



# Rhapsody

News from the Dame Malvina Major Foundation



**Dame  
Malvina  
Major  
Foundation**

## A note from Dame Malvina

There is a song, “what a day this has been, what a rare mood I’m in.” I think we could write new words to that tune “what a year this has been, what an awful mess we’re in.”

This year has been one of many disappointments, not just for me personally but for everyone, including audiences and performers. The organisers and entrants in the New Zealand Aria which had to be cancelled at the last minute, the Lexus Song Quest which had to be postponed for another year, New Zealand Opera which has suffered blow after blow. Our regional committees in Auckland/Waikato, Taranaki, Wellington and Christchurch who have had to cancel concerts and fundraisers. And of course the young artists whose training and career plans are in limbo, and the students whose end-of-year performances have been cancelled or performed without audiences. So very disappointing for us all.

And yet there have been silver linings. We were so very privileged to see our talented young DMMF Studio Artists with New Zealand Opera perform at their Parnell studios back in August. It opened my eyes to this year’s students who have not really had a chance to strut their stuff. And thank you to our now retired Governor General The Rt Hon Dame Patsy Reddy and Sir David Gascoigne for allowing us to have

a wonderful concert at Wellington’s Government House that same month. What an amazing performance that was.

We have just recently selected the superbly talented Natasha Te Rupe Wilson for the \$50,000 Dame Malvina Major Award, generously funded by Joan Egan. I’m equally delighted with the appointment of Madeleine Pierard as the inaugural Dame Malvina Major Chair in Opera at the University of Waikato, a position funded by Sir William and Lady Judi Gallagher to develop singers as they begin their careers.

Again, I feel immensely humble to have such a wonderful Foundation – my Trustees, committees around the country and our young artists – and the wonderful loving friends and family I have. I really appreciate your commitment, patience and perseverance during this troubled time.

Wishing you all health and patience, good wishes for a more settled future.

*Image:* Her Excellency, The Right Honourable Dame Patsy Reddy greets Dame Malvina at Government House in Wellington

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# Natasha Te Rupe Wilson wins \$50,000 Dame Malvina Major Award



Image: David Bachman



Natasha Te Rupe Wilson with Simon O'Neill

Auckland soprano Natasha Te Rupe Wilson has been awarded the prestigious \$50,000 Dame Malvina Major Award recognising her “track record, talent, determination and potential”.

The award, established in 2020 and funded by Joan Egan to acknowledge Dame Malvina’s legacy and vision to “share the dream”, supports the career development of talented young opera singers handpicked by the Foundation.

Natasha left New Zealand recently for an audition tour of Europe and plans to base herself in Germany to further develop her career.

The former Dame Malvina Major Foundation Emerging Artist with New Zealand Opera, Natasha completed her studies at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and was a Resident Artist with Pittsburgh Opera before returning home to New Zealand last year due to the pandemic.

She says the award means so much for her career and alleviates the financial strain that a singer in her position faces under normal circumstances, let alone during this pandemic.

“Dame Malvina and her foundation have been supporting me since I began performing in the regional competitions across New Zealand back in 2017. They have created a community of artists who feel like they’re part of a whānau. I’m so honoured to be a part of this community and to be able to put myself forward for the best possible opportunities, thanks to this award.”

Dame Malvina says Natasha has shown the Foundation that she is determined to succeed, a huge plus in these hard times of COVID-19 restrictions.

“I have watched her determined progress over the last few years where she has grown more and more as a genuine performer. Besides having a beautiful voice, she is a serious actress and obviously loves to perform – the stage is her happy place.”

Dame Malvina says Natasha is passionate about what she wants to achieve in the future and shows great love and respect for her art form and cherished Māori heritage.

“I believe it is our duty as a foundation to find and support young people who have a defined and determined idea of where they want to go to reach the pinnacle, and the talent to support their will to do so.”

Last year’s inaugural recipient of the Dame Malvina Major Award, Amitai Pati, says the award has not only been helpful in easing the stress of financially supporting his most recent endeavours, but it has opened the door to opportunities.

“In June, I was able to travel to France to participate in the Festival d’Aix-en-Provence. Not only was I able to perform, but I also made some valuable connections which have led to debuts for the coming years.

“The pandemic has affected us all. It’s been the most challenging time, especially for us involved in the performing arts. COVID has definitely made me realise that we must make the most of our situations and continue to push forward. I will always be grateful to Dame Malvina for her unwavering support.”



Wade Kernot



Joanna Heslop



James Harrison



Amanda Atlas

## DMMF artists paying it forward

**At our Government House 30th anniversary concert in August, MC Wade Kernot spoke with pride of his longstanding connection with the Foundation, since his time as an Emerging Artist in 2004.**

Wade, who is a member of the DMMF Wellington Committee, said it was time for the young artists Dame Malvina and the Foundation had backed to continue its legacy. Indeed, across the country, the Foundation's voluntary committees, who work to support its mission at a grassroots level, are now sprinkled with DMMF artists.

A Voice Lecturer at the New Zealand School of Music – Te Kōkī, Wade said it was a natural progression to join the committee when he was asked last year. "As someone who has received an overwhelming amount of support, I feel a strong responsibility to pay it forward to the next generation."

And his generation, he says, have a responsibility to continue the legacy of the many people who have dedicated the last three decades to building this great New Zealand institution. "Taking the hard earned lessons from the past and being prepared to develop to the ever changing arts environment is going to be key, particularly during these strange times."

Fellow DMMF Wellington Committee member is opera-singer-turned-diplomat Joanna Heslop. Her first connection with Dame Malvina was as a teenager when they both performed the Andrew Lloyd Webber *Pie Jesu* in Taranaki. Joanna went on to become one of the first DMMF Emerging Artists in 2000.

Facing lockdown in Italy last year, Joanna did a lot of thinking about "life, the universe and everything", and realised she needed to get back to the arts in a more deliberate way. Joining the committee on her return to Wellington was part of that,

as well as joining the New Zealand Opera Board. "COVID is a huge trauma for the world, and the arts have a crucial role to play in supporting people and society to be emotionally aware and intellectually curious. So we need to develop our artists and make their mahi accessible to as many people as possible."

In Auckland, James Harrison chairs the local committee for the Auckland and Waikato regions. A DMMF Emerging Artist with Joanna in the first year of the New Zealand Opera programme, James says the Foundation, and Dame Malvina herself, were hugely generous as he was starting out and there are many artists who would say the same.

"I was keen to give back and keep the good work going. It's a very rewarding experience as I get to hear and see the work of so many talented young New Zealanders, all of whom are doing very well in many different parts of the world and across a wide range of disciplines."

Amanda Atlas is also thrilled to use her experience and enthusiasm to help the Foundation help singers and other performers to follow their dreams – as the Foundation helped her.

"I was approached by Anna Midgley, Chair of the DMMF Christchurch Committee, to see if I'd be interested in getting involved, and I jumped at the opportunity! The Foundation has contributed so much to my life and career, and to the careers of so many of my amazing friends and colleagues. I want that to continue for my students and all the young singers who are just starting out."

## DMMF Studio Artists for 2022

**The New Zealand Opera Artist Development Programme, supported by the Dame Malvina Major Foundation for more than 20 years, provides an opportunity for some of New Zealand's most promising young artists to develop their craft within the context of our national opera company.**

The 2022 Dame Malvina Major Foundation Studio Artists are soprano Hannah Ashford-Beck, soprano Katherine Winitana (returning for a second year to continue her professional development) and tenor Emmanuel Fonoti-Fuimaono.

General Director of New Zealand Opera Thomas de Mallet Burgess says New Zealand consistently punches above its weight in producing talented singers who go on to national and international careers. "However, the road to a viable opera career takes years of discipline, mentorship, financial and emotional support. Organisations like the Dame Malvina Major Foundation allow New Zealand Opera to extend professional development to prepare singers for the next step in their careers and we are hugely grateful for their support."

Katherine Winitana



Emmanuel  
Fonoti-Fuimaono



Hannah  
Ashford-Beck

# Sharing the dream in Taranaki

The Dame Malvina Major Foundation has firm roots in the Taranaki region. From the New Plymouth West Rotary Club establishing the Foundation more than thirty years ago, to today's longstanding partnership with the Toi Foundation (formerly the TSB Community Trust), the Foundation's presence in the region has meant many hundreds of young performers have benefitted from much needed financial support over many years.

**Robin Brockie, founding Chair and current Trustee of the Dame Malvina Major Foundation, and current Chair of the Taranaki Committee, shares the history of the committee and its impact.**

Since its establishment in 2009 the DMMF Taranaki committee has been on an amazing journey. The committee was initiated by a conversation between then Chair of the TSB Community Trust, Colleen Tuuta, and Dame Malvina about helping curate and administer grant applications from Taranaki students training in the performing arts.

The first task was to establish the committee and all the founding members agreed without hesitation. They were a formidable diverse group of talented and well-connected people who possessed a deep knowledge of teaching and performing arts across the region.

We made the first rounds of grants (two per annum) between 2009–2010 and annually after that. Today, at any one time, the committee will have a cohort of up to 150 students we are supporting. We are proud of our accomplishments over many

years, directly supporting the development of in excess of 800 students and indirectly many more individuals and groups. The committee's work has contributed immensely to the strength of the fabric of performing arts across the Taranaki region and beyond. Many of our students have gone on to national and international roles in their chosen fields including giving back to the community that supported them, through performance and teaching and mentoring their successors.

Without the support of the Toi Foundation, the committee's work would not have been the success it has. There have also been many other individuals and businesses that have made invaluable contributions to our work. They know who they are and our 'amazing journey' would have been more challenging without their contribution – thank you.

## Celebrating 30 years

Despite COVID-19 disrupting 30th anniversary events across the country, we were privileged to bring together Dame Malvina, artists, trustees and supporters at a very special concert hosted by The Rt Hon Dame Patsy Reddy Governor-General of New Zealand and Sir David Gascoigne at Government House in Wellington in August.

Dame Patsy shared a favourite whakatoki, 'He toi whakairo, he mana tangata – Where there is artistic excellence, there is human dignity' and noted this is something that Dame Malvina Major clearly understands.

"Malvina, I thank you for all you have done for opera in Aotearoa New Zealand, not only through the stellar example you've set through your very long singing career, but also your commitment and encouragement of younger artists - the true marker of success. You've always understood the struggle and sacrifice required to get to the pinnacle of your art and for 30 years, your Foundation has supported some of our best and brightest to navigate their way through those challenges."



Images: Neil O'Styke



## Silver linings for local ballet dancer

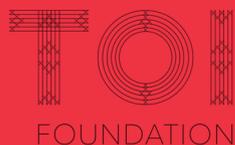
Ballet dancer Sophie Sheaf-Morrison grew up in rural North Taranaki, but in recent years, has travelled around the world and across New Zealand for her art.

Like many other aspiring dancers, COVID-19 has affected her performing arts journey and expectations, forcing her to reluctantly return home only part way through her first year at the Alberta Ballet School in Calgary, Canada. Fortunately, the 16-year-old was accepted into the Chilton Ballet Academy in Lower Hutt halfway through 2020, and received funding through a DMMF Taranaki Arts Excellence Award towards her tuition fees.

“This experience has made me a strong believer in silver linings as I am now not only closer to my home, but I have found another family at the Chilton Ballet Academy and I have progressed immensely because of them. COVID has tested my resilience and adaptability, although I feel stronger because of it.”

Sophie’s aspirations are to continue ballet and dance training in a full-time training institute with the goal of a career in the dance industry. “It is my dream to travel to pursue a position in a professional ballet company. However, if COVID has taught me anything, it is to continue working hard towards these goals with an open mindset for what the future holds.”

Sophie Sheaf Morrison. Image: Lisa Taylor Photography



*“Toi Foundation (previously TSB Community Trust) has had a long history with the Dame Malvina Major Foundation granting over \$1m to support Taranaki youth who are pursuing the extension of their education in the performing arts. Toi Foundation through its strengthening communities fund is committed to increasing people’s ability to access and participate in opportunities that meet their needs and aspirations. The Taranaki region has a strong reputation of a thriving arts scene and we continue to see this grow each year across a diverse range of mediums.”*

Maria Ramsay, Chief Executive, Toi Foundation

## Organist wins award in Maxwell Fernie’s name



Organist William McElwee is the recipient of the Maxwell Fernie Dame Malvina Major Foundation Award. The award honours the memory of acclaimed New Zealand organist, conductor and teacher, Maxwell Fernie, who died in 1999.

The Dame Malvina Major Foundation recently took over management of the Maxwell Fernie Trust and will make annual awards, in consultation with Maxwell’s widow Greta Fernie, to support young keyboard artists to further their education or training in the organ.

Dame Malvina says it is a privilege for the Dame Malvina Major Foundation to be able to recognise Maxwell Fernie’s legacy and to manage the Trust in his name. “Supporting the development of young performing artists is the purpose of the Dame Malvina Major Foundation, so we are well positioned to carefully and thoughtfully manage scholarships and named bequests or donations that support the performing arts on behalf of other trusts and individuals.”

Maxwell Fernie, St Mary of the Angels, Wellington, 1986

# Grants and prizes 2021

**Dame Malvina Major Award 2021 sponsored by Joan Egan:** soprano Natasha Te Rupe Wilson

**Dame Malvina Major Foundation Studio Artists with New Zealand Opera 2021:**

soprano Katherine Winitana, mezzo-soprano Katie Trigg, baritone Samuel Downes, pianist Ben Kubiak

## Arts Excellence Awards

**Auckland/Waikato:** soprano Felicity Tomkins, tenor Harry Grigg, pianist Shuan Liu

**Taranaki with support from the Toi Foundation:** many individuals and groups associated with the performing arts

**Wellington:** violinist Claudia Tarrant-Matthews, cellist Lavinnia Rae, composer Reuben Jelleyman (High Achiever Award)

**Christchurch:** pianist Siyu Sun

## Prizes in vocal competitions

**Dame Malvina Major Foundation Christchurch Aria first prize:** soprano Erica Paterson

**Dame Malvina Major Foundation Waikato Conservatorium of Music Aria (Greenlea Foundation Trust):** first prize tenor Emmanuel Fonoti-Fuimaono and baritone Alfred Fonoti-Fuimaono, third prize tenor Jordan Fonoti-Fuimaono

## Scholarships and grants

**Ryman Healthcare DMMF Mina Foley Award:** mezzo soprano Bianca Andrew

**Peter Lees-Jeffries Memorial Scholarship:** director Antonia Kamu

**Maxwell Fernie Dame Malvina Major Foundation Award:** William McElwee

**Cecily Maccoll High Achiever Award Canterbury:** violinist Rose Light

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Joan Egan

## Share the dream

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