena Devoe; mezzo soprano Bianca Andrew

Sponsorship from Greenlea Foundation Trust

Dame Malvina Major Foundation Opera Studies Programme: sopranos Oriana Kershaw, Katherine McIndoe, Madison Nonoa and Sophie Sparrow; tenor Filipe Manu and baritone Clinton Fung. Natasha Wilson and Jonathan Evers were given scholarships for Patricia Hurley's Masterclasses and Concerts in Italy.



James Harrison, the Dame Malvina Major Fellow with New Zealand Opera