



Katherine Winitana

2023
Update



ĒHARA TĀKU TOA I TE TOA TAKITAHĪ. ÉNGARI HE TOA TAKITINI
-MY STRENGTH IS NOT THE WORK OF ONE. BUT THE WORK OF MANY-

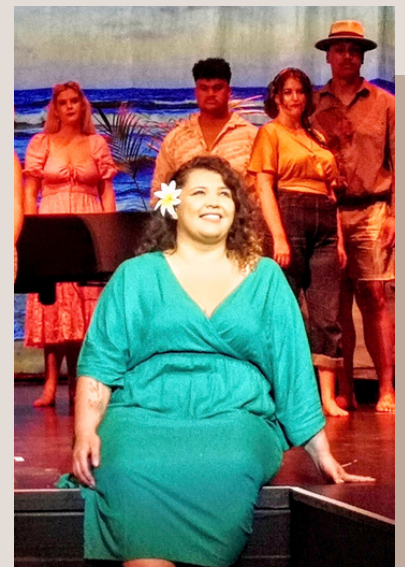
NZ Opera School

The year kicked off at the New Zealand Opera School, and as the border was open we were able to have international tutors again. This year international tutors were Prof. Russell Smyth, who had a career for over 40 years and now teaches at the Royal College of Music in London, Prof. Richard Jackson who teaches at the Royal College of Music and Guild Hall, and Sharolyn Kimmorley, one of the finest vocal coaches and accompanists in Australia.

As usual, Opera Schools' intensive vocal, language, movement, and acting training was challenging. One of the challenges that I loved most was learning some of the music from Handels' Solomon and work on it with Richard. The immense detail he found in every phrase, even those that I was not singing. For someone like me who loves to tell stories, working with someone like Richard who has got it down to a fine art, was a dream. If you missed the performance of the Solomon here is the link to the live stream on the NZOS Facebook page.

<https://fb.watch/I3RiwLkoQV/>

In the final showcase, I sang Chi il bel Sogno. This song came with challenges of its own and just to make it a bit more fun and challenging I sang it seated on the edge of the stage. In the photo I was smiling but it felt slightly different to what the picture shows. I am always grateful to be a part of NZOS and I know that the intensity of the programme has helped me prepare for the challenges that the industry has and will throw my way.





Die Zauberflöte – Festival Opera/Project Prima Volta

This year I was offered the role of Papagena with Festival Operas' second attempt at Magic Flute (first time cancelled due to Covid) and I LOVED becoming her. When learning the role I was so nervous about the dialogue. I would much rather sing then have to speak. After a bit of mucking around with silly 'witchy' voices I ended up loving it. The stage production had a theme of fairytale creatures and Papagena was initially a witch and was later revealed to be Little Red Riding Hood.

On top of being on stage, I was honoured to assist our amazing Stage Director again, John Wilkie. I am always blown away at how John can create a beautiful marriage to what is happening on stage and what is to come from the pit.

As we were gearing up for our final dress rehearsal we got the warning about Cyclone Gabriel. Unfortunately we were unable to put the show on again. My heart goes out to the company and the students who were robbed of what I know would have been a life changing opportunity yet again. I was extremely lucky to not have been effected too badly and I am glad that I was able to go stay with my Nan and be with her during that time. It is unbelievable the damage that just one night of intense rain could cause.



Inaugural Nicholas Tarling Aria Competition

Emmanuel and I traveled up to Auckland on what would have been the day after our final Magic Flute Performance for the brand-new aria competition in Manukau. I sang Chi il bel Sogno and Song to the Moon. I was lucky enough to take out joint first place with Emmanuel. As part of the first-place prize, we were welcomed back to sing in a Concert with Manukau Symphony Orchestra.. The orchestra is made up of a mix of professional, students and community musicians whose ages range from 12-80. They have such a beautiful energy and I Loved being able to sing with them. Click [here](#) to see the performance.



Becroft, North Shore Aria Competition

The competition was a nice opportunity to catch up with amazing singers from around the country. As opposed to the Tarling competition, North Shore has more classes than just the Aria Class. I entered the Oratorio class with Let the Bright Seraphim and the recital class with Summertime, Morgen and It never was you. I ended up taking out first in the Oratorio class and second in the recital class. The Aria was a clean sweep for TANZOS I was fortunate to take out first (on my own this time). Cecelia second and Emmanuel third.





TANZOS – The Aotearoa New Zealand Opera Studio

It is hard to believe that I have only spent 5 months in The Aotearoa New Zealand Opera Studio Masters Programme at Waikato University. The reason it is hard to believe is because of the number of amazing things that we have done, the people we have worked with, and what we have learned in such a short time frame

Every two weeks we are given a class schedule which will have:

- Weekly Lessons with Our Teachers
- Coachings a few times a week
- Language Classes
- 1on1 German language
- Movement/Dance Classes
- Stagecraft Sessions
- Recit Class
- Yoga
- Song Class
- Public Masterclasses
- Oratorio Class

And this is just our week to week, this does not even come close to encapsulating the entire experience. If you would like to read more up on the programme [here](#) is the link to the TANZOS website



An exciting highlight for me was having Sir Simon Keenlyside (international Baritone) and his amazing wife Zenaïda Yanowksy (Former Principle Ballet dancer with the Royal Ballet in London) teach us earlier in the year. We did two public masterclasses and an individual lesson with Sir Simon and we had a movement class with Zenaïda which I thought was fascinating. Here is a picture of us all with them and their beautiful children and also a picture from the movement class that I am quite proud of where I am doing the splits for a World class ballerina and she seems pretty impressed hah!



Something that I learned from them both that I will keep with me is that you are and always will be a human first. In both their art forms a lot of the time people often get so tied up in making sure that everything is perfect and forget that sometimes what is really beautiful is the imperfections that come with being human.

Of course the biggest highlight so far has to be our recent trip across the ditch. On the 13th of June we all boarded on an airplane and left Aotearoa, some of us for the first time ever! The amount of pinch-me moments were too many to count.

On our first day we got straight to it with a tour of the Opera Australia Studio, a group language lesson, a group repertoire lesson, individual coachings, and then we went to the Sydney Opera house! I managed to document some of day one and have linked the video [here](#) if you'd like to see it. I couldn't keep up with filming every day as there were way too many exciting things happening and I preferred being in the moment.

Katherine Wiles, a Kiwi Soprano who is now employed full-time as a chorus member with Opera Australia, took us on the tours. She shared some amazing stories and insights, told us what famous people had been in the room we were standing in, and even showed us the dressing room that used to be Joan Sutherlands and is now the main Divas Dressing room for SOH. The part of the tour that had me absolutely stunned was when we were taken onto the Joan Sutherland Theatre stage. I felt extremely emotional walking onto that stage and could feel the mana of those who had previously been on it. We were then told that this is the stage that we would be auditioning on in a week's time and all those feelings went away and were replaced with some nerves.

For some time I have had my eye on the Ryan Opera Programme at the Lyric Opera in Chicago and it was great to meet and also be coached by their Chorus Director and Head of Music, Michael Black. What was valuable about working with him was that I got a great insight into what the expectation is for artists in the Ryan Opera programme and he was able to share what work needs to be done for me to feel confident about auditioning for them.

We also had individual sessions with Glenn Windslade, whom I actually met in my first year at Opera School when he was one of the international tutors in 2020. I LOVE working with Glenn, he is such an amazing vocal technician and I came away with lots of vocal exercises to help with keeping the instrument safe and healthy.

We were welcomed to watch the final rehearsals, the dress rehearsal, and one performance of Aida and my goodness my mind was blown. The staging was incredible, the chorus was so tight and polished, and the singing (chefs kiss)

As well as Aida, we were invited to pit and perch. Two of us would go to one of the performances of Rigoletto, one would sit in the Orchestra pit and the other on the perch which is the platform side of stage. During the interval, we would alternate. I absolutely loved being in the pit, I was initially disappointed that I was in the pit for the first half because I wanted to listen to *Caro Nome* but watching the conductor during this was an indescribable experience. There were moments where he was in absolute control and then she took over and so on and so on and it just seemed like such a beautiful and fun game, something that I hope I can do one day.

I think my favourite person I worked with whilst there was Brian Castles-Onion. Honestly, I just had fun! I mean essentially that's what I always want to do but get so caught up in ticking boxes, but I just really enjoyed his approaches to certain things and I felt at ease whilst working with him.

And of course, there was the audition, the moment we sang on that amazing yet daunting stage. Yes, it was scary and yes it didn't go perfectly BUT! I walked out there and they asked for my Puccini aria and luckily it has a bit of an introduction because as I looked out across that empty ginormous auditorium something hit me. I was standing on a stage where some of the greatest singers in the world had sung and I was about to sing there as well, it was quite surreal.

I think the thing that stuck out for me whilst on this trip was that I'm doing ok! I intend to meet more amazing people learn from more people and sing on lots of crazy cool stages but I'm doing ok. For the voice type that I have it takes time, it takes nurturing from the right people and it takes dedication. I have time, I didn't think I did when I was in New Zealand but apparently, 32 in this industry is considered still a baby so at 25 I must be a fetus. I have supportive nurturing people around me who are setting me on the right track and I am sure as heck dedicated to this. Sure there have been moments where it all seems daunting, like being on the Joan Sutherland Theatre stage but I don't want to be anywhere else and I don't want to do anything else.

Sydney Opera House



Whats up next?



July 15th

NZOS Winter Gala Concert

TANZOS are heading to Whanganui to perform for the Gala Concert hosted by New Zealand Opera School. A perfect reason to get dressed up for some delicious food and even more delicious entertainment.

July 29th

ALOFA & Katarina Concert

We are finally coming home and we can't wait to share and perform for our nearest and dearest for a concert at the Blyth Theatre, Iona College. A perfect ease in for newcomers to Opera with a mix of Opera, Music Theatre and songs close to our hearts.

Aug 18th

AOS - TANZOS

Auckland Opera Studio has invited us TANZOS students to present an evening of song and Opera.

Sep 15th

NZSO and FO, Magic Flute

After the devastating cancellation of Festival Operas' Magic Flute, New Zealand Symphony Orchestra are putting together a condensed version of the Opera featuring the graduates of Project Prima Volta as some of the soloists. All proceeds go to Festival Opera in helping them continue their journey in bringing young people into the world of Opera. The event will take place in the Napier Municipal Theatre

Oct 5th

Katherine Winitana

Solo Recital

This will be my second recital assessment for the Masters's Programme and it will be held at the Gallagher Academy of Performing Arts.



Nikki Li Hartliep

I also can't go without crediting my amazing teacher. Nikki Li and I have been working together since October last year and the progress that I have made since then has been quite amazing. I feel so much more confident and also just feel like things are a lot clearer in regards to where my voice is at and where it is heading. Something that I am grateful for is her immense positivity. I can be quite a nit-picky perfectionist sometimes and often forget to enjoy the moments worth enjoying, she helps me remember that and remember that I am allowed to love the sound that I am making! We are working intensely through the TANZOS programme and for the next few months focusing on my three roles. Once my year in the programme is completed I plan to still work with Nikki Li and prepare for auditions for young artist programmes in the USA.

Roles

Michaëla - Carmen - Bizet

Leonora - Il Trovatore - Verdi

Countess - Le nozze di Figaro - Mozart