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MID-YEAR REPORT

TE PAE KŌKAKO: THE AOTEAROA
NEW ZEALAND OPERA STUDIO



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BY :

RIDGE PONINI

TANZOS ARTIST 2024-25



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NEW ZEALAND OPERA SCHOOL

What better way to start the singing year off with a BANG!!! I have been blessed to have attend the prestigious New Zealand Opera school which was held for two weeks in January over the summer break. To have the opportunity to be amongst the 21 singers chosen was a very special experience, and it was the perfect preparation to build stamina for the even more intense work at Te Pae Kōkako TANZOS.



During these two weeks, I was mostly excited to be working with the two phenomenal voice teachers, soprano Nikki-Li Hartliep and tenor Glenn Winslade. My sessions with them were the highlight of my time there as the change and confidence I had over the brief period grew immensely and after each of their sessions I left very satisfied. There is so much more to be said about the school and the amazing staff and coaches who fed us with a great wealth of knowledge and inspiring many of us who attended. Because there was a shortage of tenors in the programme, I had to step up and fill in the main tenor roles for ensemble work in the chapel service, public recitals, and the final concert. This was an opportunity to work under pressure and out of my comfort zone. I got a taste of what it will be like in the professional world, and I am happy to say that it was successful in the end.

In the final concert I got to sing the aria “Addio Fiorito asil” from the Opera *Madame Butterfly*, by Giacomo Puccini. This aria comes with its challenges and triumphs and with the help of the tutors i got through it haha.

Ending the amazing two weeks I was extremely fortunate to be awarded the New Zealand Opera School Dame Sister Mary Leo Foundation Scholarship, and The Bryan Wyness Spirit of the Opera School. This award was a testament to the arduous work I put in and a reminder of how far I have come in my journey.

Here is a link to the New Zealand Opera School website and catch up on all the news and updates from the two weeks and upcoming events.

<http://www.operaschool.org.nz>



CONCERTS - AOS & NZO

AUCKLAND OPERA STUDIO & NEW ZEALAND OPERA

Straight from Opera school, I was so grateful to be given the opportunities to showcase my talent to our audiences who love and support Opera. I was blessed to perform in New Zealand Operas, Opera in the Park which was held over two consecutive weekends. After that I was in full preparations for Auckland Opera Studios picnic back-to-back concerts which was held in Queenstown and finished in Matakana the weekend after. The highlight of these performances was being able to perform with my colleagues and gaining more stage presence. I also had the chance to promote my culture through Opera singing traditional Cook Island hymns and folk songs was very emotional for me. And lastly I thoroughly enjoyed creating relationships which is extremely important for this career and it goes a long way.



DAYS BAY OPERA

I am still pinching myself to think I played the leading role of Alexander the Great in Mozart's opera *Il Rè Pastore* performed in English, with Days Bay Opera. The role I found to be quite interesting and learnt so much from it. Mozart had written this opera at an early age, so the complexity of the music, which displayed his comparative lack of experience writing for the voice, was particularly challenging. There was a lot of challenging coloratura (elaborate embellishment in vocal music) passages, especially in the arias. I struggled with the music so much, but it was a challenge I welcomed and enjoyed getting through it. I had so much fun playing this role especially portraying the egotistic qualities Alexander displayed amongst his subjects and felt so powerful through the lens of this character. This was the best role I have done so far, and I am looking forward to more of these experiences in the future.



TANZOS

TE PAE KŌKAKO: THE AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND OPERA STUDIO

After such a busy start to the year, I was ready to settle into the start of the TANZOS programme. It has already been five months since being a part of this amazing program and I might add a lot has changed with my progress, and every week little by little I gain more confidence in myself. This program has been the best thing that has happened to me, if you had asked me 5 years ago where I would see myself, it most definitely would not be doing a master's in advanced Opera studies. I wake up everyday feeling grateful that this has happened to me. I get to do what I love and be better at it, what more could you ask for.

Our weeks consist of the following activities:

- STAGECRAFT
- LESSONS WITH NIKKI LI HARTLIEP TWICE A WEEK
- LANGUAGE CLASS, GERMAN, AND FRENCH
- YOGA
- FITNESS CLASS
- PIANO AND SCORE LEARNING SESSIONS
- MUSICAL CONTEXT - THEORY CLASS
- FORTNIGHTLY COACHING WITH DAVID HARPER
- RECIT/STYLE/DICTION CLASS
- PUBLIC MASTERCLASSES/VOICE CLASS
- RESILIENCE TRAINING



MASTERCLASS

There have been great highlights that I have experienced with Tanzos and one of them was working with incredible coaches and artist from overseas through Masterclasses.

The **first** guest we got to work with was the wonderful international Mezzo-soprano Caitlin Hulcup who had so much to offer and was very generous with her time. From my session with Caitlin, we worked on support and space as this has been something I have struggled with a lot. She offered so many great suggestions to help me engage and understand the full ability of how the body supports our sound in performance. She was so passionate and engaging with her methods and gave you a boost of confidence when things were not going the way you plan in the lesson, making you feel comfortable with your mistakes. There was so much I took away from her Masterclass and so much more to say, but to think how lucky we are to have had a private lesson as well as a Masterclass slot with a genius. I really enjoyed her energy it was so infectious and warm.



The **second** guest to grace us with her bag of tricks was Caroline Dowdle who is a highly-in-demand coach in the UK and Europe - someone important to know! Caroline again was stupendous during our private sessions and during the masterclass. There was so much she offered and each time I did not understand what she wanted me to do, she always had another way of explaining things to make it make sense. What I took away out from my sessions with Caroline was keeping the voice in the same position without changing, the importance of language and support in the body and importantly finding the different resonators in the face. The one exercise I disliked was the lunge pose on high notes hahaha, though this position was working wonders. I loved her method of teaching which was through games so that the lessons became fun and enjoyable it and keeps you wanting more, and she gives you more.



The **third** guest is someone I have looked up to for some time now, the incredible tenor Manase Latu who has recently just returned from New York completing a three-year young artist program with the Metropolitan Opera house. This Masterclass was by far the most challenging, not in the fact that it was with him but because I chose to sing the most difficult aria from my repertoire list. I sang *Salut Demeure chaste e Pure* from the Opera *Faust*, and the climax of this piece is a top c and of course in front of a live audience my nerves got the best of me, which left me to be unsuccessful to sing the top c. Manase's guidance through the piece was so helpful, we worked on phrasing of the text, legato singing, and taking a step back as he said I was working way too hard.

I struggle to know the balance of when I over sing or under sing, but through TANZOS I have discovered these faults and now finding the balance between the two. Manase was very gentle with what he needed from me, and his idea of singing is everything is a straight line nothing above or below. This concept helped me especially with my approach for high notes as these were exposed in the masterclass. I really enjoyed my experience and learnt so much leaving the stage feeling grateful with new sets of tools in my bag to play around with.

RECITALS

When you are so busy being caught up in refining and honing your voice you forget that you must display this through performance. I love working with my TANZOS colleagues and to perform with them is even more special. As a group we performed our first lunch time recital, and it was such a blast. Because it was the very first time I had perform in a while I was incredibly nervous but trusted that my times in the practise rooms prepared me enough for this moment. The performance was a success and we all enjoyed it and so did our audience.

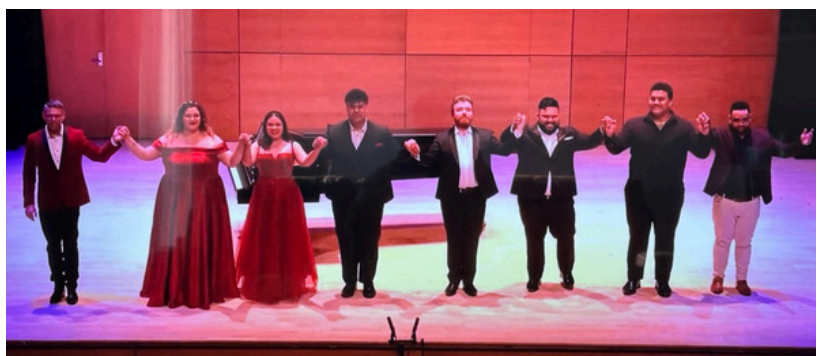


In June I had my first solo recital which you can find still up on the TANZOS YouTube channel which I will provide link below. I was so proud of how it went and the improvement in my voice within in a brief period was clear to everyone who attended and watched through the live stream. When performing a solo recital, there are so many factors you need to take in to account. These factors were quite overwhelming, but the support I had helped me face these challenges with ease. I could not have done it without the support of my teacher and my singing colleagues. I sang repertoire I love and adore, and my programme had classy and fun elements to it making it enjoyable. My first experience for my solo recital was the best and I cannot wait to perform in my next solo recital at the end of the year.

Solo Recital YouTube link:

<https://www.youtube.com/live/F65frJqynQ8>

Our most recent recital was the gala concert, 'Winter Warmers', the weekend before Matariki. By now we have had so much stage experience and exposure and each time we perform, we would leave learning something new about ourselves. I sang newer repertoire to push myself and out of my comfort zone because you never know until you try. In the setting of a recital, you want to do your best but also challenge yourself and you get better at it each time you perform, that is how I felt after this recital. Again, I was still so nervous because you do not know what is going to happen and the thought of that terrifies me but thank God I pulled through.



SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

Amongst all the highlights I have experienced during my time with TANZOS this has been the most valuable and mind-blowing experience, one I will forever cherish.



The first day we toured the Opera Australia centre, my jaw dropped the whole tour and it's exactly what you would expect when you enter a professional working space, it was meticulous and complex. There was space for everything, coaching rooms, multiple rehearsal rooms, costume station, a space to build the sets, it was sooo good. We thought we seen it all but that was only the surface, there was so much more to see and experience.

We were introduced to some particularly important people from the different departments within the company. They covered important topics such as their experience working for an Opera company, the role of a chorus manager, the role of a director, salary income as a chorus member and marketing and self promotion skills. The first day was so full on and we ended the night touring the incredible Sydney Opera house where the magic happens, and I was speechless at this point. You see so much of the Opera house on television, so experience it in person was a wholesome experience. The night only got much sweeter when we attended the dress rehearsal; for *Il Trittico* which is a collection of three one-act operas by Giacomo Puccini.

For the next few days, we sat in and watched rehearsals for the opera *Hamlet* by Brett Dean, and we got to meet some of our heroes. Allan Clayton who played the role of Hamlet has been a tenor I have been admiring on you tube and to see him in the flesh was the topping of the cake for me. I was mostly fascinated at the flow of things which seemed so chaotic to me. There were five productions going on at the same time, and each member who was in the chorus played a part in those productions. I cannot wrap my head around this it was insane, and everyone was so lovely, even the principal singers.

We had our first language session in Italian with language coach Nicole Dorigo and the knowledge of this woman is incredible. Her passion and dedication to the text of the pieces were unmatched. We did not have much time with Nicole as she was needed in the rehearsal rooms, but for the brief time we had with her we made the most of this opportunity.

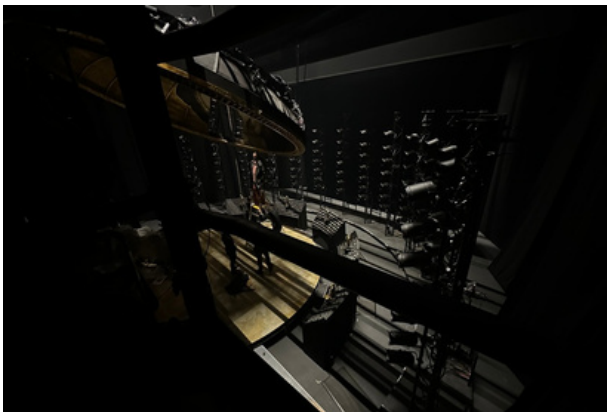
Filipe Manu was also in Sydney rehearsing the lead role of Ferrando in Amadeus Mozarts Opera *Così fan tutte*. We managed to squeeze a Q&A session with him, and it was so inspiring to see how far he has come in his career and was real about the whole experience. I could relate to Filipe in a way that we are of similar backgrounds and upbringing. As a pacific Island person, we salute and celebrate the successes of those who continue to pave the way for us, and like Filipe and many other Pasifika singers continue to inspire the next lot of up-and-coming Pasifika singers such as myself to keep going. We also had the opportunity to watch Filipe rehearse in *Così fan tutte* and he was very musical with the role, singing with ease and vocal freedom.



RESIDENCY CONTINUED..

Pit and Perch was another highlight of the trip, where two of us singers each had a night to watch the Opera *Tosca*: one of us would sit in the orchestra pit and the other in the perch, which is a platform situated on the edge of the stage. My favourite of the two was watching the opera from the Perch as you could get a close-up view of the cast and set change.

I had a coaching with Donna Balson who was such an excellent coach. We worked on my arias, and she made it so simple and fun. She is also a singer and understands the frustrations and challenges we face. She was a joy to work with and hope to work with her again in the future.



We even got to meet the CEO of Opera Australia Fiona Allan who was available to speak to us and hear our individual journeys. We then sang for her the TANZOS waiata which she absolutely loved.

The downfall to this trip was receiving devastating and sudden news with the passing away of my dear uncle who I was remarkably close with in New Zealand. I had only been four days into my trip, and this happened, I could not bear the thought to carry on without returning home to be with my family, so I left to attend the funeral.

Upon my return to Australia to finish off the week I came down with a fever which then led into a nasty flu and took me out for the rest of the trip. I felt frustrated and disappointed with myself and the situation I was in which led to missing all coaching, rehearsals, and a chance to audition for the Opera company which was one of my main goals before leaving on this trip. As difficult as it was, I had to accept this and move forward which has not sat well for me to this day, but it is what it is.



Despite all the negative aspects of this trip, I am grateful for the times I was involved and present. I learnt so much and it will add value to my growth as a singer and a person.

The last highlight of the trip was watching *Tosca* live and hearing the tenor arias performed which I am currently learning now. No words could describe the feeling I felt that night at the Opera. I literally had the chills the whole time and envisioned myself singing on that stage one day.

WHAT IS NEXT?

9th AUGUST 2024:

TE PAE KŌKAKO: THE AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND OPERA STUDIO (TANZOS) &
AUCKLAND OPERA STUDIO (AOS) AUCKLAND, NZ

-
'OPERA IN THE CATHEDRAL' GALA CONCERT
SOLOIST - TANZOS ARTIST

15th SEPTEMBER 2024:

BACH MUSICA AUCKLAND, NZ

-
MENDELSSOHN SYMPHONY NO. 2 HYMN OF PRAISE
SOLOIST - TENOR

7TH-13th OCTOBER 2024

THE BANK OF THE COOK ISLANDS (BCI), RAROTONGA

-
OPERA IN RAROTONGA
SOLOIST - TENOR

30th NOVEMBER 2024

OPERA NORTH WHANGAREI, NZ

-
CLASSICS AT THE COVE
SOLOIST - ARTIST
