

Heading now into 2026, I'm reflecting on the immense year that was 2025. It started with the NZ Opera School in Whanganui where I was excited to get a headstart working with Nikki, as I'd soon be having lessons with her twice a week as part of TANZOS. It was a great opportunity to decide the things we'd be focussing on singing-technique wise. As I write this, the NZ Opera School is underway in its second week and I'm saddened not to be attending this year.

The next event was the Nicholas Tarling Aria Competition where I was pleased to meet Judith Miller. It was so nice to put a face to the support that I was receiving in TANZOS. Following the competition, we all hopped into a van and headed down to Hawkes Bay to watch our colleagues in Festival Opera's double bill of *Dido and Aeneas* and *Gianni Schicchi*. We also had professional headshots and group photos taken all while the place was buzzing from art deco week. It was a really exciting time and I know that those new students who are soon to experience the beginning of the programme will feel the same sense of excitement.

We then got to work in the Gallagher Academy of Performing Arts building. In the TANZOS Programme, everyone has two lessons with Nikki a week and multiple coachings which totally removes the sometimes awkward hang time between lessons where it's so easy to accidentally go down the wrong path technically. It means we are constantly course correcting. We got to work with some incredible coaches who have taught me things that I'll now have in my toolkit forever. With Nikki, I expanded my repertoire and took on pieces that I knew would be a real challenge. It made for a final recital that I was truly proud to present.

After my recital, the TANZOS crew took a plane to Sydney where we would spend the next two weeks completing our residency with Opera Australia. It was such an amazing opportunity and really quite rare for young singers to have the opportunity to see the inner workings of a world class opera house. Being surrounded by such world class musicians and coaches, combined with the company of the TANZOS cohort, is why I look back on this trip so fondly. We were around the rehearsal spaces when the company was preparing their production of *Rusalka*. I immensely enjoyed watching these rehearsals and also enjoyed watching some of the rehearsals for *Le nozze di Figaro*.

I was lucky, earlier in 2025, to be accepted into the Master's programme at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. I moved here in August and have been working away with voice teacher Mark Schnaible. It's a long way from home and I've been missing my friends and colleagues back home, especially those in TANZOS. I'm in frequent contact with Nikki and love hearing updates from her and the other members of the cohort. TANZOS gave me a sturdy technical foundation which I could rely on while taking the step overseas. The programme equipped me with the tools to confidently tackle the repertoire that I've been exploring here at Curtis. Our first opera here in Philadelphia was Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* and, in it, I sang the role of Caronte. Now, we are preparing for Britten's *Midsummer Night's Dream* and I'll be singing Theseus which is a role that I'm excited to have under my belt. I'm particularly thankful, at this time, for Michael Joel's rhythm exercises as I am learning Theseus. The whole opera is filled with tricky rhythms and I'm grateful to have a strong understanding of how to sing them.

I'm so appreciative of the Freemasons Foundation's generous support. The contribution to the TANZOS Programme is literally the reason there was a spot for me. Since being in the States, I've watched every recital and masterclass that's been streamed and I love watching my friends make such amazing music. The new cohort starting very soon is filled with talent and, being part of the TANZOS family, I look forward to watching them with the same enthusiasm as I do my friends I studied with in 2025. It's so wonderful to know how much they'll develop as artists because of the programme - which is second to none in the entire southern hemisphere.