

TRAVEL REPORT

TANZOS Adventure

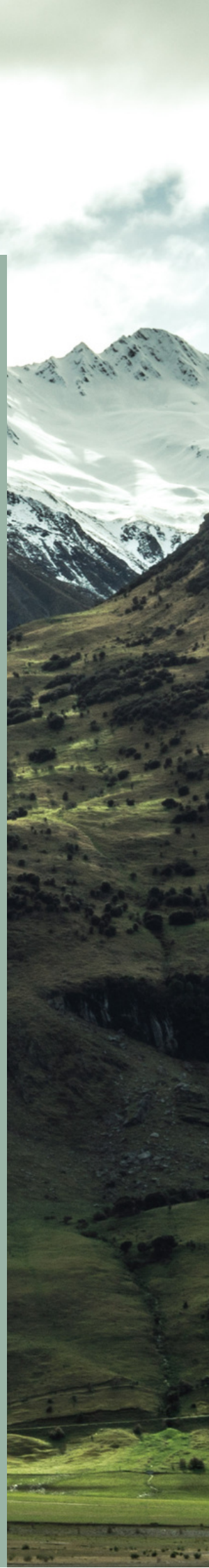
Trip at a glance

- Amazing coaching opportunities.
- World class exposure in front of high profile Opera professionals.
- Audition etiquette and practice in a safe environment.
- Personal singing milestones were met and valuable lessons learnt.
- Valuable networking and friendships made with colleagues and coaches.
- First hand experience of what its like to be at a world class opera house.
- Once in a lifetime experience

This trip was one to remember and one that was long anticipated even before I knew I had made it into the TANZOS programme. It was nothing short of a once in a lifetime opportunity to have this experience in Australia. I got to experience what it was like to be back stage at a world class international opera house and it was my first experience in Sydney. Coincidentally, we also made this trip on the day of my birthday and it was a great way to spend my 25th.

On the first day, after a restless sleep, was a language class as well as tours of the Opera Centre & Sydney Opera Theatre itself. It was a very eye opening experience for me to see how a fully professional opera company runs and how everything is very meticulous and complex.

Much of the trip was travelled via uber or walking there and I easily was surpassing my goal of 10,000 steps per day. I enjoyed making the most of being active during this time as it helped me tame my excitement on the trip.



The first sing was and is always the hardest sing in these situations and this time was no exception. That following day after our travel we were asked to sing just a bit of something for Brian Castles-Onion the musical director for Opera Australia in a mock audition class he held at the end of the day. I was nervous but also ready to show what I could put forward and contribute to the class.

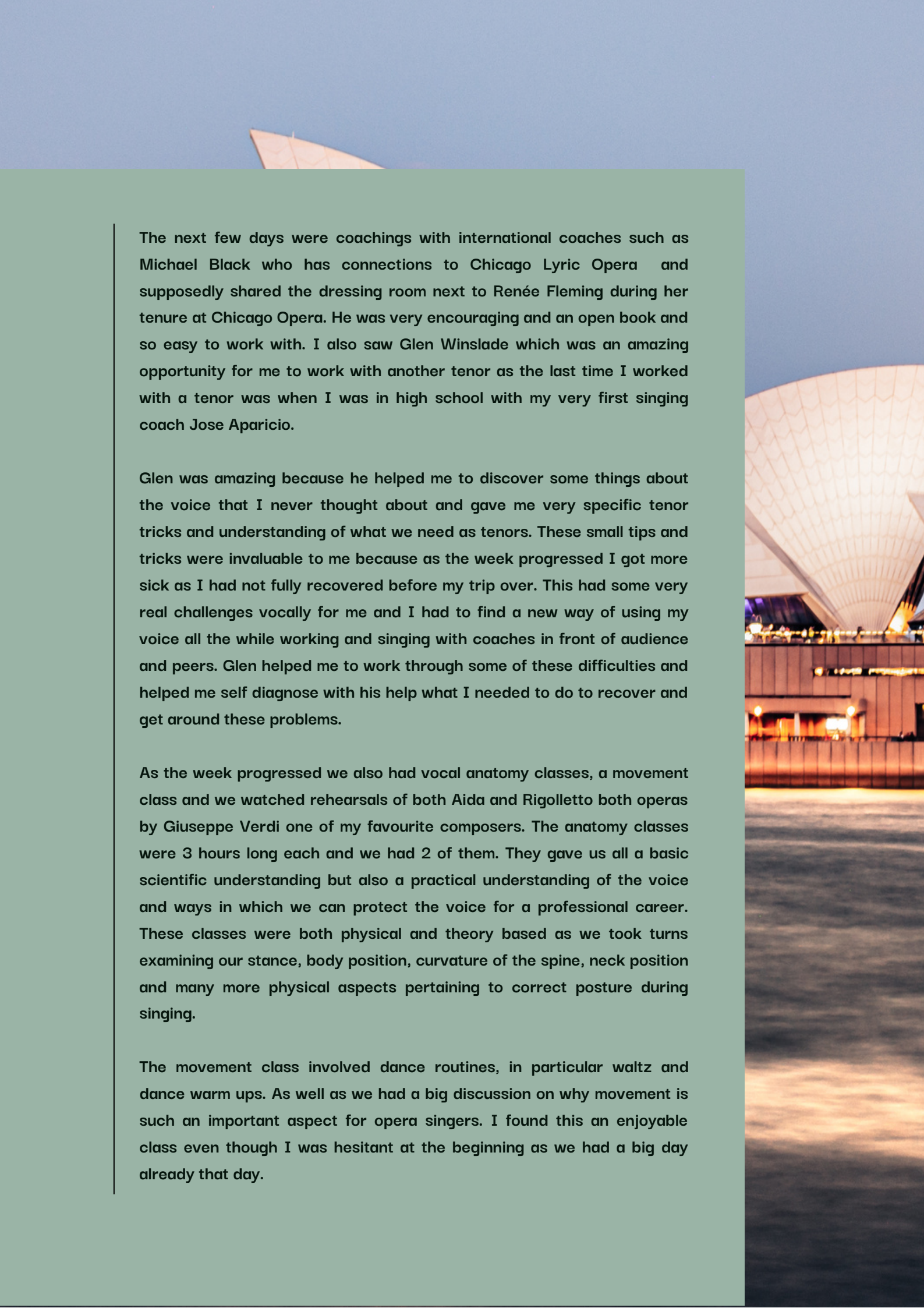
After I finished singing through half of an aria Brian stopped and asked me the question "So what is it that makes you unique and why will people hire YOUR sound?" I answered as any student would and said that I felt I stayed connected through my vocal line and didn't drop off even though I was under the weather. Brian replied: "Thats okay but you need to stop thinking as a student and start thinking you are a professional and one thing I can say is that you have a very attractive tone and that is hireable" I was surprised by his comment and it was encouraging to see agreeable nods amongst the Opera Australian Young Artists sitting in audience.

This was my first sing in Australia EVER, and I felt it went well considering a long flight and health problems prior to flying over.



Leaving Auckland Airport





The next few days were coachings with international coaches such as Michael Black who has connections to Chicago Lyric Opera and supposedly shared the dressing room next to Renée Fleming during her tenure at Chicago Opera. He was very encouraging and an open book and so easy to work with. I also saw Glen Winslade which was an amazing opportunity for me to work with another tenor as the last time I worked with a tenor was when I was in high school with my very first singing coach Jose Aparicio.

Glen was amazing because he helped me to discover some things about the voice that I never thought about and gave me very specific tenor tricks and understanding of what we need as tenors. These small tips and tricks were invaluable to me because as the week progressed I got more sick as I had not fully recovered before my trip over. This had some very real challenges vocally for me and I had to find a new way of using my voice all the while working and singing with coaches in front of audience and peers. Glen helped me to work through some of these difficulties and helped me self diagnose with his help what I needed to do to recover and get around these problems.

As the week progressed we also had vocal anatomy classes, a movement class and we watched rehearsals of both Aida and Rigolletto both operas by Giuseppe Verdi one of my favourite composers. The anatomy classes were 3 hours long each and we had 2 of them. They gave us all a basic scientific understanding but also a practical understanding of the voice and ways in which we can protect the voice for a professional career. These classes were both physical and theory based as we took turns examining our stance, body position, curvature of the spine, neck position and many more physical aspects pertaining to correct posture during singing.

The movement class involved dance routines, in particular waltz and dance warm ups. As well as we had a big discussion on why movement is such an important aspect for opera singers. I found this an enjoyable class even though I was hesitant at the beginning as we had a big day already that day.

The highlight for me on the trip was seeing 2 mainstage opera's performed in the Joan sutherland theatre and seeing phjoto's of Joan Sutherland and her impact she made in the operatic industry and knowing this could one day be a stage I could perform on being so close to Aotearoa.



Stage where we Auditioned

It was amazing to sit in the theatre and see the breadth and complexity to which Opera Australia put on their opera's. Rigolletto was my favourite. Seeing how the baritone (Rigolletto) Ernesto Petti negotiated a pianissimmi in a theatre that seats 1500 and the sound, still full of colour and vibrant, cutting to the back of the theatre was a spectacular sight and inspired me so much to want to captivate audiences just like that.

The only negative on this trip was how sick I was and trying to negotiate this at the same time as show everyone my craft and to give my best was a significant struggle both mentally and physically. This was probably one of my biggest lessons on this trip that I had to discover at some point. I learnt what I need personally when travelling, what I need to do to negate vocal inefficiencies and how to stay healthy and what I should avoid. All of this will serve me greatly in the long run.

In the end after much discussion with Madeleine Pierard, Kristin Darragh (Vocal Coach) via Zoom and Glen Winslade. I came to the decision that given my significant vocal difficulties and risk of vocal injury it was best I forgo the mock audition at the end of the trip. This was a very hard decision for me to make as it was something I was looking forward to so much before I even joined TANZOS and it hurt to make that decision. But what I learned from this experience is that there is a time for everything and this just wasn't my time. Im happy that it wasn't a high stakes situation and a proper audition and also I am not the only one that has had to go through this experience before.

I remain positive after this decision and I know for sure that I will get to sing for these people again when I am healthy and even more prepared. I was very happy to see how much my colleagues enjoyed their experience on stage and was rooting for them all the way and I am working very hard and learning so much as I go through this journey of self discovery and have taken from this experience very valuable experience, lessons and come away achieving huge milestones as I continue to learn what it is to be a professional artist.



Last photo with those that helped organise this trip

