



TE PAE KŌKAKO
TANZOS

THE AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND OPERA STUDIO

JANUARY – JULY 2025

FINAL REPORT



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2024-25 RESIDENT ARTIST

CONTENTS:



• NEW ZEALAND OPERA SCHOOL	3
• FESTIVAL OPERA NZ: GIANNI SCHICCHI/DIDO AND AENEAS	4
• NEW ZEALAND OPERA: OPERA IN SCHOOLS TOUR	5
• HAMILTON CITY BRASS: CARMINA BURANA	6
• CHRISTCHURCH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: BRITTEN SERENADE FOR TENOR, HORN AND STRINGS	7
• SETTLING BACK INTO TANZOS	8
• COMPETITION PREPARATION	9
• WHAT'S NEXT?	10
• ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	11



INTRODUCTION:

"I have had nothing short of a life-changing experience in the TANZOS programme. The skills and tools I have accumulated thanks to the very accessible and high-standard resources TANZOS had to offer allowed me to grow so much as an artist and as a person in this industry. It is a bitter-sweet moment completing my tenure as a resident artist, however, I understand this is just the beginning...

I have most of all been so incredibly proud to have been a Dame Malvina Major Foundation Scholar in this programme. Dame Malvina has been a big part of my journey since 2019, where she even temporarily taught me for 6 months. She saw something in me then and she never wavered her support. My only hope was that I represented her and the foundation well, along with the TANZOS kaupapa and my dear teacher Nikki Li, who I enjoy calling my "forever teacher". I had a great time writing this report in reflection of the final part of my time as a TANZOS artist, I am proud of the work I did and the singer I have developed into in the entire 18-months. Fa'afetai tele lava ma fa'amanuia Le Atua"

JANUARY 5th – JANUARY 19th

THE NEW ZEALAND OPERA SCHOOL

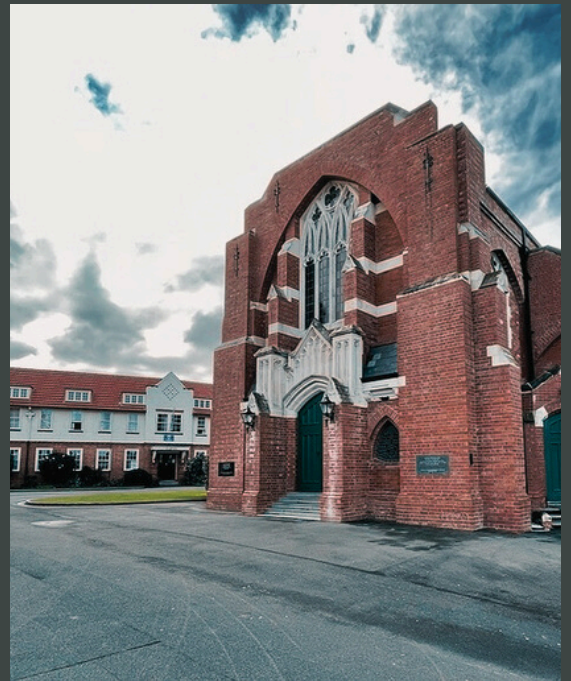


After missing the school in 2024 due to some severe sickness, like I mentioned in my first report, I was packed and ready to set off for my fourth NZ Opera School. This period was hard for me as it was not long after burying my late father, so settling into the school would be a challenge but getting singer-fit was my priority. The school was very supportive of myself and Faamanu's situation and offered any help and support we needed.

All my lessons at the school were an enjoyable experience, but most notably, was my first lesson of the school. It just so happened that it was with Glenn Winslade, whom I had never worked with before but we knew of each other for a couple years prior. I decided to go all the way and sing Romeo's aria; "Ah! Lève toi soleil". "You're brave", he said. He gave the most encouraging advice to open up and not be afraid to let the instrument soar. Despite struggling to maintain my voice that was feeling unconditioned, he gave me confidence and reminded me of what good technique feels like and that the voice will feel right when it sits right.

It was very rewarding singing at the two sponsor events. The first was held at the local museum and the other was at the Freemasons Village down the road from the school.

Lastly, as the icing on the cake of my wonderful experience at the school, I was awarded the Dame Malvina Major Foundation Scholarship, otherwise known as "the big kahuna". Of course this was a privilege for me because as I mentioned before, Dame Malvina and the foundation mean a lot to me and also, I felt like the hard work I put in the two weeks and throughout 2024 was paying off. A wonderful start to the year.



JANUARY 27th - FEBRUARY 17th

FESTIVAL OPERA NZ: GIANNI SCHICCHI



Just a week after the New Zealand Opera School, it was time to return home to Hawkes' Bay to where it all started. Before that, I managed to squeeze in 2 lessons with Nikki Li before tackling what would be my biggest operatic challenge to date. Gianni Schicchi, let alone, Puccini was something I didn't think I would be singing for a while; especially in such a big capacity like a full on orchestra, theatre, costumes etc. Of course, there were challenges like positioning the big moments, working the passaggio and finding the most primal vowels to allow for the best resonance. That was 80% of the work I did with Nikki Li, because thankfully enough, I had performed the role before with the Conservatorium of Music at Waikato two years prior.

This period started with an interview with Bryan Crump and RNZ. There I talked about the Opera School, the greatness of Dame Malvina Major and her legacy, along with promoting the opera for Art Deco Weekend. The rehearsal period was so much fun. Myself, along with my colleagues similar in age were treated like professionals and we were able to deliver a professional-caliber performance in return. The environment we were in, along with it feeling like home, made us all better artists. Also, because we were performing a comedy opera as well, we all contributed something that took the show to the next level in it's musicality and humour.

By the time we got to the performances, we were ready. Despite there being 3 shows in the span of 32 hours, we had built enough fitness and had the blocking locked in that we were on autopilot. It was already a big challenge for me to sing this role, but an added challenge would be being ready to sing it at 11am. Thankfully, through TANZOS I had built stamina to allow myself to be ready for any hour of the day and all the shows went well.



FEBRUARY 18TH - MARCH 4TH (rehearsal period)
MARCH 21ST - APRIL 11TH (performance period)



NEW ZEALAND OPERA: SCHOOL'S TOUR

This was a big undertaking for me as I had never been on the road in this capacity before. If i'm completely honest, I signed onto this project without taking much into consideration. Of course, I was up for the challenge. Learning this music (The Elixir of Love) in English after knowing a lot of the role in Italian was a challenge. The changing of navigation simply because the vowel was different was where the challenge was. Thanks to loads of coaching with Training Resident Répétiteur, Jonathan Dunlop and Nikki Li; I got over my fears quickly.

The rehearsal period was very busy as I was juggling three projects in the same month. Nonetheless, I soldiered on and focused on what was in front of me. The biggest challenge with a project like this was finding the fitness to run around and simultaneously maintain a solid vocal technique. It took a month before I felt fit enough for this show. By the time we got on the road, I was very confident with the music and blocking. The thing with shows with a lot of slap-stick material, something can go wrong at any given moment. You always had to be on your toes in this show. Most of the time, it was a great success and the children LOVED it.

Which brings me to the most rewarding part of this project and why, despite my doubts signing on, I am very happy and content with the work we did. The tamariki. The looks on their faces, their reactions, their joy and opening their eyes to a whole new world was priceless. In some schools, we were like celebrities to them. I thoroughly enjoyed this 6-week long project.



FEBRUARY 21st

HAMILTON CITY BRASS: CARMINA BURANA



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As I mentioned in the previous project summary, I had been juggling 3 projects in the same month. My debut as the 'Roasting Swan' was next on the list. This was both immediately after Gianni Schicchi had ended and not long after School's tour rehearsals had begun. To the point where in the span of a week, I was travelling Hawkes' Bay - Auckland - Hamilton - Auckland - Hamilton - Auckland.

My preparation for the role (an aria) was a lot easier said than done. The same tune sung 3 times and 90% of it; above the stave. It was also a big undertaking and quite frankly, a challenge in it's own very unique way. How do I find a nice position post-passaggio and stay there without pushing? Aside from casting tenors, this role would often be cast in countertenor, mezzo or even baritone (in falsetto) voices. I wanted to be able to do it and do it justice. After a few lesson with Associate Director Peter Lockwood in 2024 and lessons with Nikki Li at the same time I was working on Gianni Schicchi, it was locked in.

The period of engagement was short. A single rehearsal, a dress rehearsal, then a show. I had been told about projects like this, how it can feel like it comes and goes. A challenge for me was the timbre of the orchestra. Naturally, because it was a brass band, it was an adapted and re-arranged score from the original. Myself and the other soloists (TANZOS artists Jasmine Jessen and Samuel McKeever) felt it was drastically different than when we were in the listening and learning process. Either way, we were away as soon as we made the adjustment.

When the performance came around, we were ready and despite it being outdoors and at 8pm at night - we overcame it all and all sang very well.



MARCH 14th

CHRISTCHURCH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: BRITTEN SERENADE FOR TENOR, HORN AND STRINGS



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My preparation for learning this piece started in July 2024, where for countless hours, I would sit at the piano and play out my vocal line. Because it was Britten, who has notoriously abstract writing, this whole process challenged my musicianship and music theory. Where do I fit in the chord? What notes in the accompaniment relate to what I am singing? How many more beats until I come in? This was the tip of the iceberg.

Once I had learned all the notes and was confident enough - I began to sing and coach it. I had quickly realised that the real work was just beginning. The musicality and nuances of the piece was now my priority now since I had done the hard & "boring" work. After the 2024 TANZOS year ended, I temporarily put the piece to bed. I had performed Gianni Schicchi, learnt Carmina Burana, was rehearsing for the Elixir of Love Schools Tour and all the while in the back of my head, the Britten Serenade sat.

Between the two-week break of the rehearsal and performance periods of the Schools Tour, I squeezed in a few lessons to bring this piece back to life and to (my favourite part) polish! Before I knew it, I was away after that and suddenly in Christchurch ready to meet the conductor Ben Northey and the other soloist; Emma Eden (horn).

The room was so professional I had to pinch myself. What could a 23 year old possibly offer to a room full of established professionals? Safe to say, my imposter syndrome was through the roof. Once I got over it, I realised I had a lot to offer and especially, my voice to offer. They saw something in me and I needed to deliver. This piece challenged me in all the right places. It made me a better singer and musician. The trust and pressure was building me up and the experience and performance was incredible from start to end.



APRIL 12TH - MAY 30TH

TANZOS: THE FINAL LAP



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After an extremely busy first 3-and-a-half months of 2025, it was time to find some time to finally settle back into Hamilton and continue the amazing work I had done with progressing my stamina and musicianship. First: a much needed break. On top of this, a singing lesson to realign my technique!

A lot of exciting things happened in this period. 1) I had a photoshoot with my brothers at the Willowbrook Mansion. 2) Emmanuel got engaged to his now-fiancee; Katherine. 3) My partner Niamh became an aunty to the most beautiful baby boy, Angus. 4) My dear mum turned 60 and we all surprised her in Hawkes' Bay for dinner and presents.

A much needed break was filled by being around friends, family and loved ones. There was no better way to settle back home, sure it was busy but I managed to give my voice a break and spend time with my village. In and amongst all of this, I was able to be fully back into the fully intensive weekly schedule for TANZOS. Attending group classes, seeing coaches, singing in voice class and getting old and new repertoire rolling and preparing for any upcoming competitions.

The biggest and most important thing on the agenda was intensive learning on my three core roles. My roles were: Ferrando (Cosi Fan Tutte), Nemorino (L'elisir D'amore) and Rinuccio (Gianni Schicchi). I have been going hard at chipping away at these roles throughout this year, but also in 2024. I wanted to get these roles to the point where I needed little prompting and knew it inside-out. For this, I was able to get very helpful coachings from Jonathan Dunlop, David Harper, Donna Balson and of course, my lessons with Nikki Li. After a couple of weeks, I felt very prepared and ready.



MAY 30TH - NORTH SHORE COMPETITION
21ST JUNE - CHRISTCHURCH COMPETITION



COMPETITIONS

Despite not being the biggest fan of competitions; I understand that they are a vital part and a huge financial help to a young, aspiring singer. I mentioned in my 2024 end-of-year report that for the first time in 2 years, I re-entered into competitions (Lockwood New Zealand Aria) so I was still feeling fairly fresh, which in a way, made me very calm about it all.

The first competition I entered was the North Shore Competition at the Pumphouse Theatre. My preparation was simple, turn up ready and get to a point where you can go on auto-pilot vocally and lean into the character and themes of the pieces. I had great success at the competition where I was blessed with First overall in the Gentlemen's Recital class (Seamus Casey Memorial Award) and the Aria Competition (Becroft Aria).

Less than a month later, I went across the ditch to Christchurch for, what would be, my first competition in the South Island. I met loads of new people and heard some new voices and it was lovely. I also had great success at this competition, humbly accepting second place in English Art Song and first place in Lieder, European Art Song and Musical Theatre. For the main Ōtautahi Aria Competition, I was blessed with the runner-up position, capping off a wonderful weekend in the South.

Later this year, I am planning on entering and singing at the Dunedin Competition in August, along with the Lockwood New Zealand Aria in November, which I am very much looking forward to doing. In 2026, my hope is to expand wider than New Zealand and dip my feet into competitions in other countries. as for what competitions, I can't wait to see what will pop up.



WHAT'S NEXT?

TIME AFTER TANZOS:

I am now in a transitional period out of being under the University system. Finding a steady stream of income is priority, but also making sure that I can continue to have lessons with Nikki Li, along with coachings with whomever is in residence in Hamilton. I have been working on completing my CV to ensure it is ready for any application opportunity that comes up. I am also in the process of booking a recording session so that I can have recordings of my current repertoire in my back pocket for applications.

FUTURE PLANS & ENGAGEMENT so far:

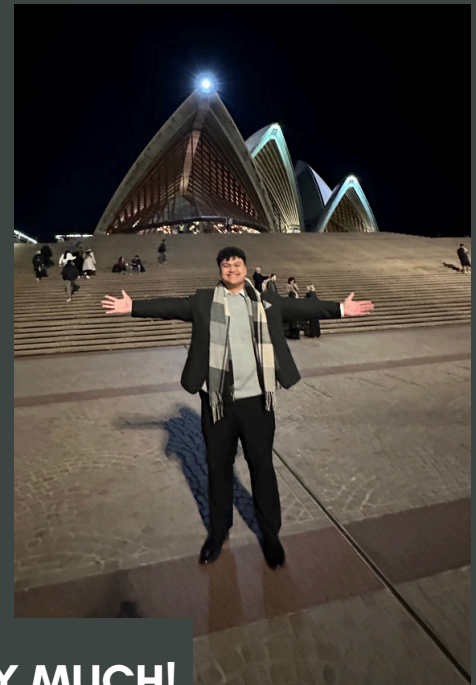
- July 25th – First Recording Session – Audition Arias
- August 20th – New Zealand Opera School Freemasons Foundation Dinner
- August 21st-23rd – Dunedin Vocal Competition
- August 31st – Homecoming Concert for Libby Montgomery at The Auckland Opera Studio
- November 6th-8th – Lockwood New Zealand Aria
- November 27th – Masterclass with Joyce DiDonato, Wellington
- November 28th-29th – Dunedin Symphony Orchestra: The Messiah



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



- Te Pae Kōkako: The Aotearoa New Zealand Opera Studio – staff & colleagues
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- Dame Jenny Gibbs
- Madeleine Pierard
- Nikki Li Hartliep-Lawrence
- Friends, family, loved ones & supporters of Jordan's



FA'AFETAI TELE LAVA, THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

JORDAN FONOTI-FUIMAONO

