



TE PAE KŌKAKO
TANZOS

THE AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND OPERA STUDIO

2025
TANZOS REPORT
JASMINE JESSEN



**Dame
Malvina
Major
Foundation**

JANUARY

New Zealand Opera School

FEBUARY

Nicholas Tarling aria competition
AOS Matakana concert
Carmina Burana

MARCH

TANZOS starts back
Ian Tindale guest tutor

APRIL

Thomas Johnson guest tutor

MAY

North Shore aria competition
Donna Bolson guest tutor

JUNE

Role study assesment
MSO family concert

JULY

MOSF

AUGUST

Un ballo in maschera
Wellington aria competition
ODT Southern aria competition

JANUARY

New Zealand Opera School

I started the year at the New Zealand Opera School for two weeks, marking my third time attending. It was a fantastic way to prepare for university and ease back into my routine. Unfortunately, I fell ill at the beginning of the session due to a rough ferry ride from Picton to Wellington. As a result, I had to miss the first day and was unable to sing for the initial few days.

I particularly enjoyed coaching sessions with Nikki and Glen, although I appreciated all the tutors at the school. The three main arias I brought with me included “*Quel guardo*” from Donizetti’s *Don Pasquale*, “*Sul fil*” from Verdi’s *Falstaff*, and “*Ain’t it a pretty night*” from Floyd’s *Susannah*, which I performed during the final concert.

Additionally, I had the wonderful opportunity to sing “*Hear my prayer*” by Mendelssohn at the Oratorio concert following the first week. I had fun singing in the Cafe night concert as well.



FEBUARY

Nicholas Tarling Aria Competition

In this competition, I performed “Sul fil” from Verdi’s “Falstaff,” accompanied by Rosemary Barnes. I was delighted to be awarded runner-up, feeling well-prepared after receiving coaching from the NZOS.

AOS Matakana Concert

This concert was a delightful experience, held in a lovely backyard in Matakana. They created a makeshift stage by the water, allowing us to sing over the water to an audience seated on the grass. I had the pleasure of performing “Girl in 14G,” which is always a joy, alongside my colleagues and pianist Somi Kim.

Carmina Burana

I had the incredible opportunity to perform the soprano solo in *Carmina Burana* by Carl Orff. The music presented its challenges, but I thoroughly enjoyed the learning process and hope to sing it again in the future. Sharing the stage with Sam and Jordan was a highlight, and we were accompanied by the Hamilton City Brass and conducted by Maria Colvin.



MARCH-MAY

TANZOS Resumes

I was excited to kick off the second year of TANZOS! We started looking at the arias for my role study which is Nannetta from Falstaff, Pamina from the Magic flute and Norina from Don Pasquale. It was exciting to explore new repertoire.

Ian Tindale

Guest tutor Ian Tindale specializes in art songs. I had the opportunity to work on a few pieces from the Britten's cycle, *On This Island*.

April

Thomas Johnson

I thoroughly enjoyed working with guest tutor Thomas Johnson. He provided valuable feedback as I explored various repertoire.

MOSF Audition

After discussions with Madeleine and Nikki, we concluded that I should apply for a summer program abroad, ideally in Italy. I decided to audition for Jack Li Vigni's Mediterranean Opera Studio and Festival on YAP tracker. For my application, I auditioned for the role of Adina in *L'elisir d'amore* and Amina and Lisa in Bellini's *La Sonnambula*. Thomas and I recorded "Oh quante volte" from Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* and "Quel guardo" from Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* in the concert chamber. Less than a week after submitting my audition, I received a positive email offering me the role of Adina in *L'elisir d'amore*!

May

North Shore aria competition

In May I competed in the North Shore aria competition, I was excited to debut some new repertoire. I was delighted to have been selected to sing in the aria finals, where I sung "Ah, douce enfant" from Massenet's *Cendrillon* and "Oh, quante volte". Jonathan Dunlop traveled to Auckland to accompany me and the TANZOS artists, I enjoyed performing alongside him.

Donna Bolson

I particularly enjoyed collaborating with Donna during the three weeks she spent in Hamilton. Our main focus was on role study assessments. Each of the three roles presented its own challenges, but I found joy in tackling them all. Donna was instrumental in helping me navigate the musically complex sections that I had been struggling with.

JUNE

Role Study Assessment

We were fortunate to have Catherine Norton in Hamilton to conduct the role study assessments. Although the assessment felt a bit intimidating, I was confident in my preparation. The first role I assessed was Pamina, and Sam kindly joined me to sing “Bei mannern.” In the afternoon, I had Norina assessed, with Edward stepping in for the lively duet “Singorina in tanto fretta.” A few days later, I presented Nannetta for my final assessment. Jordan was able to assist by singing “Labbra di foco,” which was incredibly helpful. The role of Nannetta included many ensemble parts that were quite tricky, especially the finale “tutto nel mondo.”

MSO Family Concert

As the runner-up in the Nicolas Tarling aria competition, I had the privilege of performing with the MSO. I provided them with several suggestions for my performance, and Brent Stuart chose “Quel guardo il cavaliere.” I thoroughly enjoyed singing this vibrant aria with the orchestra.



MOSF WEEKS 1 & 2

After a lengthy journey involving four flights and a bus ride, I was thrilled to begin my experience at the Mediterranean Opera Studio and Festival.

Rehearsals

The initial two weeks primarily revolved around rehearsals and staging for the operas. We kicked off with staging and astonishingly completed the entire staging of **L'elisir d'amore** in just four days! Jack Li Vigni, our director, employed a hands-on approach that I thoroughly enjoyed. He infused an extra layer of comedy into the opera, even incorporating some Star Wars themes into the staging. Rachelle Jonck conducted and coached us on the music, showcasing her mastery of bel canto and guiding us on how to sing with an orchestra. She placed particular emphasis on recitatives and Italian diction.

Sitzprobe

On the fifth day, I was honored to be chosen as one of the eight Adinas to perform duets and arias with the orchestra. This opportunity was an incredible learning experience, and I relished singing alongside the orchestra.

Performance

We began performances for the operas in the second week. I participated in the chorus for *La Bohème* and *La Sonnambula*. The music was exquisite, especially with the orchestral accompaniment.

Opening Night - Adina

Friday, July 4th, marked the opening night for *L'Elisir d'amore*, where I had the privilege of performing as Adina. Although the turnaround was quick, with less than two weeks since my arrival, I felt well-prepared. The performance went extremely well, particularly considering it was our first show. I was proud of myself and the accomplishments I had achieved.



Jack Li Vigni and I after performing Adina



Sky (Gianetta), Laura (concert master) and (Dulcamara)

MOSF WEEKS 3 & 4

Coachings and Lessons

During weeks 3 and 4, I participated in individual coaching sessions, with each day featuring two to four 30-minute lessons. I had the pleasure of working with a variety of tutors, including Nelly Miricioiu, Rachelle Jonck, Luis Ledesma, Danielle Orlando, Mark Verter, Giancarlo Scalia, Lynn Fortin, Jack LiVigni, Felice Venanzoni, Kamal Khan, Samantha Malk, and Leo Catalanotto. Of all the lessons, I particularly enjoyed working with Nelly, as she was my assigned teacher it allowed me to see her frequently.

The repertoire I had coached;

- *Ah, Douce enfant* (Massenet)
- *Quel guardo il cavaliere* (Donizetti)
- *Oh quante volte* (Bellini)
- *Sul fil d'un soffio* (Verdi)
- *Ach ich fuhl's* (Mozart)
- *Durch zartlichkeit* (Mozart)
- *Volta la terrea* (Verdi)
- *Saper vorreste* (Verdi)
- Adina's role
- Art songs (Mendelssohn, Hageman, Poulenc)

It was beneficial to receive coaching on Oscar's arias from *Un ballo in maschera*, since I was covering the role with Wellington Opera.



Performing *Girl in 14g* with Leo

Masterclasses

Each morning, we attended an hour-long Masterclass led by various tutors. The sessions covered topics related to Bel Canto, resonance and harmonics, the use of “chest voice,” recitatives, and other relevant subjects.

Performance

Re-opening of Villa Comunale di Caltagirone

In week 4, I had the opportunity to perform in the concert celebrating the re-opening of the historic Villa Comunale. The event showcased a variety of musical theatre, and I sang **Girl in 14g** by Jeanine Tesori. The performance was a success, and I thoroughly enjoyed sharing the stage with Leo Catalanotto.

Operas

Performances for *L'elisir d'amore*, *La Sonnambula*, and *La Boheme* continue.

MOSF WEEK 5

Performance

We concluded our final performances of *La Sonnambula* and *La Bohème*. The last *La Bohème* show took place in Ramacca, a quaint village nearby. This wrapped up the 17 opera performances over four weeks. We performed seven *L'elisir d'amore*, five *La Bohème*, and five *La Sonnambula*. Additionally, we showcased a selection of excerpts from these three operas at Villa Patti in Caltagirone.

Masterclasses

In the final week we had a few masterclasses from guest tutors Tanja Ariane Baumgartner and Giuseppe Filianoti. I particularly enjoyed Tanja's masterclass, she was able to adapt to each singer well. I also sung in a masterclass with Jack. I sung "Oh quante volte", Jack focused on finding the harmonics and resonance in my sound.

Final concert

For the final concert, I performed "Pronta io son" from *Don Pasquale*. I had recently learned this duet as part of my role study for TANZOS, so I was thrilled to have the chance to perform it. This collaboration featured Baritone Neil Hong and Pianist Leo Catalanotto, who coached us and helped with the comedic effect.

End of MOSF

This program has been incredible, arriving at the perfect moment in my career. Having the opportunity to perform a leading role and work with international tutors has helped me to grow as a performer. I am immensely grateful to Dame Malvina Major and the board for their ongoing support. Thank you for supporting this opportunity; it would not have been possible without the DMMF.



Group photo after final concert



With pianist/coach Marc Verter

AUGUST

Un ballo in maschera

I had the privilege of covering the role of Oscar in Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* with Wellington Opera. It's a delightful role with fantastic arias and music. Although I wasn't required during the performance season, I watched all three shows in Wellington. Natasha delivered a brilliant portrayal of Oscar, and I truly enjoyed the character she brought to life. Observing the opera was a valuable learning experience for me.

Wellington Aria Competition

Bruce Greenfield was the adjudicator, and I received positive feedback on my performances. I was thrilled to be awarded Best Performance by a Female Composer for "The Girl in 14G" in the recital class. Singing in the finals, I performed "Ah douce enfant" and "Oh, quante volte," and it's always a pleasure to perform alongside Catherine Norton.

ODT Southern Aria Competition

A few days after the Wellington competition, I participated in the competition in Dunedin. I performed the same repertoire with Catherine that I had in Wellington, so I felt well-prepared. James Harrison was the adjudicator, and I appreciated the detailed nature of his comments. Although I didn't agree with everything he noted, I valued most of his feedback. I was incredibly excited to win the aria finals. This was a significant milestone for me, as I had only reached the finals and been awarded runner-up in the past.

