

ARIA



This is the 21st issue of Aria – can you believe it!

Now that we are at the end of the college year in the UK I can look back on what has been a particularly pleasing and fulfilling time for me. The students are really bounding ahead. James Ioelu has made wonderful progress at the National Opera Studio. I attended their final performance last month and the marked improvement from all the students was wonderful to see. Of course James was my focus.

Phillip Rhodes has been covering the main baritone role in Lucia di Lammermoor at Covent Garden. I attended the opening night and Phillip was in the box with me and he kept saying 'Kiri, I have to pinch myself. I am at Covent Garden'. It is always a singer's dream to be at the most wonderful Opera House in the world. A most interesting production – I must say I loved it.

I was privately delighted when Phillip was selected as the first recipient of the Kiri Te Kanawa Covers Award a programme developed by Covent Garden and funded by the Foundation to provide grants for costs associated with providing cover roles to talented young artists of great potential. You will read more about this later. Suffice to say it provides very necessary financial help for understudies...who are paid a very small fee and must attend the Opera rehearsals and performances at a very significant cost to the singers ... I am sure our support makes a difference.

I'd like to record the Foundation's congratulations to Rodney Macann, one of our trustees, on his New Year's honour which was well deserved.

Later in this newsletter you will read about a number of singers with great potential now being supported by the Foundation. One in particular, Bongani Justice is a wonderful singer from South Africa. I was told that when he auditioned for the National Opera Studio

the whole panel of judges asked him to sing a third song and then applauded, quite rare I believe. He was also a finalist in Placido Domingo's Operalia. You will find him on YouTube ... he is a lovely person and very gentle with a most beautiful voice. I am very excited that we are supporting him. Our focus has always been on identifying exceptional talent and excellence – and he has both. I do hope you will look him up.

May I take this opportunity to thank the trustees of both Foundations. Collectively we make a formidable team focused on a common goal. Once again thank you all so much for your support and dedication.

Looking back over the past 20 editions of Aria it's clear that our aim has always been to help and guide young singers. Sometimes we've have to make sure they are on the right path and keep reminding them to stay focused ... most of them do. However I do feel so sad as sometimes their stories are of such dedication, hard work and survival in a really difficult environment. Most, if not all, are trying to make ends meet – some teach to earn a little money, others do as much as they can to balance the budget – this is where I feel we can help. My heart went out recently to a NZ student – he is working so hard, teaching every spare hour he has. He was struggling to pay the rent but will not give in because he so very much wants to be in this business.

Finally I want to say that my last tour back to NZ was a wonderful time visiting the smaller towns (especially Gisborne) which really took me back to my early days. My travelling companions were fun too ... Terence Dennis and Paul Gleeson ... it was all work and a small amount of play!

Thank you for your continuing support.

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CREDIT JOHN SWANNELL

Welcome to the 21st edition of Aria

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Congratulations to **Bianca Andrew** currently studying at The Guildhall School of Music & Drama on being awarded The Ferrier Loveday Song Prize at the 2016 Kathleen Ferrier competition. Bianca received a further Foundation grant to support her fundraising efforts for her final year at the Guildhall.

Bongani Justice, South African bass baritone (mentioned earlier in this newsletter by Dame Kiri) received a scholarship from the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation (UK) to secure his place at the National Opera Studio for 2016-17. In October 2015 Bongani moved to Cardiff to continue his studies with a Master's Programme in Advanced Vocal Studies at the Wales International Academy of Voice under the tutorship of Dennis O'Neill.



2014 Lexus Song Quest finalists.

Foundation supports special tuition for song quest hopefuls

As part of a long-standing commitment to developing New Zealand's best singing voices, the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation will again sponsor a series of special Lexus Song Quest Masterclasses later this month.

Tutored by esteemed Head International Lexus Song Quest Judge, Yvonne Kenny, the ten Song Quest semifinalists will enjoy an intensive week of individual coaching sessions which will allow the students to focus on building singing technique and characterisation, and provide an opportunity to discuss their individual study plans and proposals before singing at two semi-final concerts in Wellington.

Around 50 contestants competed in the initial Lexus Song Quest round, with preliminary judge Patricia Price commenting on the high calibre of the applicants.

"I arrived in NZ feeling hopeful and honoured to have been invited to judge such a prestigious competition. My expectations were fully met! The organisation was most impressive, and the singers we listened to were of the highest quality, vocally and artistically. It was a very satisfying experience indeed," Patricia said.

The semifinalists are: Madison Nonoa (Soprano, Auckland), Imogen Thirlwall (Soprano, Wellington), Harry Grigg (Baritone, Dunedin), Filipe Manu (Tenor, Auckland), Tavis Gravatt (Bass Baritone, Auckland), Jarvis Dams (Baritone, Hamilton), Benson Wilson (Baritone, Auckland), Emily Mwila (Soprano, Wellington), Bradley Christensen (Baritone, currently overseas) and Sophie Sparrow (Soprano, Dunedin).

Four of these talented young singers will compete at the Lexus Song Quest Grand Final Gala in Auckland. One of the semi-finalists will be awarded the 2016 Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation Scholarship for Outstanding Potential – a cash grant of \$15,000 to be used for overseas study. The Foundation will also present a second Masterclass at the Concert Chamber, Auckland Town Hall on Sunday 24 July to be conducted by Yvonne Kenny, where singing teachers, their students and the general public are invited to attend and observe free of charge.



In July 2015, NZ baritone **Julien Van Mellaerts** graduated from The Royal College of Music with a Masters of Performance with Distinction. He recently received a Foundation grant to support his continuing study in 2016 towards his Artistic Diploma in Opera at The Royal College.

Blaise Malaba, Democratic Republic of Congo bass – performed so well in the 2015 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World he was recently awarded a Foundation Scholarship to support his entry to the MA Opera Performance course at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. Following receipt of the grant he wrote saying 'I am very happy and honoured to receive your financial support and I am grateful for the opportunities it will provide me. The BBC Cardiff Singer of the World competition gave me the opportunity to believe in my potential and to work harder to achieve a higher level.'



The Kiri Te Kanawa Programme gathers momentum

Recent editions of *Aria* have reported on the Foundation's plans to create a high-level, personalised, and sustained skills boost to a select group of young opera singers preparing to leave New Zealand for international post-graduate training and career development.

'The Kiri Te Kanawa Programme' will be focused on providing training and mentorship that will better prepare participants to undertake advanced study abroad, compete with their international peers, and establish sustainable professional careers.

The Programme consists of five high impact modules spread over a 12-month period. Each with a focus on specific skills areas such as language, stagecraft, career management and business advice, together with intensive vocal and repertoire coaching.

The Programme will formally commence with the first teaching module (29 August to 4 September 2016). Five highly regarded international professionals in their field have already been contracted to lead various sections.

The Programme Director and senior vocal tutor is Kathryn Harries, an acclaimed international opera singer who is Director of the National Opera Studio in London. Kathryn will be supported by an outstanding faculty of coaches/tutors, including Teresa Desmarchelier, recognised as one of Australasia's leading lyric diction and language coaches – focused on the Italian and French repertoire; Sharolyn Kimmorley, renowned coach and former Artistic Administrator of Opera Australia, Professor Terence Dennis, coordinator of Classical Music Performance at the University of Otago School of Music and leading American opera director and teacher Chuck Hudson.

Following nationwide interviews and reviews organisers have selected just six singers for the inaugural Programme, in order to ensure that each singer has as rich an experience as possible.

Eliza Boom – soprano
Madison Nonoa – soprano
Katherine McIndoe – soprano
Natasha Wilson – soprano
Filipe Manu – tenor
Jarvis Dams – baritone

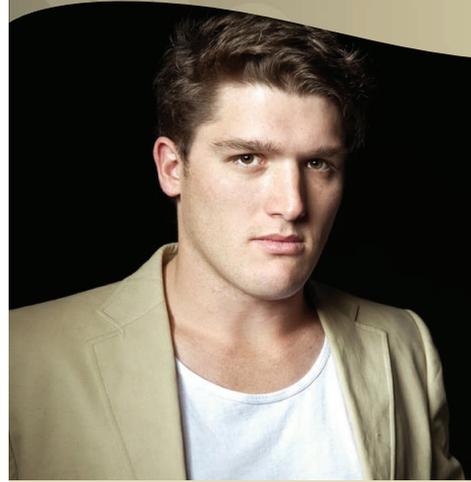
Staging such an ambitious initiative comes with a significant price-tag. The Foundation Trustees have enthusiastically endorsed the project which carries a budget in excess of \$200,000 for the first year and are prepared to underwrite this amount because they believe the idea is too important to drop. However if it is to succeed on all fronts it requires generous support and we are appealing to our supporters to help us financially to make a difference where it really counts. Further details about how you can assist will be sent later this month.

STOP PRESS:

As *Aria* went to print the Foundation was pleased to note that three of the singers selected for The Programme are among the 10 singers contesting the Lexus Song Quest Semi-finals (Jarvis Dams, Madison Nonoa and Filipe Manu); two of them (Eliza Boom & Jarvis Dams) have also been selected as one of the five finalists in the 2016 IFASC Australian Singing Competition – competing for one of Australia's most coveted singing award, the Marianne Mathy Scholarship ('The Mathy'). We wish them all every success in these competitions.



PHOTO: CLIVE BARDA/ARENA PAL



New Zealand Tenor **Jonathan Abernethy** has been supported by the Foundation for five years during which time he has established himself as a vibrant and upcoming operatic artist, his most recent accolades being named a HSBC 2015 Festival d'Aix-en-Provence Laureate and winner of the Australian Opera Award. With Opera Australia's 2016 season, Jonathan prepares the roles of Nadir (*Les Pêcheurs de Perles*) and Ferrando (*Così fan tutte*) to cover major international artists in two new productions. During the Sydney season of *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* Jonathan was called in part way through the penultimate show to perform the role of Nadir and then went on to debut the whole role in the final performance of the season to great success.

Anthony Schneider, New Zealand bass – reports he reached the semi-finals of the Metropolitan Opera competition, and therefore had the exhilarating opportunity to sing on the Met stage! He said this was one of the most exciting experiences he'd ever had! He also reached the Semi-finals of the MacCammon competition in Texas.



"I learnt that the possibilities are endless when you fully participate in a character and have no fear."

James Ioelu's final letter from London

I am writing this note with less than five weeks to go here at the National Opera Studio. We were told at the start of the course that it would get busier as the year went on and I can say now that this was not an exaggeration. We have just started staging rehearsals for our concert at the Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff where I will be singing the role of Fiesco in a scene from Verdi's opera *Simon Boccanegra*. I am looking forward to singing in Wales as there are not many opportunities to sing Verdi with a full orchestra.

We have just finished a successful contemporary scenes project led by the great Graham Vick. It was an intense period of work singing something I did not enjoy in particular but the process in which Graham Vick worked was invaluable. I learnt that the possibilities are endless when you fully participate in a character and have no fear. This sounds a little silly out of context but on stage it really separates the professional from the amateur. Dame Kiri very graciously came along to support the evening.

After the scene concert in Cardiff I have only to showcase my core role, which is Leporello from *Don Giovanni* among other small concerts. We have had a few opportunities to sing for agents, casting directors – needless to say that networking is of central importance. Relationships are vital to create and to maintain; like in business, you may have a fantastic product but half of the challenge is how you market yourself. Again, it's not enough to be a talented singer!

As always, it is very difficult to sustain a career in the United Kingdom if you do not

have the right documents to work. I am again very thankful, as I have been given the support of the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation through Deborah Sanders who is working closely with Fragomen (lawyers and also very supportive!) guiding me on the visa path. I am confident that I can provide a viable application that will lead to success.

During this visa process I will be heading back to New Zealand. I am fortunate enough to fill my time back in New Zealand by singing with NZ Opera and the APO. I will be making my debut with NZ Opera singing the Machese in *La Traviata* as well as covering the roles of Baron Douphol and Doctor Grenvil. A month later, I will sing the role of Jonas Fogg and cover Judge Turpin in *Sweeney Todd*. I will also make my debut with the APO, singing the role of Montano in *Otello* with Simon O'Neill singing the title role. I'm currently in the thick of learning these roles, and I am happy to have the opportunity to get all of these roles onto my cv and will be good preparation for my planned return to the UK for the 2017 audition season.

My time here at the Victoria League London base has been wonderful. The staff are very helpful and cheerful, which makes it all the more enjoyable. I do wish to take this opportunity to once again thank the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation and in particular Dame Kiri Te Kanawa for their continued support and generosity. To the Victoria League Auckland, the Deane Endowment Trust and all my supporters, my thanks.

Best wishes – James Ioelu

Cover awards provide lasting memories and unique learning opportunities

In a previous edition of *Aria* we reported that New Zealand baritone Phillip Rhodes and Uzbekistan soprano Hulkar Sabirova had been named inaugural recipients of the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation Cover Award – an initiative developed by The Royal Opera House and the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation (UK) in recognition of Dame Kiri's 70th birthday and her long professional association with Covent Garden.

A grant of £70,000 to The Royal Opera will be used to allow emerging artists to take on cover roles where the company might not normally be able to have a cover in place.



Here are excerpts from their unique experiences ...

Hulkar Sabirova – “I came to ROH for covering Lucia with my favourite Soprano, Diana Damrau. I will never forget the first moments, when I entered the Opera House – surrounded by pictures of legendary singers, who sang on this majestic stage! It felt like a dream – I have seen and heard many legendary recordings and videos made here but never thought I could be there in person.

On my first day I could already see the stage rehearsal of Lucia on the main stage. What a great production it was! So realistic, so dramatic and very emotional, with artists, who not only sang incredibly, but played and transferred into public so much emotion.

On my first day I had the opportunity to meet Diana Damrau and I discovered that she is not only a fantastic singer, but also a lovely person. She was so supportive to me and I tried to attend every rehearsal and performance, to hear her singing, to be able to learn as much as possible from her. I love her musicality and honesty in every note, perfect vocal line and virtuosity.

We had the cover rehearsals at Helpmann Studio. I was very nervous at the beginning, but the atmosphere was so nice, I had the feeling that the whole staff wanted us to feel very comfortable so we could really enjoy making music, learning as much as possible performing this great role!

I learnt a great deal from working with the ROH coaches, not only for Lucia, but also for other parts which I will sing in the future.

I thank Dame Kiri, her Foundation and the ROH with all my heart for creating this unique opportunity which I was privileged to experience!”

Phillip Rhodes – “My first day on the job came a few weeks earlier than expected due to the indisposition of Ludovic Tezier. As a result I would be rehearsing the first few days. To say I was nervous would be a great understatement. However the production team were so warm, encouraging and accepting, I managed to keep my nerves and general excitement in check, just!

During the next few days (and weeks) I was continually pinching myself. Being in the ‘ROH’ environment is amazing, stressful, but so satisfyingly. The stress comes from seeing the demands put on performers. The satisfaction when seeing those demands met. This show however seemed much more emotionally demanding than any which I have witnessed before (particularly for the title role) and the performers in this particular production were not only openly attempting everything thrown at them, but achieving, and often surpassing the demands. Watching Diana Damrau work in the studio was a lesson in the limitations of an operatic singer and how to discover them. Diana continuously challenged herself by being very open to Katie’s suggestions, and then absolutely committed herself to making the direction work. It was simply astounding.

It was also a great privilege to shadow French Baritone, Ludovic Tezier, I have learned a great deal from him and he was very open to discussion not only about the role but also the difficulties that may or may not come up during my career. He is a wonderful singer and a great colleague, and I felt very lucky to watch

him closely over the weeks. It’s also nice to talk rugby to another fanatic from time to time, even if they are French supporters!

Finally, my day on the Royal Opera House stage. The text came at 8.50 am ‘..... is unwell and unable to rehearse today... making sure you are on your way in...’

It is the final stage and piano for the Second Cast and I will be the only singer out of costume, but that doesn’t matter to me, I am just so excited to stand on the floor that has caught the blood, sweat, and tears, of so many great singers. To me, this is hallowed ground. Anyone should consider themselves lucky to have been there in any capacity, and I do. I think of this stage as an All Black might think about playing at Twickenham. Greatness has stood right here. Millions of eyes have looked upon this very spot, right here. Hearts have been broken and healed, right here. And now it is your turn to stand right here, you have only this moment in front of you, you have earned your place here. Right! Now enjoy it! These are words and sentiments of my father that have always comforted me during the ‘big moments’ of my life. For me, this was one of those.

And so, to the Royal Opera House and the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation, for creating an opportunity to experience that, I will be forever grateful. From day one of rehearsal through to my final moments on the Royal Opera House stage to enjoying the show from the directors’ box in the company of Dame Kiri, The Covers Award has been a wonderfully amazing experience, filled with learning and great opportunities to work with the best in the world of opera.”



"... I was not disappointed – the facilities are superb and the final concert was of the very best quality..."



GARY MATTHEWMAN JOINS UK FOUNDATION

Dame Kiri recently welcomed Gary Matthewman as a new trustee on the UK Foundation. Initially studying in London, Berlin and Vienna Gary is now established as one of Britain's leading song pianists. International appearances include his debut recitals at Carnegie Hall in New York and the Musikverein in Vienna, as well as in concerts in Germany, Holland, Switzerland, Spain, USA, Brazil, China and Australia.

As official accompanist for vocal contests, he has worked for BBC Cardiff Singer of the World, the 'Das Lied' – International Song Competition in Berlin, the Hilde Zadek Competition in Vienna, and the Queen Sonja International Music Competition for singers in Oslo. He is a song coach for the Jette Parker Young Artists at the Royal Opera House.

Announcing his appointment Dame Kiri said she was delighted that Gary had accepted her invitation. "He is a good friend and colleague. I have worked with him in a professional capacity many times including my appearances on Downton Abbey. He has much to offer the Foundation – he is young and although he has a very busy concert schedule he is already involved and keen to continue to help to coach our selected students. He also teaches at the Royal College of Music so will keep an eye on our students there."



World's best confirmed to teach at NZ Opera School 2017

Earlier this year Dame Kiri made her first visit to the Wanganui Opera School to see at first hand an institution that the Foundation has supported for the past four years.

"I had heard so much about it and wanted very much to see for myself just what it was like. I was not disappointed – the facilities are superb and the final concert was of the very best quality. The 24 singers were all given very good repertoire to work with and I must say I was very pleased by the performances," she said.

Recently organisers announced plans for 2017 including the appointment of world-renowned singing teachers Della Jones and Cesar Ulloa as the 2017 Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation International Vocal Faculty tutors.

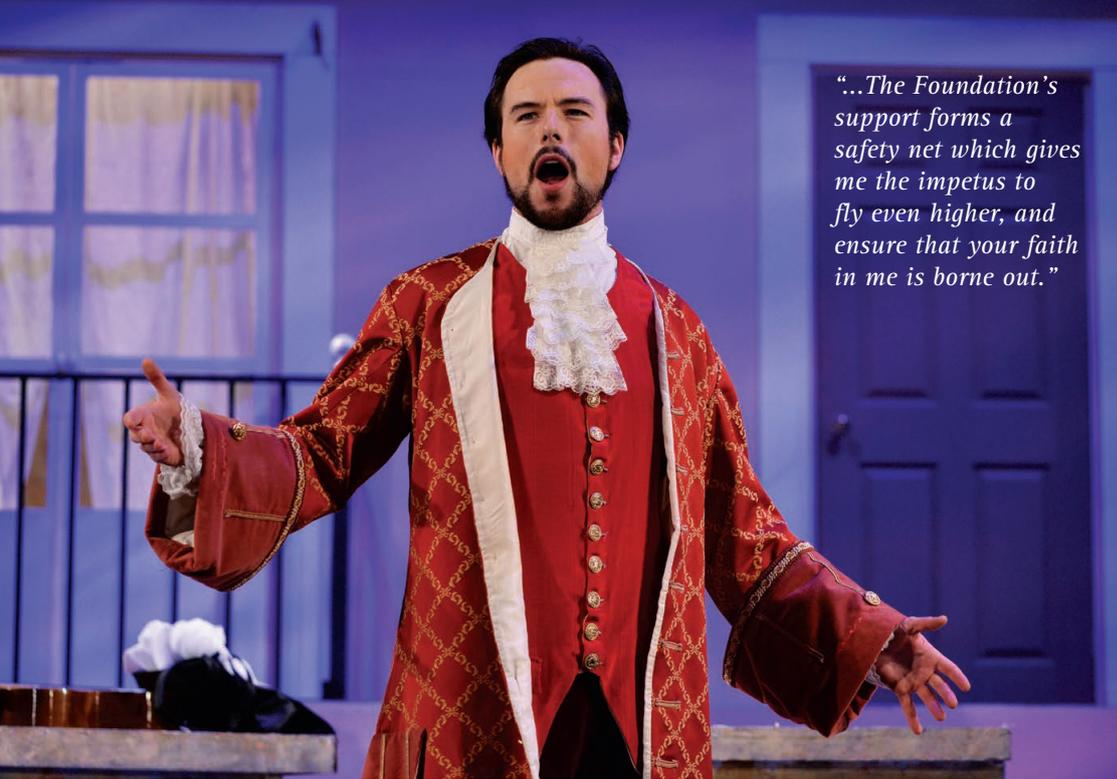
Della Jones, has had a stunning career as one of the world's leading mezzo-sopranos, appearing in the USA, Russia, Japan, Canada, UK and throughout Europe in over 120 operatic roles. She has worked with all the leading orchestras and conductors, including Leonard Bernstein, Sir Georg Solti, Sir Charles Mackerras, Sir Simon Rattle,

Sir John Eliot Gardiner, and Sir Antonio Pappano. More recently Della has been doing tremendous work with students in London (National Opera Studio) and in Cardiff (Welsh International Academy of Voice).

Cesar Ulloa is Chair of Voice at the San Francisco Conservatoire where he also heads up the San Francisco Opera Center's Merola and Adler Fellows programs.

His students perform regularly on the major operatic stages of the world, and have been top prize winners and finalists in numerous competitions including the Metropolitan Opera National Council, Operalia, Montserrat Caballé, Loren Zachary, George London, Richard Tucker and Cardiff Singer of the World.

Student places for the School, which will take place 9-22 January 2017 at Wanganui Collegiate, are strictly limited to 22.



“...The Foundation’s support forms a safety net which gives me the impetus to fly even higher, and ensure that your faith in me is borne out.”

PHOTO: BOB SIMPSON

TO LIVE, LOVE, LEARN & LEAVE A LEGACY

What better way to leave a legacy for music than by making a bequest to the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation. The Foundation was recently delighted to receive advice from the executors of the estate of Claire Loudon that she had left a bequest to the Foundation.

Claire’s love of opera obviously gave her great pleasure, including the many opportunities to attend Dame Kiri’s concerts. When Claire took early retirement from the Tribune Company in Chicago it gave her the chance to combine her love of travel, which took her all over the world, with more of Dame Kiri’s concerts.

Dame Kiri recalls Claire with fondness, “I remember Claire very well - yes she seemed to be everywhere I sang. Always pleasant and very devoted. Regrettably I did not know she was unwell and I feel very sad at her passing” she said.

Leaving a gift in your will is one way to make the type of gift that you may not be able to make during your lifetime. It is a simple procedure that allows you to include the Foundation as a beneficiary of your will. Bequests are usually directed to the Foundation for use at the trustee’s discretion but they can also be directed towards a specific need such as a music scholarship for a talented singer. If you would like to discuss this matter further or would like a copy of sample language for your lawyer please contact the Foundation office.

Foundation scholarships provide impetus to reach for the sky

Kieran Rayner, a London-based New Zealand baritone who recently graduated after completing his Masters in Voice with Russell Smythe at the Royal College of Music has been awarded two prestigious scholarships offered by the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation.

Following auditions at the RCM Kieran was nominated and subsequently received the 2016-17 Kiri Te Kanawa Scholarship presented in association with The Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation UK which is awarded to a singer in his/her final year of study at the RCM. The £10,000 award will allow him to accept a place at the Royal College of Music International Opera School.

Subsequently Kieran was also nominated for and received the 2016 –17 Victoria League Scholarship in Singing which carries 12 months accommodation at the Victoria League’s London base. The scholarship is sponsored by the Victoria League in Auckland in association with the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation.



Commenting on the awards Dame Kiri said the audition panel was impressed with the considerable progress Kieran has made over the past year, his clear and articulate assessment of where he sees his best goals in opera, and above all his excellent work ethic and ambitious approach to his future career.

Acknowledging the scholarships Kieran said “I feel so honoured to receive not one but two Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation related Scholarships to cover my fees at the Royal College of Music and accommodation at the Victoria League’s Student House.

I’m still grinning about it all! Such a lot of pressure has been taken off my next year’s budget, which is a real godsend.

I am delighted to be joining the Foundation family, it means so much to me. It has been a privilege to connect with Dame Kiri, who is such an inspiration. In this industry which can be cold and lonely, Dame Kiri and the Foundation are a warm, welcoming presence. I will really benefit from Dame Kiri’s encouragement and help – musically, technically, financially, strategically, and with advice for my career. The Foundation’s support forms a safety net which gives me the impetus to fly even higher, and ensure that your faith in me is borne out.”

Congratulating Kieran, Mrs Colleen Corse-Scott, Chairman of the Victoria League Trust said ‘ we are delighted to once again co-operate with the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation in awarding this scholarship and especially pleased that it is being awarded to such a dedicated young singer’.



Claire Loudon - RIP



Visit our website www.kiritekanawa.org to follow news of our Foundation recipients

Further information about how to make a donation is on the website or contact the Foundation for details.

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The next issue of Aria will feature more news about the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation. If you want information about the Foundation please contact us. However, if you do not wish to receive further editions of Aria please advise us by sending an email.

It is believed that the contents of this newsletter are a full and fair representation. Interested parties should make their own enquiries to satisfy themselves on all aspects. **PRIVACY POLICY:** Under the Privacy Act 1993 any address or information you supply us will be held in secure circumstances by the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation and used to communicate with you about the Foundation's events, associations and activities. Our mailing lists are available only to the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation and are not available to any third parties or organisations.

