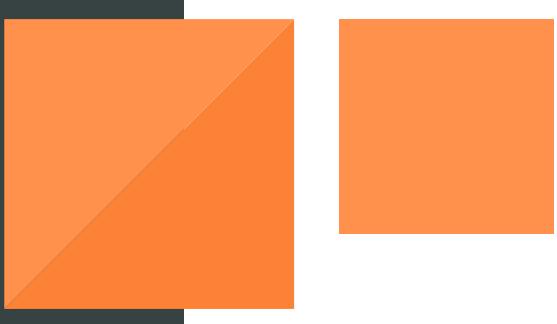


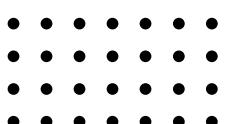


2025



Faamanu Fonoti-Fuimaono

2025 Report August - December.
Te Pae Kokako The Aotearoa New Zealand
Opera Studio.



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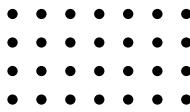
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Introduction and Acknowledgement



Biography...

Faamanu is a proud Samoan/Kiwi baritone from Flaxmere, Hastings. He is currently studying his Master's in Advanced Opera Studies under the tutelage of Nikki-Li Hartliep, as a member of the Te Pae Kōkako TANZOS (The Aotearoa New Zealand Opera Studio) programme, at the University of Waikato. Faamanu began his singing journey in church, where he was part of the youth group and choir. Inspired by his older brothers, he auditioned for the youth programme Project Prima Volta (PPV) and has since worked both onstage and backstage with Festival Opera through PPV. He is also part of an operatic quartet called 'Alofa', made up of himself and his three brothers. Together, they perform regularly around the country at a variety of corporate events. Faamanu received the TAPA Scholarship Award in both 2021 and 2022, as well as the prestigious Blues Award in both years—an honour recognising students who excel in sports and the arts. He was selected to attend the New Zealand Opera School every year from 2022 to 2025 and was invited for a 5th time this year.

Faamanu has performed in many major operatic productions, including NZ Opera's *Rigoletto* (2024), Festival Opera's *La Traviata* (2019), *Madama Butterfly* (2017), *La Bohème* (2016), and *Carmen* (2018). He appeared as Aeneas in Project Prima Volta's production of *Dido and Aeneas* (2016), sang the role of Harasta in Festival Opera's *The Cunning Little Vixen* (2022), and performed as Simone in the University of Waikato's production of Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*. He was also in the ensemble for NZ Opera's production of Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*. Additionally, Faamanu joined NZ Opera on stage for their semi-staged performances of Verdi's *Requiem*, *Il Trovatore*, *Die tote Stadt*, and *Tristan und Isolde*, singing in the chorus alongside international casts and the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra. In 2023, Faamanu toured with NZ Opera's *Opera in Schools* programme, performing Respighi's *The Sleeping Beauty*, and again in 2025, touring Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love* to over 10,000 students across the country. In 2025, Faamanu was a Finalist in the North Shore Berecroft Aria Competition and also for the New Zealand Aria Competition in Rotorua

Thank you sincerely for giving me the opportunity to be part of this remarkable programme, made possible through your generous support. This year has been incredibly busy, filled with meaningful learning, artistic growth, and unforgettable experiences. In this report, I will do my best to outline just how impactful my time with TANZOS has been on both my musical and personal development. I am deeply grateful for everything this programme has offered me, and I look forward to carrying these lessons with me as I head overseas in 2026.

Vocal Progress and Defining Repertoire

The second half of 2025 marked a period of enormous growth in my vocal development. Working closely with my teacher, Nikki-Li Hartliep, has been truly eye-opening. Our work covered all aspects of vocal technique, including breath control, vocal support, vocal health, exercises, and the importance of language. However, the most transformative lesson for me was learning the importance of confidence — trusting myself as a singer.

Developing confidence and self-belief addressed many of the issues I had previously struggled with. Nikki has helped me trust my voice and let go of distractions once I step on stage, allowing me to sing with greater freedom and authenticity. This newfound confidence enabled me to revisit and tackle more challenging repertoire, both familiar and new.

One highlight was returning to The Count's aria "Hai già vinta la causa" from *Le Nozze di Figaro* by Mozart. This role had always been difficult for me to characterise, as the Count is a wealthy, entitled nobleman — far removed from my own personality. Through increased confidence, I was able to fully embody the character without feeling restricted by self-consciousness.

I was also proud to perform my first Puccini aria, "Questo amor" from *Edgar*. This piece is widely regarded as one of Puccini's most beautiful, yet vocally demanding works, and performing it marked an important milestone in my development. I am now further challenging my voice with more advanced repertoire, including "Per me giunto" from Verdi's *Don Carlo* and "Avant de quitter" from Gounod's *Faust*. As a young baritone, these were arias I once only dreamed of singing — it is remarkable to now be working on them seriously.

In October, we were joined by Glenn Winslade from Sydney, completing what I consider the "dynamic duo" of teaching styles alongside Nikki. Glenn brings decades of experience and has an exceptional ability to explain complex vocal concepts in a clear and accessible way. His teaching focuses on free, natural sound production, particularly valuable for younger singers. As a male teacher, he was also able to relate directly to the physical and biological aspects of the male voice. I first met Glenn two years ago at New Zealand Opera School, and I continue to use his warm-ups daily — a testament to their effectiveness.



Programme Tutors

TANZOS offers an outstanding group of tutors who provide a well-rounded and thorough education. Michael Joeldelivers invaluable insights into musical context and style, covering repertoire from early Baroque through to late Romantic and modern opera. He also reinforces essential skills such as music theory, rhythm, sight-singing, harmony recognition, and music history.

Norman Franke has guided us through the complexities of the German language, helping us understand grammar while also analysing song texts and translations in depth. His work has been instrumental in strengthening my approach to German repertoire.

We were also fortunate to have Ben Knight visit on three occasions to lead resilience training classes, providing valuable tools for managing the psychological demands of a performance career. A major highlight was a visit from Paul Anthony-Keightley, former singer and current artist manager at the Patrick Togher Agency, who offered invaluable insight into the business side of the industry and the perspective of agents and managers.

FRIDAY 14TH NOVEMBER | 7PM
DR JOHN GALLAGHER CONCERT CHAMBER



WITH NICK FLETCHER, PIANO



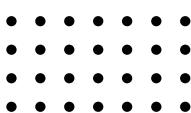
National and International Coaches

We were privileged to work with an exceptional group of visiting tutors and coaches. Caroline Dowdle from London — a senior coach at the Royal College of Music and an internationally renowned répétiteur — worked closely with us on refining technique through specific repertoire. She provided practical strategies for breath management in difficult passages, legato, and maintaining consistent support throughout long phrases.

We also welcomed Thomas Johnson, répétiteur at Opera Australia, who brought a wealth of experience, particularly in German repertoire, having lived and worked in Germany for many years. His guidance greatly improved my understanding of German language, poetry, and effective methods for learning new repertoire.

National tutor David Harper was another invaluable presence. His combined understanding of vocal technique and repertoire proved especially helpful as I prepared for overseas auditions. I find that I learn new repertoire significantly faster when working with David, and his guidance was crucial during this period.

Competitions and Opportunities



I began Semester B by performing in several fundraising concerts supporting fellow young singers preparing to study overseas. These concerts provided valuable performance opportunities while contributing to a meaningful cause.

Following this, I spent several months preparing for the Semester B recital — a period during which I noticed the most significant changes in my voice. In November, the current TANZOS cohort collaborated with alumni to present Una Serenata Italiana in Wellington, in partnership with the Italian Embassy. The concert was directed by Elaine Kidd, Director of the Jette Parker Artist Programme, and accompanied by Caroline Dowdle and Jono Dunlop. This intensive two-week rehearsal period provided valuable experience in a high-pressure, professional environment and was a standout highlight of the year.

Later in November, I tested everything I had learned by competing in the New Zealand Aria Competition at the Sir Howard Morrison Centre in Rotorua. I was honoured to be named a finalist and to perform Zurga's aria “L'orage s'est calmé... Ô Nadir” from Bizet's *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* with the Auckland Philharmonic Orchestra. This was my first experience singing solo with an orchestra, and it was truly life-changing. Feeling the support of the orchestra behind me was both grounding and exhilarating. It was also incredibly special to share the stage with my brothers, Alfred and Jordan — marking the first time three siblings have competed together in an NZ Aria finals night.

Another unforgettable experience was observing a masterclass with Joyce DiDonato. While I did not participate directly, I learned a great deal from watching. Her reflections on taking time to develop — and the fact that she began her professional career at 29 — were particularly inspiring.



2026: Auditions, Engagements and Future Plans

2026 is shaping up to be a busy and exciting year. I will begin the year as baritone soloist in Dan Forrest's *Creation* with Hamilton City Brass and the Hamilton Arts Festival Chorus, alongside soprano Anna Leese, as part of the Hamilton Arts Festival.

In February, I will compete in the finals of the Nicholas Tarling Aria Competition. On ANZAC Day, I will make my Auckland Town Hall debut as baritone soloist for Auckland City Brass' *A Call to Arms*, conducted by Uwe Grodd, singing alongside Madeleine Pierard.

In June, I will complete my time with TANZOS with my final assessment, having learned three complete operatic roles. August will include several fundraising concerts, my Christchurch Symphony Orchestra debut, performing Mahler's *Songs of a Wayfarer*, and a performance as baritone soloist in Brahms' *Requiem* with Cantando Choir, once again alongside Anna Leese.

Later in the year, I will prepare to relocate to London. In October 2025, I auditioned for overseas institutions, with the Royal College of Music — the world's top-ranked music school — as my first choice. In December, I was thrilled to receive an offer of admission along with a full-tuition scholarship for a two-year Master's degree. I have accepted this offer and will spend the coming months fundraising and preparing for this next major step.



A poster for a performance. At the top left is the TANZOS logo. The main image is a portrait of a woman with a crown, set within a circular frame that appears to be falling or breaking apart. Below the image, the text reads "Tickets available now" and "UNA SERENATA ITALIANA" in large, bold, white letters. At the bottom, it says "SATURDAY 29 NOVEMBER, PUBLIC TRUST HALL, WELLINGTON". Logos for the Royal Ballet & Opera and the Embassy of Italy are at the bottom right.

THANK YOU!!

Thank you once again for supporting young singers through such an exceptional programme. TANZOS has equipped me not only with technical and artistic skills, but also with the resilience and confidence required to succeed in this industry. I am incredibly grateful for this opportunity and feel well prepared for the next chapter of my journey as I move to London.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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