



TE PAE KŌKAKO
TANZOS

THE AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND OPERA STUDIO

2024
REPORT
JAN-JULY

JASMINE JESSEN

2024 REPORT JANUARY-JULY

JANUARY

New Zealand Opera School

FEBRUARY

Nicolas Tarling Competition

MARCH

Oriental week

Caitlin Hulcup and Caroline Dowdle
Napier Aria Competition

APRIL

TANZOS lunchtime concert

MAY

Manase Latu masterclass
Cathedral fundraiser

JUNE

Becroft aria competition
Recital season
Winter Warmers Concert

JULY

Opera Australia Residency



JANUARY

2024 began with two weeks in Whanganui attending the New Zealand Opera School. This was a great way to prepare for my studies with TANZOS. I enjoyed the range of tutors such as Glen, Sharolyn, Bruce and Luca. I especially enjoyed my first few sessions with Nikki Li Hartliep. We spent time working on my lower range and learning a new aria "Comme autre fois" from Bizet's Pearl fishers which I was assigned during the first week. As a TANZOS artist I sang in a lunchtime concert at the Whanganui Regional Museum and a Freemasons Foundation concert at the Masonic Court Rest Home and Village. My highlight was performing in the Greatest Opera Moments at the end of the NZOS.

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/whanganui-chronicle/news/review-students-and-whanganui-regional-museum-acoustics-shine-at-nz-opera-school-recital/XX3RN22RBFB6NHNSEBQHK6IDH4/>

FEBRUARY

In February I competed as a finalist in the Nicolas Tarling aria competition in Auckland. I performed "Comme autre fois" from Bizet's Pearl fishers. A few weeks later I moved to Hamilton from Wellington.



MARCH

Orientation week was a nice way to begin TANZOS, I learned about what was involved in the program and what was expected of me. During the week we had the opportunity to get professional headshots taken. This was especially exciting for me since I've never had professional headshots taken before. I really enjoyed dressing up and the photographer who helped me with the poses and angles to stand in. At the end of orientation week we had a concert in the playhouse theatre where the new cohort sang one aria each accompanied by David Harper. I was able to meet some of the tutors, supporters and sponsors for TANZOS.

In the second week of TANZOS we had two remarkable guest tutors, Caitlin Hulcup and Caroline Dowdle. Caitlin helped with adding meaning and emotion into my arias and had some exercises to keep airflow going (pretending to walk on moon with legs and pretending to do breath stroke with the arms). Caitlin also helped with my breath flow by using visual aids, like pulling my hand over a scarf while I sang a long phrase.



MARCH (CONTINUED)

Caroline Dowdle was an excellent coach, I especially enjoyed the sessions where Caroline and Caitlin were working together. Caroline had extensive knowledge in the phrasing, language and finding the stresses in the text. Caroline encouraged me to look at the text and find the stresses and which words the phrase leads to. She had a couple different exercises to get this into the body like stamping, bouncing a ball or clapping the hands on the stress of the text. This helped with making the meaning of the the text clearer.

NAPIER ARIA COMPETITION

At the end of March I performed in the Napier aria competition. I enjoyed having another opportunity to perform and try out some new techniques. I sang “Comme autrefois” for the aria prelims, which Nikki and I later decided to put on pause so I could focus on a new technical approach in new repertoire.



APRIL

April was a great month to focus on my technique with Nikki. We spent a lot of time figuring out what repertoire and roles are best suited for my voice at this stage. We decided to drop a lot of the repertoire I've been singing recently, but we also brought back some old pieces as well as choosing a few new works.

TANZOS LUNCHTIME CONCERT

The TANZOS lunchtime concert was a great opportunity to present my improving technique in a performance setting. In the concert I sang "Presentation of the rose" from Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* which is a piece we refreshed, but now had a new approach to the high notes. I also performed "Tornami a dir che mami" from Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* with Jordan Fonoti-Fuimaono. This was the first time I had performed this duet, it was really wonderful to sing it with one of my new colleagues at TANZOS. We also performed the TANZOS waiata for the first time, 'Wai o te Rangi', written by Katherine Winitana.



MAY

In May I was focusing on the repertoire and preparation for my first TANZOS Masters recital. We had the opportunity to have a Masterclass with Manase Latu - He was really lovely to work with and had some great acting tips!

CATHEDRAL FUNDRAISER

I volunteered to sing in a Fundraising concert to save the St Peter's Cathedral since this is important to many people in the Waikato Region, and to Dame Malvina. I learned new repertoire for this concert, Mozart's "Laudamus te" (in two weeks) and Faure's "Pie jesu". I was proud of learning the difficult Mozart so quickly and look forward to continuing work on it.

NZ MUSIC MONTH - OPERA IN THE STRAND

This event was in collaboration with the New Zealand Opera School to celebrate the NZ music month. It was held in Auckland at the Strand Arcade on Thursday 30th May. This concert was free to the public and anyone who walked by could listen. It was a great way to make opera more accessible.

<https://ourauckland.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/news/2024/04/opera-set-to-soar-from-strand-arcade-bridges-in-free-concert/>



JUNE

NORTH SHORE ARIA COMPETITION

June began with the North Shore aria competition. I entered in a number of classes which included new repertoire in my recital. I placed 3rd in the recital class and was a finalist for the aria.

RECITAL SEASON

Overall I was very proud of how my recital went. I had never performed a recital of that duration and I felt that my stamina kept me going. It was enjoyable to collaborate with Catherine Norton, she is a terrific musician. I especially enjoyed the romantic Rachmanoff pieces, I felt confident with the Russian language after working on it with Yelena Kurdina. It was also special to be able to perform my new arias, including “O mio babbino caro” (*Gianni Schicchi* - Puccini) and “Ain’t it a pretty night” (*Susannah* - Floyd). It was great that the recital was live-streamed so my friends and family could watch and support from their homes. I also had the pleasure of performing in both Jordan and Sam’s TANZOS recitals.

WINTER WARMERS CONCERT

The Winter Warmers concert was a gala to showcase what we’d worked on during the first half of the year. The programme contained a wide range of pieces and styles. I sang arias, duets and some ensembles and we the concert with the TANZOS Waiata, ‘Wai o te Rangi’



JULY - SYDNEY

The TANZOS residency with Opera Australia was very inspirational and a truly great learning experience. I am deeply grateful to have been given this once-in-a-lifetime experience to learn about the craft of opera. Everyone was so friendly and welcoming at Opera Australia and they treated us as “young artists” rather than “students” which was really affirming.

Day one was very busy, we with a tour of the Opera Australia headquarters at The Opera Centre in Surry Hills, Sydney. The tour started in the costume and wig department downstairs. It was impressive to see the craftsmanship for the handmade costumes and the wigs. Afterwards we went upstairs to see the many different rehearsal spaces and had a talk by Shaun Rennie who is the director for *Gianni Schicchi*. He gave us insight into his journey from an actor to a director and his comedic concept for the opera. Isabella Sampson spoke to us about the Opera chorus. You can audition and either get contracts for opera or have a year contract as an opera chorus, working on multiple productions at a time. Going through the Opera Chorus can be a way to cover roles, feature with small roles then progress to lead roles. People from the PR team spoke to us about using social media to represent yourself and had some interview tips like steering the interview to for things you want to mention. In the afternoon we went to the Sydney Opera House and had a tour of backstage and the dressing rooms.

JULY - SYDNEY

Within the two weeks we had a number of coachings. I especially enjoyed the sessions with Donna Balson - she helped greatly with the diction and shaping of my pieces. Brian-Castles Onion also had some great suggestions, like making sure to show off what I'm good at in everything I sing. Jonathan Wilson ran through some pieces with me and helped with some tuning issues. Nicola Dorigo has extensive knowledge on Italian diction and gave us useful tips to put towards our Italian arias. Con Costi who was the director of their current production of *Il Tabarro* helped with the acting journey for my aria "Ain't it a pretty night". Denni Sayer who is a movement director delivered a session on awareness of our movements when we perform. She also gave us some useful exercises on how to gain strength in our knees - which do get a hammering in this profession! We met with the Opera Australia CEO Fiona Allan, she spoke to us about her connection to New Zealand and how she wants to support young artists like ourselves. I had a session with Alex who taught me about stage makeup and how to wear a wig. We watched a number of rehearsals and performance's including Brett Dean's "Hamlet", Puccini's "Il Trittico", Puccini's "Tosca" and Mozart's "Così fan tutte". I especially enjoyed the pit and perch for *Tosca*, I've never watched an opera from that perspective.

One of my highlights was getting to sing the Joan Sutherland Theatre stage. The acoustics were really nice and it was incredible to hear myself in a large and well known Opera house like this one. It was also special - and quite emotional - to sing the TANZOS waiata on the stage.

On the final day we had a mock audition for Opera Australia. This a great opportunity to sing in front of the panel which was Paul Fitzsimon (Chorus Master)/Michael Curtain (Asst. Chorus Master), Johannes Fritzsich (Conductor - *Tosca*) and Danielle Maas (Opera Director). Although it was nervewracking I was really proud of my effort. We had a talk with the panel after, we discussed how to deal with nerves and how important it is to use your imagination to create a scene when you are performing. Overall I learned a lot from the company, and I am so grateful for their generosity of spirit and the enthusiasm of their welcome.

TANZOS

This programme is exactly what I need to prepare myself for professional work and overseas studies. The weeks are busy but full of variation which I enjoy. Every two weeks we are given a class schedule which can include:

Weekly sessions with Nikki Li Hartliep
Coaching sessions with David Harper
German language class
Stagecraft with various directors
Musical context (theory, repertoire, musicianship)

Diction class (Italian, French, German, Russian)
Yoga
Personal Trainer session
Piano/musicianship sessions



NIKKI LI HARTLIEP

I am extremely grateful for my teacher Nikki Li Hartliep. The progress she has helped me make is amazing. She has helped me feel more confident in my voice and performance ability. I am more certain of the type of voice and repertoire that I suit. I look forward to continuing the progress with Nikki. Especially with new repertoire for my next recital and my role studies: Pamina in Mozart's "The Magic Flute", Nannetta in Verdi's "Falstaff" and Norina in Donizetti's "Don Pasquale"

WHATS NEXT

2024

9th of August: Auckland Opera Studio concert

16-18th August: Wellington aria competition

8th September: Roderick Williams Masterclass

12-14 August: Dunedin aria competition

31st October-2nd November: New Zealand Lockwood aria competition

19th November: Jasmine's trimester B recital

23rd November: End of year concert

2025

5th-19th January: New Zealand Opera School
