

# THE MELBA

MAGAZINE OF MELBA OPERA TRUST







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## About Melba Opera Trust

Melba Opera Trust is Australia's premier scholarship program for promising young opera singers and répétiteurs.

Driven by Dame Nellie Melba's conviction "a beautiful voice is not enough", the program nurtures artistic development alongside business training, mentoring and performance experience. We are the next step for artists preparing to become professionals on the world stage.

**Inspiring Excellence  
Realising Potential  
Forging Careers**

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## Melba Opera Trust

ABN 96 424 419 725

T: (03) 9944 2100  
www.melbaoperatrust.com.au

Design by Kerry Aker

Editing by Andrew Stephens.  
Contributors and research:  
Amy Black, Bronwyn Douglass,  
Olivia Giglia, Sharolyn Kimmorley AM,  
Bruce Raggatt, Peter Reilly,  
Andrew Stephens.

Thank you to the Melba Alumni and Mentors who contributed their stories to form part of this special edition.

If you would prefer not to receive this publication, please contact Melba Opera Trust.

# Note from the Acting Chief Executive Officer

Welcome to the second of two commemorative editions of *The Melba*, to celebrate the 10-year anniversary of providing scholarships to exceptional young artists.

This edition comes at an unprecedented moment in modern history. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we live and work, for the time being at least. However, thanks to the largely agile nature of Melba Opera Trust, we are still able to deliver our world class program via digital platforms for the moment. In line with some of the leading opera programs in London, Melba Opera Trust adopted systems to enable artists to continue their learning, albeit in a re-imagined setting. Languages, vocal coaching, stagecraft and business skills development continue to remain our focus for this year's artists, under the guidance of Sharolyn



Kimmorley AM, Johannes Fritsch, Teresa Desmarchelier, Giuseppe D'Orazi, Dr Erin Helyard, Yvonne Kenny AM, Constantine Costi, Monica O'Brien, Kris Neill, Graham Pushee, Steven Richardson and Richard Thomas – to name a few!

We are grateful to everyone who has played a part in the evolution of the organisation's successes to date: the artists themselves, the mentors leading a pathway through the industry, the generous and loyal donors who believe in our vision of investing in world class artist development, and the dedicated Board of Directors and management team who make it happen.

As well as a brief welcome to our dynamic 2020 Melba Artists, the following pages capture the impact of the Melba Program through reflections and updates from our alumni and mentors. Sharolyn Kimmorley AM, Artistic Manager and Artist Advisor, talks about the "grit" of the Melba Program and depth of the training modules alongside artistic development and performance: the evolution of it is recounted by some of our longest serving staff.

Melba Opera Trust's achievements remain underpinned by the strong and generous community of donors who share our vision towards sustainability and keep Dame Nellie Melba's legacy alive; we would not be where we are today without your enduring belief and trust. Your support has helped launch 51 careers to date and it is your continued generosity that enables us to provide our Program to current artists during this unprecedented time.

I am grateful for the opportunity to lead the Melba during Amy's family leave, after welcoming her son, James, to the world in November 2019 and I look forward to the next chapter.

**Olivia Giglia**  
Acting Chief Executive Officer

# Welcome to the 2020 Melba Artists

Demonstrating the resilience necessary in a changing world, this year's Melba Artists have enthusiastically embraced the beginning of their Melba journey.



L to R: Louis Hurley, Chloe Harris, Georgia Melville, Su Choung, Emilia Bertolini, Nathan Bryon and Rebecca Hart.

The Melba Program for 2020 was underway with the usual sense of anticipation and excitement greeting this dynamic new group of Melba Artists in January.

In addition to bringing together mentors and artists from around Australia to Melbourne, the first mentor module included the annual artists' Melba Pilgrimage to the Yarra Valley to learn about Dame Nellie Melba and visit her memorial at Lilydale Lawn Cemetery, the permanent Melba exhibition at Yarra Ranges Regional Museum – including some specially chosen personal artefacts not usually seen by the general public – and her family home, "Coombe, The Melba Estate".

In February, artistic and business mentoring took place alongside a photo shoot and preparations towards the much-anticipated Meet the Artist performances in Sydney and in Melbourne, that were planned for March and April. Of course, this took a sharp turn with the impact of the global pandemic. Although we didn't know it at the time, the Meet the Artists performance in Sydney on 16th March would be the last opportunity for Melba Artists to perform live for the time being.

With the March mentor module scheduled in Melbourne just one week after travel restrictions were imposed, Melba Opera Trust was determined to remain present for our artists and quickly pivoted to

connect artists with their mentors online. Sharolyn Kimmorley AM saw the opportunity for the 2020 artists to focus on languages and embrace a level of detail in their preparation that their busy lives often do not allow. "Finally, preparation as I believe it should happen at all times!"

The artists took to it immediately and were most grateful to be able to continue their program, as noted by tenor Nathan Bryon. "Thank you for doing such an amazing job of keeping the Program going despite all this COVID-19 stuff, it's been really wonderful".

It has remained a focussed time for them, with four mentor

modules now complete and more to come over the following months. At a time in their professional careers when momentum is critical, we are proud to keep delivering the Melba Program, through technology. The health and safety of our artists and mentors remain a priority and we will continue to comply with the necessary restrictions at this time. We are also ready to reinstate face to face interactions as soon as we are able.

A very warm welcome to our 2020 artists.

**Read our Melba Artists' biographies on the website:**  
[www.melbaoperatrust.com.au](http://www.melbaoperatrust.com.au)

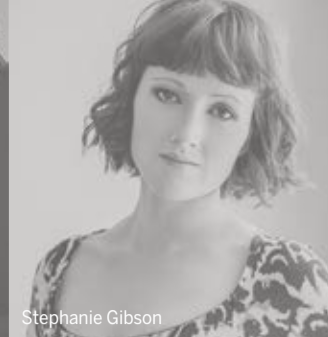




Beloura House and Garden



Siobhan Stagg



Stephanie Gibson



# THE MELBA APPROACH

A commitment to excellence has resulted in a rich and challenging program for the Melba's annual intake of emerging artists.

Melba Opera Trust's program has been informed by Dame Nellie Melba's holistic approach to operatic development. Today, it is carried forward by Sharolyn Kimmorley AM, Artistic Manager and Artist Advisor and Bruce Raggatt, Program Coordinator.

Each time a performer steps on stage, it is like being in the Olympics, says Sharolyn. This is why mental health, sports-style psychology and general wellness figure so importantly as components of Melba Opera Trust's comprehensive and long-running Mentor Program.

"Becoming a professional singer is a lifestyle choice and it is like being a professional athlete," Sharolyn says. "And you can't be in the Olympics if you don't do the training. In singing, there is a lot of rejection. I don't think people are always prepared for that. To move through that is about not beating yourself up, but having courage, strength, belief and the appropriate tools."

Acquiring these tools is central to the mentor sessions, which were launched in 2011 as one aspect of the three-part program for which Melba is now renowned. At that time, the intensive Artistic Development Program

and the Performance Program offered by the Melba were both firmly in place. The new Mentor Program began to support scholarship recipients with a fully holistic experience, nurturing all aspects of the performer and demonstrating Melba's philosophy for young singers to be "more than a voice".

These continue to include sessions on style, presentation, public speaking, time management, networking, stage presentation in recital, legal and accounting concepts for freelance artists, media training, recording and vocal health. Audition preparation, movement and stagecraft workshops have also become part of the many seminars in which experts in a particular field share their experience. In 2011, 50 sessions were piloted, but by 2019, more than 100 were delivered. As you will read in this issue of *The Melba*, in which some of these mentors are interviewed, the depth of training is exceptional.

Sharolyn says that the Mentor Program has evolved with changing demands and an altered landscape, noting that performers have needed to become much more flexible – especially so with the advent of COVID-19, which has



2019 Melba Artists in performance with Sharolyn Kimmorley AM. Image: Anna Kucera

dramatically changed delivery of the planned 2020 program.

"Fortunately, many of our mentors are happy to present their workshops via the digital platform and to date our program is largely intact. Of course, nothing can substitute for face-to-face coaching, which helps truly develop an artist's communication with their subject and audience. This is something that will be reinstated as soon as we're able."

More broadly, Sharolyn says artists need to take on all aspects of what the Mentor Program offers. "One thing we have boosted over the years is language training. Language is such an integral aspect and it takes a lot of time and hard work to grasp a language to the point where you are fluent. We can do only so much – we open the door, but the artists have to make the choice to walk through the door."

Language proficiency affords performers freedom of thinking and speaking in different languages, which is difficult to quantify. It enables flexibility and spontaneity to adapt a performance because the subject is intimately known in whatever language the performer is singing, rather than learning something in parrot-fashion.

Changing attitudes more generally is crucial and the Melba Program strives to impress an awareness of the hard work required for success. "Life is fast with resources available on the internet quickly. Preparing for a career as a professional singer, however, can't be like that. I observe that many have an ability, but are not prepared to make the sacrifices necessary and then try to take the short cut."

Even so, success doesn't necessarily mean performing in

the great opera houses of the world. Success can mean, in some cases, a realisation that skills could be diverted to pursue another career.

"Success is fulfilment – that your life has a meaning. Music, for me, is about doing something that can put a smile on people's faces and give them joy in their lives." Such attitudes are enriching, and young singers thrive when they grasp the importance of sessions dealing with wellness, mental health and sports-style psychology.

"This is especially important in a profession where you have to open up your soul. You bare yourself on that stage, so you have to be comfortable with who you are and deal with any demons.

"We give the Melba Artists tough love. Later in their careers they realise how valuable that was."





2010 Melba Artists

Fiona Jopson

**THE MELBA MENTORS**

**JOHANNES FRITZSCH**

*Johannes is a German-born Tasmanian-based professional conductor. He discusses ensemble training and professional rehearsal preparation.*

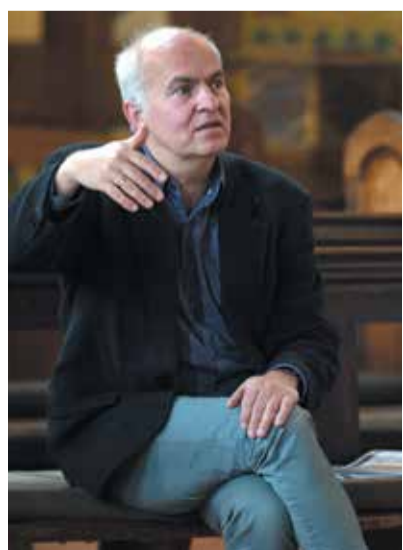
Working closely with singers for most of his career, Johannes not only does work on ensemble preparation with the Melba Artists, but he also offers coaching in his native German. "German language skills are very important as there are so many operas in German. And working on ensemble is an absolutely crucial training for the young singers' future careers."

As a younger man, Johannes studied piano and conducting full-time for five years at the Carl Maria von Weber Music Academy in Dresden.

Part of the training involved coaching opera singers, and learning how best to work with them. "When I left university, my first position was in an opera house as vocal coach and conductor, so that was my daily work: to work with singers, coach them their new roles and prepare the ensembles. It is something that has been very familiar to me for the past 40 years."

Working on ensemble with the Melba Artists has several components, including a focus on how to prepare the individual parts before coming together to sing in ensemble. "All of them have had experiences with ensemble, some more than others, but it is a vital part of what they do," Johannes says. "They learn to listen to what the other singers do. Pronunciation, colour of the voice: the aim is to sing together in a really perfect way. My part as the coach is to help the singers to bring the various elements together for the best possible result in ensemble perfection."

*"German language skills are very important as there are so many operas in German."*



**BEHIND THE**

Determination, inspiration and dedication  
the success of Melba Opera Trust

The scholarship-based Melba Program, the continuing achievements of the 51 alumni and nurturing the broader Melba community are all outcomes that are significantly a result of the people in the wings: the staff behind the efforts that enable the Melba Program.

Amy Black, who has been with the Melba since 2004 (when it was the

Melba Conservatorium of Music) and became the General Manager in 2008, says the evolution of this world-class program has been possible thanks to all staff involved over the past 10 years, particularly those with lasting tenures such as Peter Garnick, Managing Director (2010-2019), Bruce Raggatt, Program Coordinator, and Finance Manager Simon Suen, who are both celebrating their

10-year anniversaries with the Melba this year.

Amy feels immensely fortunate to have had leadership support from her managers, Professor Mel Waters, Peter Garnick and the Board of Melba Opera Trust. "My journey has meant that my role has continued to evolve in line with the organisation. No year with Melba has ever been

the same, and we are always looking to refine and improve how we can best support Australia's exceptional opera artists. I love what I do, I love why we do it and I can't wait to continue introducing fresh ideas in support of a bright future for this very special company."

The Melba Program is structured in such a way that it affords



L to R: Amy Black, CEO; Bruce Raggatt, Program Coordinator and Simon Suen, Finance Manager.

**A vital element**

Peter Garnick was appointed Managing Director of Melba Opera Trust in 2010, and his contribution over nine years was critical in building Melba Opera Trust's success story.

In early 2010, the Melba Board commissioned John Hood to search for a successor to retiring Managing Director, Professor Mel Waters. Chairman, Rob Logie-Smith AM and Director Barbara Yeoh AM were charged by the Board with interviewing a shortlist and selecting the successful candidate.

They were unanimous in recommending Peter because of his scientific training, his career as a violinist and subsequently as an orchestral manager. His experience as a CEO began with four symphony orchestras in the USA. He subsequently led the West Australian Symphony

Orchestra for six years, managing its corporatisation, and later Orchestra Victoria for 11 years, navigating its transition to independence.

This trajectory enabled Peter to bring to Melba Opera Trust insights to and a grasp of the vital elements of the industry, including fundraising, marketing, people management and teamwork.

His fundraising expertise, underpinned by his wide network, was a key ingredient in the organisation's financial success. One outstanding example is the Melba master classes at

Cranlana, the Myer family home. Lady Southey AC's generosity in hosting these was a direct result of Peter's work with her at Orchestra Victoria, where she was a major benefactor and guardian angel.

Peter's industry networks were also beneficial to the embryonic Trust. He worked in the mid-1980s at Opera Australia (then The Australian Opera) where he forged relationships with Sharolyn Kimmorley AM and Moffatt Oxenbould AM. When the Trust was seeking artistic leadership to work with Amy to develop the training program, Peter facilitated meetings with

Sharolyn that ultimately led to her deep and sustained involvement. Through his relationship with Moffatt Oxenbould AM, Peter was instrumental in establishing the partnership between Melba Opera Trust and the Dame Heather Begg Memorial Award, which supports early professional Australasian opera singers.

Leadership, staff development, strategic thinking and governance, as well as empathy with artists, team members and benefactors were all features of Peter's nine years at the helm. He was also a mentor to his colleagues, in particular to his successor, current CEO Amy Black.





Janet Szepei Todd

David Jones, Siobhan Stagg and Michael Coleman

Sophie Yelland

# THE SCENES

have been the foundations underpinning during its first decade of operations.

artists the gift of time. Without having to rush overseas or accept opportunities before they are ready, the program and its funding allows our artists time to develop – both artistically and professionally – to prepare, make contacts, experiment with performance and save precious funds, all while working with some of the world’s best, here in Australia.

“The program has altered the course for operatic development drastically in Australia and I’m pleased to have played a role in creating that opportunity for our artists.”

Of course, the many local and international achievements of alumni are usually marked by significant challenges. “Time after time I have seen alumni forge ahead in the face of disappointment, and it’s their sacrifice and resilience that inspires me to make the program the best that it can be... they deserve it!”

The vibrant community that has grown up around these young singers includes the support they provide to each other. “Our artists are talented, but they are also exceptional colleagues and the friendships that have emerged as a result of the program is undoubtedly one of its great strengths. This extends to the Melba mentors who remain generous in sharing their

wisdom and time, which in turn creates such a wonderful spirit of reciprocity among the artists.”

An integral part of the community comprises the incredibly supportive donors, who take such a keen interest in the young artists coming through the Melba. Everyone working together to create a sustainable financial future has created a sense of common purpose. “It’s clear that being a part of our artists’ journey is very moving for our donors, and there is a real sense of shared involvement, which feels rewarding to be around.”

Bruce Raggatt’s role as Program Coordinator has involved him in two key parts of the Melba Program: Performances and Mentor Modules. Initially, his role included dealing with clients seeking to engage Melba Artists, organising venues and accompanists, devising some musical programs and looking after invoicing and budgeting, alongside Jo Beaumont. This later expanded to take in working on the Mentor Modules, managing their logistical side (booking venues or organising catering) and helping to shape the content in artistic, business and professional development sessions.

With a background as a singer, Bruce’s priority has been to ensure the content is tailored to reflect what skills they need now and as their careers progress.

“I have striven to make sure the quality of the mentors is always improved and that what they present is crafted to be as pertinent to our artists as possible. It is important to tailor the program as much as we can to each cohort of artists. As a result, I have ongoing dialogues with mentors to hone, shape and update content. This is a process that I know our mentors love because they believe in our artists and our program and want what they deliver to be as accessible and relevant as it can be.”

Engaging mentors has had several facets: sometimes, particular needs have evolved – such as stage-makeup training – and Bruce has sought people with appropriate industry expertise. At other times, the Melba has been approached by professionals. “This is an affirmation of the standing of Melba Opera Trust in the industry. And others, like Stuart Skelton for example, had such a great time working with our singers that he has returned to Melba Opera Trust many times, but has also encouraged other international artists like Susan Bullock CBE to work with us...and she loved her experience too!”

For Bruce, the most inspiring moments involving the artists have been those when they have demonstrated how far they have come artistically and personally as a result of being in the program. “Most recently perhaps, I am thinking of

Cleo Lee-McGowan speaking at the Meet the Artists in her final of three years in the program. Her speech was delivered with such calm assurance and confidence – it was testament to a significant transformation in not only her capacity but also her sense of who she is as a person and an artist. So many of the artists emerge after their time with Melba as more polished, better presented and more artistically mature – it is always tremendously rewarding to observe these changes.”

As for Finance Manager Simon Suen, he says joining the Melba a decade ago meant participating in the transformation of the Melba Conservatorium of Music into the Melba Opera Trust. “My role is to support my fellow team members with relevant, accurate and timely financial information and advice, and to report our financial status to the Board and other stakeholders. During the years the financial planning, reporting and controls have been strengthening to support the extensive programs we continue to offer.”

Simon’s work has become an integrated part of the professionalism and high standards set by Melba Opera Trust. He says his biggest achievement “is a clean bill of financial health for a decade endorsed by the Board and the auditors”.

## THE MELBA MENTORS



### YVONNE KENNY AM

**An international soprano and teacher at London’s Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Yvonne mentors vocal development at Melba Opera Trust.**

Yvonne directs her focus as a mentor to the artistry of singing – as she says, to make the sound as free as possible and to optimise a singer’s strengths. “Singing has to be as close to speech as possible to make it believable. That is always my focus: finding the pulse in all of those languages.”

Living mostly in London with two periods in Australia each year, Yvonne has been taking classes at the Melba since the Mentor Program launched in 2011. In her sessions, she encourages Melba Artists to find their own voice, rather than just parroting what they are told. “Then it comes alive off the page. I am very interested in freedom of the voice, optimal resonance and beauty of tone: that is my goal with everybody with whom I work. I want to find their best possible sound and best possible way of expressing themselves with passion and drama. Not catching that passion and drama on the throat, but keeping it always on supported breath.”

Yvonne believes the benefit of group coaching followed by one-to-one sessions is that singers can hear positive results in others before they can sense it in themselves.

“It is my job to help people find their own expression and to work in great detail. I think this is one of the most important things I can offer. We all work with very good coaches and prepare our work wonderfully, but it needs to be at a very refined level. I think opening peoples’ eyes to how detailed that needs to be, they can then step forward.”

With her Melba sessions Yvonne often opens some segments to supporters so they can observe the learning in action. “In a performance situation, you see what happens under pressure and you see what needs to be assisted or developed in order to cope with that. And for the people who are attending, it helps their understanding of just how complex learning to be a fine singer really is. And how much detail and hard work is involved.”



Peter Garnick

Undoubtedly the most significant consequence is the 51 Melba alumni who are pursuing operatic careers both here and overseas – a unique Australian success story.

Peter’s legacy is well captured from one of his earliest quotes: “Our work is to build bridges to the professional sphere. We select the small number of people who have the talent, drive and instinct to be successful. Then, through financial support, networks and mentoring, we build that bridge so that they can take the next steps.”

As we are fond of saying... “Once a Melba, always a Melba” and Peter will always be a Melba.

#### Peter Garnick’s notable achievements include:

Creating a proud team of staff, artists and benefactors

Nurturing outstanding Australian talent towards opera stages around the world through the internationally renowned scholarship program

Building the Melba endowment and establishing Melba Opera Trust as an industry-standard brand

Increasing the number of Melba supporters fivefold to more than 500

Establishing a bequest program (currently 10)

Increasing philanthropic trust supporters from four to eight

Cultivating Mentor Program supporters (currently nine)

Exceeding \$10 million in total philanthropic support





Amy Black, Lady Primrose Potter AC, Siobhan Stagg, Janet Szepei Todd, Elizabeth Chernov, The Hon. Alex Chernov AC QC and Betty Amsden AO



Jacqueline Porter with Cheryl Barker AO



Lauren Fagan, for the 150th birthday of Dame Nellie Melba at the Dame Nellie Melba Kindergarten

## THE MELBA MENTORS



## TERESA DESMARCHELIER

**Teresa is a language and diction coach, assisting with Italian and French diction.**

Equipping singers with the skills for linguistic preparation across a range of languages, so they can be expressive and pronounce the basics well, is Teresa's primary objective in her Melba Mentor Modules.

Singers are expected to perform in several languages – usually Italian, German, French and English, and sometimes others – and also to be highly expressive and convey meaning in each language while singing. The challenge, Teresa says, is to give the artists a method that allows them to achieve correct pronunciation basic to every aspect of language. "Until you can read words and phrases correctly and well, there is no point singing them."

The method she teaches involves listening and discriminating sounds, just as a native speaker acquires his or her language from infancy. Using a variety of techniques, Teresa guides them through phonetics, various language registers, vocabulary and grammar. "We work on a dynamic level so that they can hear and pick up rhythm, style, accentuation and intonation and what I would describe as prosodic delivery. Ultimately, what we try to achieve is a synergy of language and music working hand-in-glove. Even though that is obvious, it is amazing how neglected it can be."

During the sessions, Teresa records the artists and plays it back. "When they start to see and hear how even a tiny mispronunciation can give a totally different meaning to the intended one, it can be very funny – and instructive," she says. "To progress linguistically they find they have to start at the beginning. I give them the building blocks."

*"Until you can read words and phrases correctly and well, there is no point singing them."*

In the following pages, Melba Alumni reflect on their

## Cleo Lee-McGowan

**Soprano**  
Joseph Sambrook  
Opera Scholarship –  
2017, 2018, 2019

When she joined the Melba, Cleo was fresh out of university and at a very formative time in her career.

She was especially grateful for the Melba focus on striving for excellence, hard work and dedication. The area that helped her most, apart from singing development, was public speaking. "This was something that once terrified me, but during my three years I was able to become a more polished speaker. This adds depth to a concert and sets you apart as a poised and accomplished performer."

Cleo always enjoyed the Meet the Scholars concerts. "It felt like a celebration of the exciting and challenging work that we were ready to take on for the year.

"Under the musical direction of Sharolyn Kimmorley AM, we had the most fantastic repertoire to sing. And my most memorable moment was the workshop with Maestro Johannes



Fritzsich in 2019. It was an enlightening experience of the work required preparing a role before it is ready to be performed professionally. It was fantastic to work with someone who is so knowledgeable, and I definitely gained a lot from it."

Cleo Lee-McGowan and Samuel Piper at the 2019 Meet the Artists concert at Deakin Edge.

**Cleo won the Sydney Eisteddfod Operatic Aria and moved to London where she is currently studying at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.**

## Siobhan Stagg

**Soprano**  
Amelia Joscelyne  
Memorial Scholarship –  
2009, 2010, 2011, 2012

When she became one of the inaugural Melba Artists in 2009, it seemed to Siobhan that the Melba team saw her potential more clearly than she could see it herself. "This endorsement gave me the courage to prioritise this vocation and to give it the time and energy it deserves. Ten years and many life lessons later, I still can't believe I get to make music for a living. I draw upon the philosophies and skills I learnt through Melba Opera Trust each and every day. This profession is not without its challenges, but the wonderful soprano Nadine Sierra put it beautifully when she said that an artist's duty is to 'showcase the beauty of human imperfection! What an honour it is to serve the community in this way; to bring people together to experience the transformative power of music.'

Siobhan says she often reflects on the negotiation techniques taught to her by former Managing Director Peter Garnick. "Each of us faces numerous forms



Siobhan Stagg in recital with pianist Timothy Young, for the 2020 Adelaide Festival. Image: Andrew Beveridge

of negotiation on a daily basis, some obviously more significant than others. It's been helpful to call upon Peter's sage advice when I've found myself at various crossroads – to put aside my instinctive reactions and consider things objectively from a business perspective. Sometimes we have to make tough calls about contracts and roles which are tricky in the short term but an investment in our longer-term goals. We need a healthy balance of head and heart in life, and it's

been invaluable to put Peter's lessons into practice along the way."

Siobhan remembers a wonderful farewell concert the Melba held for her just before she moved overseas in 2012. At the concert she performed Richard Strauss' magnificent *Four Last Songs* with a chamber orchestra in the South Melbourne Town Hall. "Nowadays when I sing these songs in mainstage symphonic programs, I realise how lucky I

was to accumulate these early performance experiences through the Melba Opera Trust Program."

**Siobhan has performed her signature role of Pamina across Europe, including at The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. In 2019 she sang the title role of *Cendrillon* for Lyric Opera of Chicago.**





Angela Brun



Chuck Hudson and Janet Szepei Todd



Fiona Jopson, Stephanie Gibson, Siobhan Stagg, Janet Szepei Todd, Nathan Lay and Lauren Fagan

scholarship journey and how their careers have evolved.

# Morgan Balfour



Morgan singing with the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra in Sydney for Noël Noël in December 2019. Image Keith Saunders

**Morgan moved to the United States to undertake a Master's Degree at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and she has now joined the Lyric Opera of Kansas City as their Soprano Resident Artist.**

## Soprano Amelia Joscelyne Memorial Scholarship – 2015

Spending time with the other Melba Artists in her year was a highlight for Morgan. "It is a big family that you become a part of and meet up with all over the world," she says. "I learnt so much from my peers and am truly grateful that everyone was willing to share so much with one another."

Morgan particularly appreciated the negotiation session with Peter Garnick. "My Bachelor's Degree set me up with language skills, stagecraft and vocal pedagogy, but there was zero discussion about the fact that as a singer you are essentially your own business or company.

The majority of young singers are unmanaged; I had no idea that contract negotiation was something I was even allowed to do, yet alone how to do it. After my year at Melba, I was aware that I had to think of myself as a 'brand' as well as a musician. This was especially beneficial when I recently applied for and received my Artist Visa in the United States."

A standout performance for Morgan during her Melba year was with her colleague Nicholas Tolputt. "At our first Meet the Scholars concert, Nick and I sang 'Io t'abbraccio' from Handel's *Rodelinda* together. I had never sung with a countertenor before and Nick is a gorgeous singer – I remember calling him a musical unicorn during our first rehearsal – as well as a great friend."

## THE MELBA MENTORS

# CONSTANTINE (CON) COSTI

**Melba Artists develop their stagecraft in lessons with this Sydney-based theatre and opera director.**

One of the fundamental principles Con works with is that successfully staging a performance is 80 per cent preparation. Whilst working on arias and doing scene work with the Melba Artists, he also spends a lot of time focussing on the texts being used in a performance. "We analyse what it means and how it is structured – the context, the characters, who they are and what they want. We analyse the music and storytelling. Arguably the most important thing in an opera performance is working out the emotions, the emotional journey the composer is trying to take the audience on."

The final piece of the puzzle is the artists and their own experiences. "A great performer makes what they do personal and they give away a part of themselves. I am really interested in the performers, for they are the ones up there doing it. Absolutely it is very new for them, but for me it is about empowering them to make sure they know their point of view is just as valid as the material they are working with and that their interpretation is what can make something really special."

Con says it is always such a rewarding experience in his Melba coaching to "start small and end up with a very meaningful and detailed performance". His sessions are usually built around a Meet the Artists performance. "I've found that the artists have relished this approach and they feel like they have ownership over what they are doing. They are proud of the work they put forward and eventually show to an audience."

Con says one of the wonderful things about working with the Melba is that when he begins his sessions, the young artists are always "very much in the zone and ready to go. They are a very focussed, enthusiastic and hardworking team, which makes my job better."

# Jeremy Kleeman

## Baritone Joseph Sambrook Opera Scholarship – 2014, 2015

Jeremy's decision to relocate to London to pursue an international career was inspired by his Melba experiences. "Many of my fellow alumni have taken their singing overseas with success, and Melba's Sharolyn Kimmorley AM has been regularly encouraging me to do the same. A strong value I gained through my time at Melba, that has carried into my professional life, was that if I put the hard work into my preparation for any given performance, it will pay many dividends. The devil is in the detail, as Sharolyn would say. I was so fortunate that Melba provided the funding for the coaching and lessons I needed to prepare thoroughly for all of my engagements and taught me

how valuable an investment it can be."

Jeremy says another incredibly practical aspect of the program was learning about negotiating from former Melba Managing Director Peter Garnick. "It has had a lasting impact on me. I love his phrase, 'That sounds great in principle, would you be able to send me the details in an email?'. That way you can be positive without committing to a 'yes' and you get everything in writing. I have used this on many occasions."

Personal styling tips have also stuck with Jeremy. "I finally learnt a nice way to do my hair for performance, which clothing colours are a great pairing for me and the correct length for a tie!" This was no doubt noticed at one of his favourite performances: *Nellie in Her Own Write* at the Port Fairy Festival in 2015.



"Something about the performance just clicked. Stephen McIntyre's narration and concept is so charming. My colleagues Stefan Cassomenos, Morgan Balfour and Zoe Drummond and I had a great energy together. The repertoire was beautiful, too. It was the first time I sang 'Ye banks and braes o' Bonnie Doon', and discovered that I had a real affinity for the song."

**Jeremy has since performed with Pinchgut Opera, Sydney Chamber Opera, Victorian Opera, the Dark MoFo Festival, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Queensland Symphony Orchestra and Musica Viva. He also presented a lieder recital with fellow Melba alumna Alexandra Flood at the Northern Lights Festival in Trømsø, Norway. He is currently completing post-graduate opera studies at the Royal College of Music in London.**

Jeremy also points to his meeting with Sir Bryn Terfel as a very special moment, "especially when he complimented my speaking voice!", while Chuck Hudson's acting and movement classes stand out as highly motivating and rewarding. "I regularly apply his work on motivating action and am careful not to fall into the common opera singer's trap of symmetrical gesturing that he alerted me to."



# Bronwyn Douglass

## Mezzo-soprano Amelia Joscelyne Memorial Scholarship – 2016, 2017

Receiving extra coaching from director Andrew Sinclair was one of the most wonderful experiences, among many, that Bronwyn cherishes from her time at the Melba. Ill health had unfortunately affected some of the other singers in her group and they could not sing, so Bronwyn jumped at the chance of additional learning with Andrew.

"One of the arias we worked on was 'Things change, Jo' from *Little Women*. With our extra time, we had the luxury of an in-depth discussion about the character Meg. We tapped into some of my own experiences growing up with two sisters and found such powerful, meaningful connection with the text. What we created was pure magic. By the last time I sang the aria through, most of the room was in tears. It was the first time that I felt that level of connection with my performance. It has made me strive to have that level of connection in all of my

performances and it has forever created a special bond between Andrew, me and the donors that were there."

**Bronwyn studied overseas in 2018 and 2019, including three months in New York at The Metropolitan Opera and The Juilliard School, as well as attending the Georg Solti Accademia in Italy, working with Barbara Frittoli, Alessandro Corbelli and Maestro Richard Bonyngue.**







Sue Logie-Smith AM, Rob Logie Smith AM, Elizabeth Chernov, The Hon. Alex Chernov AC QC, Deborah Cheetham AO, Tiriki Onus, Dorothy Blair and guest



Sharolyn Kimmorley AM, Dennis O'Neill, Siobhan Stagg and Amy Black



Amir Farid with Brenton Spiteri and Siobhan Stagg

## THE MELBA MENTORS



## JUDITH FIELD

**As a public speaking teacher, Judith's mentor sessions assist with how to present at public engagements.**

With eight years of mentoring Melba Artists behind her, Judith's focus on public speaking is warmly welcomed by the young performers. While they may be comfortable performing music on a stage, she says, speaking directly to an audience can seem like a foreign activity.

Yet the two are aligned, Judith assures them. "You have to breathe from your diaphragm, but one of the big differences is that when you sing you don't really look at the audience. But when you speak, particularly if you are in front of fewer than 100 people or so, you have to do a sort of 'laser beam' look if you are going to engage them."

During her sessions Judith uses props to stimulate ideas for impromptu speeches. She also asks the artists to practise introducing a piece of music or to talk about their scholarship and how they are using it.

"I say that public speaking is scarier than both singing and acting. When you are singing, you are in a role; when you act, you are becoming a character and you are not actually yourself. What makes public speaking scarier for some people, I think, is that you are being yourself and that means you need to let your personality, your eyes, your voice and everything work with you so that you look relaxed, confident and comfortable.

"You need to speak from your heart and your head, alternating between facts and feelings, emotions and logic, evidence and personal experience."

*"I say that public speaking is scarier than both singing and acting..."*

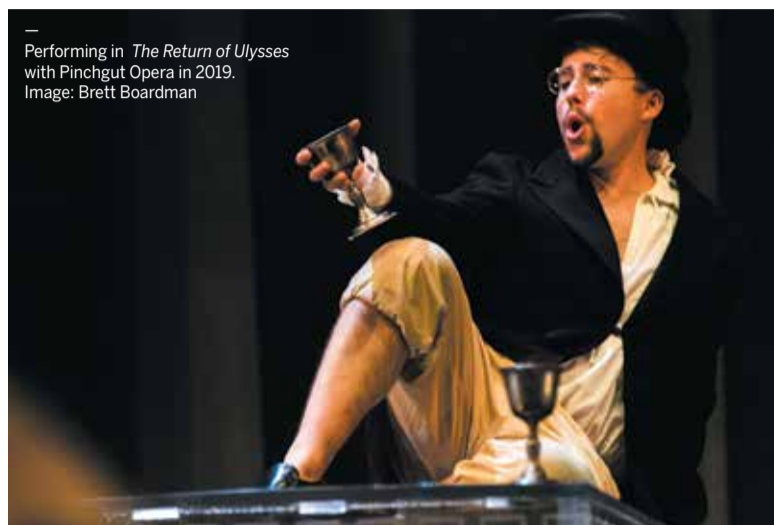
# Nicholas Tolputt

## Countertenor

**John & Elizabeth Wright-Smith Opera Scholarship – 2015, 2016**

Two years as a Melba Artist influenced every aspect of Nicholas' singing career. "I had no idea what challenges or hurdles an operatic career might present, but the Melba equipped me with practical knowledge across a diverse range of areas. There isn't a day in my current schedule that I'm not thankful for the advice and guidance that this program gave me."

Among these was learning to speak publicly. "This skill is surprisingly rare in classical musicians; they prefer to stay behind the music and are daunted by the idea of having to stand and deliver any type of speech. For me, this experience has helped me feel more natural



Performing in *The Return of Ulysses* with Pinchgut Opera in 2019. Image: Brett Boardman

and comfortable on stage, in interviews and in auditions. The confidence to express myself without music backing me up has made me a better performer and has helped open many great opportunities in my career

since graduating from the Melba Program."

Having the opportunity to sing for his scholarship supporters John and Elizabeth Wright-Smith was a heartfelt occasion. "I was invited to perform for John's birthday

**An established artist with the Hobart and Brisbane Baroque Festivals, Nicholas has also performed with Pinchgut Opera, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Western Australian Symphony Orchestra, New Zealand Dance Company (for *Orpheus: The Dance Opera*) and in the Adelaide Festival's Helpmann Award winning production of Handel's *Saul*.**

celebration at their beautiful property and in front a large group of John's family and friends. I felt instantly welcome and at ease. I've maintained contact with John and Liz and feel very fortunate to be part of their Melba family."

# Nathan Lay

## Baritone

**John & Elizabeth Wright-Smith Opera Scholarship – 2011**

Nathan completed his Bachelor of Music at the Melba Conservatorium between 2006-2008 and so has been part of the Melba circle for a long time. He still recalls highlights within the Melba Opera Trust Program such as working with American director Chuck Hudson, a week-long workshop that involved a focus on movement and stagecraft. "One thing that stood out to me at the time was how much he stressed the importance of knowing what every other character thinks and says about your character throughout a show. He really opened my eyes on text analysis."

Another memorable moment was time spent with Sir Bryn Terfel, during which Nathan picked his brain about how he has approached things during his very successful career.

Nathan – who recently joined the full-time chorus at Opera Australia – has had great successes since leaving the Melba, especially over the past five years during which he was in the Young Artist Program at Victoria Opera, while also undertaking a Master of Music in Opera Performance at the University of Melbourne. In 2016 he won the Australian International Opera Award, which allowed him to study for a year with highly acclaimed international tenor Dennis O'Neill at the Wales International Academy of Voice during his Master of Arts in Advanced Vocal Studies.



**Nathan joined the classical crossover group The Ten Tenors and has now toured with them around the USA several times, as well as appearing in performances in Australia, Dubai and the Netherlands.**



# Christian Gillett

**Bass-baritone  
Beleura-Tallis Opera  
Scholarship – 2013**

Developing an individual identity as an artist has been one of the greatest gifts Christian has received from Melba Opera Trust, especially as he has moved from opera to "crossover fare", including musical theatre and cabaret. "I was always encouraged to stick with my strengths and passions. I'll be eternally grateful for the support and assistance that everyone at the program gave me."

Working with one of his opera inspirations, Cheryl Barker AO, was "definitely one of those 'pinch me' moments" of the Melba Program. So too was having a long chat with Sir Bryn Terfel about the role of Sweeney Todd, one of Christian's dream roles. "Above all was the amazing professional and personal relationships that I was able to develop during my year as a Melba Artist. The knowledge

and encouragement gained from the many master classes – with extraordinary artists such as Cheryl Barker AO, Yvonne Kenny AM and Stuart Skelton, to name but a few – is something I take with me to this day."

**Christian also emphasises an opportunity to work with Chuck Hudson, renowned American opera director and acting coach. "He helped make our pieces come alive and has absolutely helped shape the way I approach how I perform a piece, regardless of genre. The numerous workshops that helped with things such as accounting, grant applications and branding – something that I was not skilled in before the program – has also informed how I operate as a freelance artist."**





Stuart Skelton and Kyla Allan



Siobhan Stagg with Yvonne Kenny AM



Stacey Alleaume with Dennis O'Neill CBE

# Lauren Fagan

**Soprano**  
Dame Nellie Melba  
Scholarship –  
2011, 2012

Lauren's Melba experience was unique. While working full-time in a sales role, she was simultaneously beginning work towards all the necessary skills required to succeed in an international operatic career. "Before I left for London, whilst I was in no way a complete artist, I certainly felt very well prepared and fully aware of just how hard I would need to work to become an opera singer worthy of the world stage. The amazing mentors and staff from Melba Opera Trust have given invaluable, personalised advice (and still do!) which has helped in a career which is constantly exposing difficult choices." Motivation and attitude underpin her approach towards consistent high standards as well as greeting each opportunity with enthusiasm.

"This self-motivation and determination to grow as an artist definitely helped with relatively quick progress from the moment I arrived in the UK seven years ago."

One of the main skills Lauren developed in the Melba Program



Image: Victoria Cadisch

was a strong sense of how multi-faceted a professional opera singer needs to be. "Improving my voice is the core to opera singing, but the program quickly made me aware of how much I needed to work on my acting, language, physical presentation and audition skills. I can honestly say I use these skills from the Melba Program every day of my life."

A highlight performance with the Melba was singing with other

Melba alumni at Stowell Park, a family estate in the Cotswolds owned by Dame Nellie Melba's direct descendants. "It reinforced the ongoing support and strength of the Melba family. It was quite surreal to be singing 'Home, Sweet Home' and 'Waltzing Matilda' with Melba's direct descendants Lord and Lady Vestey present as well as wearing one of Melba's original Cartier necklaces."

**Lauren completed her Opera Masters at Guildhall School of Music and Drama and became a member of the prestigious Jette Parker Young Artist Programme at The Royal Opera. She has continued to perform with The Royal Opera as well as performing Violetta in La traviata for Opera Holland Park and Mimi in La bohème for Opera North.**

## THE MELBA MENTORS

### CHUCK HUDSON

**Chuck is an American theatre and opera director. His Melba workshops focus on movement and aria interpretation.**

Helping singers to stand out from the hundreds of others during auditions is one of the primary goals for Chuck during his sessions with Melba Artists. New York-based Chuck has been a mentor at the Melba since 2011. He assists singers in helping to exercise dramatic control over any piece of music, regardless of where it is being performed. "Even under the high stress and limiting conditions of an audition or competition, I provide singers with the tools they need to prepare audition material that is both grounded in tradition and that dares to create a unique, honest and motivated performance."

Chuck's group classes revolve around four elements: a "psycho-physical" warm-up, exploring dramatic movement techniques, analysing a dramatic text to create character and action, and discussion of how these all combine in performance. In individual sessions with Chuck, the singers apply what they have learnt to arias in several languages.

Chuck maintains that there are specific acting challenges for opera singers. "Any performer must behave truthfully under imaginary circumstances. We want the opera singer to be able to perform truthfully just like actors in the theatre or on film; however, the demands of the opera world are not always those of cinematic realism. There are no close-ups when you are on stage.

"In a world where a character sings rather than speaks, we need the singer to discover and portray the dramatic truth, but not the factual reality." For this reason, Chuck's work with the Melba Artists helps to inform their singing with meaning, character and action.

"These techniques provide a genuine multi-dimensional structure that helps singers create a grounded, motivated and honest performance when they have 'nothing' around them. They are then confident to do their best moment-to-moment work in the audition room itself."



# Paull-Anthony Keightley



— 2018 Meet the Scholars performance at Deakin Edge, Federation Square.

**Bass**  
Amelia Joscelyne  
Memorial Scholarship –  
2018

"I'm still amazed with the variety of opportunities that were on offer to us," says Paull-Anthony. "I think the whole Mentor Program allows the artists to become better people on and off the stage."

A Melba scholarship came at an important time in Paull-Anthony's career, affording him the resources to prepare adequately for life as a full-time singer. "We

**After leaving Melba, Paull-Anthony commenced an ensemble position at Deutsche Oper Berlin, thanks to The Opera Foundation for Young Australians Deutsche Oper Berlin Award. He has now joined the OperAvenir program at Theatre Basel, singing Colline in La bohème and Hobson in Peter Grimes.**

discussed every possible element of the career, some of which at the time I honestly didn't fully understand. But in the years that followed, the value of all the lessons has become very clear. They were pivotal in my preparation to move to Berlin – a move that has allowed me to call Europe home."

Paull-Anthony has a respect for the art of preparation which he developed strongly at the Melba. "From learning your music and accepting that there is always more to learn, to being on time for rehearsal with the correct music in hand, preparation is always the common denominator."

Some of his most memorable experiences at the Melba included a concert for Mary-Jane Joscelyne's birthday and OAM award celebration. "I joined past Amelia scholarship recipients Siobhan Stagg and Fiona Jopson with Adam McMillan on the piano. Singing with Siobhan Stagg and Fiona Jopson was formative and our paths have now crossed many times in Europe. The Melba family ties are very strong!"





Hannah Dahlenburg, Nathan Lay and Janet Szepei Todd



Tiriki Onus



Leilah Fox, Rebecca Gulino and Emily Edmonds

## THE MELBA MENTORS

### DR CAMPBELL THOMPSON

**Performance manager for the New Zealand Commonwealth Games and Olympic Games, Campbell brings a sports-informed perspective to performance issues.**

When performance is a large part of a person's life and identity, it can also be a source of anxiety about the outcomes. Campbell's work in sports psychology segues well into the world of opera because both involve huge amounts of hard work, practice and personal investment to ensure a successful public performance.

In working with Melba Artists, Campbell emphasises that worries about "meeting the mark" can be as a result either of the goals artists set for themselves, or those set by the larger world. "But these worries are common to all performers at some stage in their careers. We explore in the sessions why that is so and how we can work with our minds in order to look after our performance and wellbeing, while still pursuing our goals in a way that is enjoyable and fulfilling for us."

Campbell first looks at artists' learning and growth mindset, which often means adjusting attitude so the focus is not on outcomes alone but on "having your heart in improving and learning in areas that are meaningful to you as a person".

"If we put our energy into that, we don't worry so much about the outcome and we are going to get better; we are going to explore our full potential as a performer and a person. Where the heart goes, the mind follows."

Part of this means bringing focus and attention into the present moment rather than imagining a future performance. Drawing on the concept of mindfulness, Campbell encourages artists to focus on the music, being connected to an audience and being "in" the performance rather than focussing on what is coming next.

Campbell emphasises how much he enjoys working with Melba Artists. "I find it really easy to help them because I think they are amazing. The level of talent and the beauty of what they are able to produce blows me away. I want them to see what I see in them." He finds it a privilege to help them find their "inner coaching voice" to replace their "inner critic".



## Damian Arnold

### Tenor

**Eleanor Blakemore Opera Society Vocal Scholarship – 2017**

As a result of being in the Melba Program for the year preceding his move to London, Damian felt very well prepared to enter study at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. The Melba, he says, provided incredibly well-balanced training at a particularly important point in his development.

While he has many memorable moments from his time at the Melba, he says the master classes were a highlight. "In my year we were lucky to have master classes with Australian operatic legends such as Yvonne Kenny AM, Stuart Skelton, Emma Matthews and Patrick Nolan. I was always struck by the professionalism of each master and their passion for the development of the next generation. Master classes are often open to the public, but I appreciated the intimate nature of our sessions where we felt safe to make mistakes and get stuck into what it means to be a singer."

Dealing with stress is critical. "At particularly stressful times, I have been able to lean on my Melba training. This has really helped me. A part of this process was



World premiere of *The Angel Esmerelda* at Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Image: Mihaela Bodlovic

developing time management to enable balance between the many projects I have had whilst at Guildhall."

A performance Damian remembers from his Melba year allowed him to put this training into practice. "As recipient of the Eleanor Blakemore Opera Society scholarship, I was scheduled to sing at one of their lunches, but I had a cold. I wanted the chance

to thank the Opera Society for their support so, despite feeling unwell, I decided to perform anyway. I announced I wasn't feeling my best and, although I did not sing to my full potential, I left the lunch feeling so appreciated. To me it was an amazing example of the supportive environment that Melba Artists are surrounded by."

**Damian is continuing his study at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama Opera School, where he is the recipient of the Ewen Balfour Award. He has had the opportunity to sing with the London Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Sir Simon Rattle and covered the role of Eurymachus in The Royal Opera's production of *The Return of Ulysses*.**

## Michael Petruccelli

### Tenor

**RJ & AF Hamer Opera Scholarship – 2016**

Better understanding his strengths and weaknesses as an operatic performer has been a valuable learning experience from the Melba for Michael. He says being able to recognise what you perform well and why is vitally important in choosing repertoire that will allow a singer to audition well.

"Having discovered and polished my audition repertoire throughout my year with Melba Opera Trust I was able to audition successfully for the Oper Frankfurt Opera Studio. This in turn has led to many performance opportunities on the Oper Frankfurt mainstage with boosted confidence as a performer at the international level. It also expanded my international network, leading to future opportunities."

Michael emphasises working with Yvonne Kenny AM in a master class as a highlight of the Melba Program. "It was a public master class and I was singing Don Ottavio's aria 'Il mio tesoro' from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. My first time through I remember singing okay, but definitely not at my best. Yvonne's first phrase after I had finished was, 'Remember



Singing in master class for Deborah Humble at Cranlana, Melbourne.

never to push the voice', which has stuck with me since! When I sang through the aria again, I focussed on being relaxed and concentrated on consistent airflow. This allowed me to be freer in my singing and consequently – and what can seem initially as a bit of a paradox – much more resonant. Not driving the voice can be a difficult thing to keep in mind, especially when you are singing over an orchestra and in an opera house of over 1500 seats. Nonetheless, maintaining this vocal freedom is something

that we must continue to work on throughout our careers."

In his work with Sharolyn Kimmorley AM, the art of preparation crystallised. "She often stressed the importance of being prepared for rehearsals. Knowing the notes is not enough! It is extremely important to know the word-for-word translation not only of your character's text but also the text of the character with whom you are singing. Equally crucial is to work through the pronunciation of the text – spoken first, and then sung – and to know

**Michael is currently based in Germany where he is a member of Opera Frankfurt's Opera Studio for the 2019/20 season. In Australia, Michael has performed with Opera Australia and Victorian Opera as well as participating in opera development workshops for two new works: *Ned Kelly*, for *Lost and Found Opera* in the Perth Festival and a new opera by Tim Finn, for New Zealand Opera in Auckland, New Zealand.**

intimately how your character fits into the narrative of the opera.

"At Oper Frankfurt, I have found that being prepared is especially vital, particularly when being cast in a revival production. Revivals are put on here with very little rehearsal (usually a week and a half). Coming to the first rehearsal knowing your translations, knowing your character and having studied the staging allows you to enter the rehearsal room on the front foot. It shows the opera company that you are a reliable and easy singer to work with."





Merlyn Quaife AM with Christian Gillett



Robert Barbaro



Panayiota Kalatzis and Susan Bullock CBE

# Tessa Hayward

**Soprano**  
Dame Nellie Melba  
Scholarship, Annie  
McFarling Opera  
Scholarship and Patrick  
& Vivian Gordon Award  
– 2019

Learning the art of preparation was very significant for Tessa during her Melba year; it is a professional skill that she believes touches every aspect of a final operatic performance, from language and music, to stagecraft, presentation and character portrayal. "I now have a higher level in my preparation of music. This allows me to be completely immersed in my performance and connect with the audience to a greater degree. I feel more secure in my technique so I can let out the emotional colours and story within the music."

Tessa says the program has offered her an incredible and



Tessa performing at the Melba Opera Trust 10 Year Celebrations event in Melbourne, August 2019.

detailed insight into all facets needed to become an opera singer, from marketing, health care and grant-writing to acting, languages and vocal coaching. "The program has given me guidance as an artist whilst providing incredible contacts in the industry. It has helped me realise this is my dream

and that, with preparation, hard work, perseverance and of course some luck, it is possible."

Among her memorable moments was working with Maestros Asher Fisch and Johannes Fritzsche. "It was incredible to sing some of my favourite arias for such a world-

renowned conductor [Maestro Fisch] who has worked for many opera companies and orchestras and conducted more than seventy operas. I learnt a lot regarding repertoire, breathing, taking cues from the conductor, ensemble work and moving the phrases." And working with Maestro Fritzsche on Mozart ensembles was "a wonderful and challenging experience".

"Finally, I loved my singing lessons with Yvonne Kenny AM. She has always been an idol for me; therefore, to sing through roles she has performed was incredible. She gave me tips for breathing, preserving the voice, chest voice and when to give and take musically. I learnt so much incredible detail!"

**Tessa is currently a Young Artist with Pacific Opera. She regularly performs in concert with Pacific Opera and in the Chorus of Opera Australia.**

## THE MELBA MENTORS



## MONICA O'BRIEN

**As a Sydney-based counsellor and life coach, Monica presents wellbeing and guides the artists with time management and conflict resolution.**

Having worked with creative people for decades, Monica is well acquainted with the difficulties they face in navigating a tough industry while also trying to be creative and grow into a sense of self. In wellness workshops with the Melba Artists, she emphasises that their empowerment lies in rising to the challenge of learning to manage themselves in practical, physical and emotional ways.

"When I talk to them about wellness, what typically comes to mind is exercise or nutrition. I don't approach it from that level only: wellness is an inside job. I try to encourage them to do those physical things, but if a person's mental, emotional and spiritual health is not balanced, there will be symptoms."

Monica stresses the importance of living in the present moment and being aware of habitual thinking processes in which we play the "B-movie" in the stories we tell ourselves about who we are. "I tell them we have a choice. Our reptilian brain will play a movie around, say, a rehearsal or performance and the mind naturally goes to anticipate what that will be like. If we change that story and play the A-grade movie, we get into a resourceful state and our performance is likely to be our best selves."

Using both group and individual settings, Monica ensures her sessions are very practical, providing Melba Artists with the tools to jettison negative self-beliefs that have often been unintentionally passed on to them. This involves helping to build up a resilience and competence grounded in a sense of self, rather than in external approval.

"But it doesn't happen overnight so we talk a lot about establishing tools to move forward."

# Janet Szepei Todd

**Soprano**  
Beleura-Tallis Opera  
Scholarship – 2010,  
2011, 2012

One-on-one work with prestigious international artists opened Janet's eyes to overseas learning opportunities and the potential for an international career. "Melba helped steer my path toward the US where I've lived, studied and worked as a singer for the past five and a half years".

She credits the broad range of skills acquired during her time at Melba for supporting her everyday working life, especially the professionalism required to manage herself as a business. "From presentation, to conduct, tax and finances...I can't stress enough how essential this has been as a freelancer in the music industry." After all, Janet says, Dame Nellie Melba herself was not only a brilliant talent, but also a fine businesswoman. "It was extremely valuable to have been

taught the skills to be a well-rounded professional as a young singer entering the music world."

Janet Szepei Todd in *Madama Butterfly* in Los Angeles, 2019.

**After leaving Melba, Janet completed a Master of Opera at Manhattan School of Music. She is currently based in Los Angeles where she regularly sings in the chorus of the Los Angeles Opera.**



Performing with Opera Australia for the operetta *Two Weddings, One Bride*. Image: Jeff Busby

# Zoe Drummond

**Soprano**  
RJ Hamer Opera  
Scholarship – 2015  
Dame Nellie Melba  
Scholarship and Patrick  
& Vivian Gordon Award  
– 2016, 2017

Zoe was so inspired by mentoring sessions with Yvonne Kenny AM during her time at the Melba that she made it her top goal – one she achieved – to move to London and study opera for the Master of Performance at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama under Yvonne's tuition. This achievement and others in her career since were also enabled by her work with Melba's Sharolyn Kimmorley AM. "She really raised the bar of my music-making. With her international reputation and experience she inspired me to pursue a career overseas. She is still one of the best coaches with whom I have ever worked."

One of the wonderful opportunities provided by the Melba was the chance to perform often, in many different venues, to many different audiences. "Becoming comfortable performing under a range of conditions has been incredibly helpful for my career," she says, citing experiences earlier this year when she performed on the icy cold island of Islay in Scotland.

Less romantically, the Melba sessions on tax, accountancy, negotiating and contract reading were also crucial. "It prepares you for the essentials of a self-employed singing business. I always read contracts thoroughly and know the questions to ask to make sure I am in control of my situation."

A treasured memory from her three years as a Melba Artist is a master class at the Sydney Opera House with Renée Fleming.

**Zoe performed the role of Clorinda (*La Cenerentola*) with West Green House Opera before beginning work with Scottish Opera covering Tytania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and performing in their Spring Highlights Opera Tour singing with fellow Melba alumna Jade Moffat. Zoe is also a principle artist with Opera Australia and won one of Australia's most prestigious awards, the 2018 IFAC Handa Australian Singing Competition Marianne Mathy Scholarship.**





Nikki Hill, David Aronson and Stefan Cassomenos



Toni Lalich, Shauntai Batzke and Deborah Cheetham AO



Samuel Dale Johnson



Samuel Sakker

## THE MELBA MENTORS



### GRAHAM ABBOTT

**Graham is a former ABC radio presenter and professional classical conductor. He mentors the artists in concert introductions and media management.**

Having worked in radio for many years and having been on both sides of the interviewer's microphone, Graham stresses to the Melba Artists that when in an interview situation, one of the most important things to understand is the context. This means seeing the experience from the interviewer's point of view: what do they need the interview for, where will it appear, is there a specific agenda and what sort of audience do they have.

In taking the artists through a detailed presentation about what an interview is and its various purposes and possible outcomes, one of Graham's main aims is to make them aware of the realities of these situations. "Often you don't know until you encounter it. It is an interesting field, but a minefield for the unwary."

Graham also conducts mock interviews, using various scenarios, to convey the different situations in which performers might find themselves when being interviewed by media. "Examples might include being interviewed for a local newspaper – by someone who usually reports on sports – about something you are doing at an outdoor venue. Or you are going to be interviewed on an ABC specialist opera show about a concert. These are very different scenarios."

In the second part of his classes, Graham has a focus on preparing effective concert introductions. He emphasises catering for the specific audience which, in his mock scenarios, might range from a primary school group, to a general audience, or to one filled with opera aficionados. "The way their imaginations sparked was fantastic. They thought in the first person and even made the introduction in character as part of the performance."

## Amir Farid

**Repetiteur**  
Repetiteur Scholarship (supported by Helen McPherson Smith Trust) – 2013

Working now as a staff pianist for the Vocal Arts Department at The Juilliard School in New York City, Amir says the skills and experience he acquired as a Melba Artist played a substantial role in his pathway to this prestigious role. "Studying with my mentor Sharolyn Kimmorley AM for a number of years and working with countless singers and coaches through Melba Opera Trust, gave me the experience necessary to establish myself as a sought-after collaborative pianist in New



With fellow Melba Alumni Siobhan Stagg and Rebecca Guinello.

York City. I developed the skills to play orchestral reductions in the most meaningful, useful and imaginative way possible. Melba

Opera Trust provided us all with the opportunity to apply our skills in the real world on a regular basis through public performances

**In addition to his work in the Vocal Arts Department of The Juilliard School, New York City, Amir is also rehearsal pianist with the New York Philharmonic.**

and allowed us to refine what we learnt to help propel our careers further."

Amir was the Melba's inaugural repetiteur. He says a highlight was an opportunity through Melba to sit with Sharolyn as her page turner, while she performed with Sir Bryn Terfel on the stage of the Sydney Opera House in front of a packed and highly enthusiastic audience. "It is still strong in my memory."

## Xenia Puskarz Thomas



Performing in Sydney for Melba Opera Trust's Autumn Soiree, April 2019.

**Mezzo-soprano**  
Amelia Joscelyne Memorial Scholarship – 2019

"We are given a taste of so many different things in this program, beyond music and language, which can reveal aspects that one is passionate about. Dancing, musician's health, learning spoken languages are just some of my new passions that have emerged from the program."

Xenia understands that a high level of professionalism is vital for a successful musician's career. "Some of the business skills we worked on – negotiation, tax, social media, networking and

even etiquette – are necessary for each performance. Having the capacity to be both your own manager and the performer, too, is essential to be able to keep working. Through the Melba Program I learnt to become the best manager I can be."

Xenia appreciated each performance opportunity with Melba. "At every concert there were always new and old faces of the Melba community to network with afterwards. It was significant to have their support and kindness radiate from the audience. I developed some friendships over the year of which I'm very fond. They made every performance dear to me."

**Following her Melba scholarship, Xenia headed to New York to undertake private study after winning the 2019 Opera Foundation for Young Australians Lady Fairfax New York Scholarship. She recently undertook the 2020 Song Studio workshops at Carnegie Hall where she worked with Melba mentor Renée Fleming, as well as other artists, Harmut Höll, Eliška Garanča and Gerald Martin Moore.**

## Shakira Tsindos

By the Light of the Moon with Opera Australia.

**Mezzo-soprano**  
Joseph Sambrook Opera Scholarship – 2016

Connecting with other Melba alumni who were studying and working overseas was what

**Before leaving for the UK, Shakira continued to perform as a principal with Victorian Opera as well as performing in Opera Australia's Schools Company tour of *By the Light of the Moon*. She is currently completing her master's at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama Opera School and recently performed the role of Zerlina in Merry Opera's production of *Don Giovanni* in Kent, UK.**

sparked Shakira's interest in developing her career in the UK. "Four years later, I'm in my final year of my master's degree at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and am already performing professionally in the UK. Melba provided skills and tools to best prepare me as a professional performer."

When preparing the role of Zerlina for a UK tour of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* earlier this year, Shakira could not help but think back to working with incredible directors and coaches such as Chuck Hudson and Sharolyn Kimmorley AM during her Melba scholarship. "They continued to challenge and push me to be the best actor and singer that I could be. These standards and expectations have ensured that I can hold my own in a rehearsal room and on the world's stage."

Another workshop she greatly appreciated was with ABC radio presenter Mairi Nicolson. "We performed mock radio interviews with Mairi following a workshop on dos and don'ts for dealing with the media. Promoting your work and the company you are working for is part of the job and I have had so many instances where Mairi's words of advice have kept me on target to present our best work to a radio audience."

Towards the end of her Melba year, Shakira and her Melba colleagues performed in the Melbourne Recital Centre's Primrose Potter Salon. "That is a very special venue for me as I had first performed at the MRC in high school for our school's showcase. To be presenting a recital-long concert for our family, friends and Melba community was something to cherish."



These concerts also gave us the opportunity to present unknown arias, ensembles and songs that I have since revisited in concerts and recitals in Melbourne and the UK."





Jade Moffat, Zoe Drummond and Morgan Balfour



Morgan Balfour



Bronwyn Douglass with Dame Kiri Te Kanawa ONZ DBE



Jeremy Kleeman, Alexandra Flood and Nicholas Tolputt

# Alexandra Flood

## Soprano RJ Hamer Opera Scholarship – 2014

Making her recital debut with Nicholas Tolputt, Jeremy Kleeman and Stefan Cassomenos remains a wonderfully strong memory for Alexandra. Held at the Melbourne Recital Centre, the event included Alexandra singing Monteverdi's 'Pur ti miro' with Nicholas. "It was my first-ever experience performing with a countertenor," she says. "It was truly magical and prepared me so well for when I performed that same piece three years later with Russian countertenor Iurii Iushkevich and the St Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra."

As a Melba Artist, Alexandra discovered that one of the most important things to be aware of as an opera performer was one's individual skills as an artist. "What makes you unique? What can you share that no one else can? This awareness of who I am and what I have to give helped me so much throughout the first years of my career and continues to guide my choices today."

She also appreciated learning about budgeting. "With the generous scholarship funds,



Alexandra Flood in *La traviata*.

it was up to us to develop our artistic plan and decide how many singing lessons we needed, whether the German or the Italian course would best serve us, how many scores we could (or should!) purchase. This smart approach to financing my career has been immensely useful as I set out as a freelancer. I still use

some of the Melba Excel sheet resources!"

Of her mentoring sessions, a coaching lesson with visiting Semyon Rozin, during which she worked on Violetta's aria 'Sempre libera' from Verdi's *La traviata* was memorable. "The aria was new to me and I had received some feedback that I wasn't destined

In 2014 Alexandra was a young artist at the Salzburg Festival, where she sang the roles of Blonde in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail für Kinder*, Modistin in *Der Rosenkavalier* with the Vienna Philharmonic, and Clorinda in *La Cenerentola für Kinder*. Since then she has performed extensively in Europe both in opera and concert. Highlights include: Norina in *Don Pasquale* for Vorarlberger Landestheater, Bregenz; Marguerite in *Le Petit Faust (Hervé)* with the Staatstheater am Gärtnerplatz, Munich; Blonde at the Vorarlberger Landestheater in Bregenz, Austria; and Maria in *West Side Story* in Bolzano, Italy.

to sing Violetta. But Mr Rozin heard the lyrical potential in my voice and encouraged a healthy, bel canto approach to the role. Two years later I made my debut as Violetta in Amsterdam. I am so grateful for those early Melba moments, many of which gave me the strength and confidence to continue along this path."

## THE MELBA MENTORS

### GLENN WINSLADE

**As a former international tenor, Glenn is a highly sought-after Australian singing teacher. He presents on vocal health and the importance of knowing about history's great singers.**

Bodily awareness is vital for performers, and the crucial role of the throat, ear and nose in a singer's life cannot be underestimated. When Glenn takes his sessions on vocal health, he emphasises the importance of professionals such as speech pathologists and ear/nose/throat specialists in helping to maintain singers' health and in assisting when problems arise.

Going to an ear, nose and throat specialist can be confronting for young singers, especially when it might involve having their nasal cavities anaesthetised so that a camera can be fed through for inspection. "Yet every singer has a point in their career where they may have an allergy or another problem that has arisen. Thus, it is vital to attain images of the vocal tract while it is in good form and means visiting an ENT specialist early in their careers."

During his sessions with Melbas, Glenn also discusses issues such as reflux. "We talk about what the triggers and treatments are. A lot of singers don't realise that the worst thing you can do is eat spicy food late at night and then go to bed." This can have profound effects on the voice.

Making young singers aware of how the body responds in certain situations can also be revelatory. "Recently in New Zealand at a performance, the director – unbeknownst to me – had decided to use stage smoke. Even though you know the smoke is safe and it isn't going to hurt you, psychologically your eyes see the smoke and they start to close to protect the lungs. It affected all the singers because it is a set-up with which they are not familiar. There are ways we can mentally balance that out, but you need to know how the body responds to such situations."

Glenn talks to Melba Artists about singing history, too. "I explain to them what to listen for in the singers they come across. We are incredibly lucky that we have recordings of some of the singers singing music by composers they knew, such as Melba who worked with Puccini and Verdi." The class also investigates certain performance practices that are no longer fashionable and examining why this is so.



# Jessica Harper

## Soprano Dame Nellie Melba Scholarship and Patrick & Vivian Gordon Award – 2018

Magical is the way Jessica describes her year at Melba Opera Trust, having been deeply stimulated by the high standard of preparation required. Now this strongly informs her artistic and career choices.

"The Melba Program carries so much distinction that it demands excellence from the artists in every performance, workshop and master class. Thorough preparation, organisation,

Jessica has won many awards including The Opera Foundation for young Australians Dalwood-Wylie AIMS Graz Award and AIMS Sundell Study Award, the Inaugural Limestone Coast Opera Lucca Competition and the Gertrude Opera Glyndebourne Cup Asia Pacific Regional Final which led to her being a finalist in the illustrious Glyndebourne Opera Cup in the UK in 2020.

good manners and punctuality definitely help you to stick out in the real world. Dame Nellie herself was famous for her fierce and unyielding Scottish work ethic; this is something I try to emulate every day."

The traditional Melba Pilgrimage during which artists visit sites in the Yarra Valley that were significant in Dame Nellie's life, was a highlight for Jessica. "I have admired Dame Nellie Melba for my entire life and receiving her scholarship was so touching for me. We visited her estate and even her grave in Lilydale. It was enormously inspiring." The annual Meet the Scholars concert at Deakin Edge was a wonderful experience, too. "The program, performers (if I may be so bold!) and venue were all absolutely stunning. I had the joy to perform not only an aria, but also several ensembles with my Melba colleagues, all of whom I still count among my very dear friends."

Underscoring all of this, though, were interactions with mentors such as Sharolyn Kimmorley AM and Teresa Desmarchelier. "I have always been a proud language lover, and during my Melba year I was given the skills to keep perfecting my understanding of language prosody as it informs melodic line in classical



Performing in finals for the Glyndebourne Opera Cup in March, 2020.

music. This opened up a world of language nuance for me, which has totally changed how I approach learning new roles and works. The text gives you everything you need to inform

your character analyses and then to come up with your acting choices. Not just that, but once you have your vowels perfectly lined up, the voice also sounds at its most beautiful."





Simon Bruckard and Shakira Tsindos



Coombe, The Melba Estate



Deborah Humble with Michael Petrucci



Timothy Newton with Dame Felicity Lott DBE

## THE MELBA MENTORS

### KATIJA VLATKOVICH

**As a social media specialist, Katija leads workshops on understanding the importance of social media, advantages and pitfalls.**

Katija has found that personal branding is something a lot of young artists haven't thought too deeply about, and it can be far more complex than many imagine. Teaching artists about the potential successes and pitfalls of social media and online self-promotion is her focus during mentoring sessions. Katija wants to inspire them to use it well, but judiciously.

"We go through the fundamentals of how to make sure you have a clear positioning online, ensuring branding is all on point and not having anything questionable. The idea is to teach artists how to showcase themselves by putting their best foot forward, so I offer examples of other artists who are doing it well."

During the classes, Katija teaches Melba Artists about which communications channels are best to focus on and how to create content that is going to connect with their most appropriate audiences. "It is setting them up with the basics so they can create a clear and cohesive brand online."

One of Katija's rules of thumb is to ensure that online posts, whether video, images or text, are done well. She also emphasises the importance of good research into target audiences. "If they are intending to go to Italy to work, for example, it is important to do research so that they position themselves in front of the right people, influencers and supporters. It is about being more strategic about where you want to be rather than posting content for the sake of it."

Katija believes that younger artists are sometimes unaware of their broader footprint online; they don't necessarily know how to keep their brand and personal life separate in an online context. "It is very easy to upload something, but very hard to take it down."

At the same time, she aims to inspire emerging artists about how much reach they can achieve with just a phone and how they can potentially monetise content. "It is about using the tools available to build their confidence. You don't have to be polished and perfect to get your name out there."



## Emily Edmonds

**Mezzo-soprano  
Dame Nellie Melba  
Scholarship and Patrick  
& Vivian Gordon Award  
– 2013**

The most powerful legacy of the Melba Program Emily continues to enjoy is the relationships that were forged around her. "Some of my dearest friends and colleagues, all around the world, are past-Melbas. I'm grateful that I'll always be part of this Melba family."

Emily believes the program remains vital, having prioritised a well-rounded approach to artistic development, vocal development and the acquisition of skills that support the making of an artist.

**After Melba, Emily became a member of the prestigious Jette Parker Young Artist Programme at The Royal Opera 2015-2017. She is currently an Associate Artist with Classical Opera Company for which she has recently performed the role of Dorabella in *Così fan tutte*. She has also performed as a principle with The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Komische Oper Berlin, Pinchgut Opera, Music Theatre Wales and Opera Philadelphia.**

"In my work as a singer now, I aim to embody that well-rounded and 'whole' artist approach; it's vital to the very essence of the kind of work that I am a part of making. I value making work that connects, feels meaningful, and incorporates all the elements of who I am as a performer: singing, acting and creating."

One of her most enduring memories of her Melba time is performing at Dame Nellie Melba's home, Coombe Cottage, which she describes as magical. "The Melba community is also a special part of the program, so performances were often a joyful way to connect with the wider Melba family."

In her endeavours since graduating from the Melba, Emily has stretched well beyond performance. "As well as exciting performances internationally, I've created a podcast for performers, entitled Show Notes. As someone who has been supported in my artistic development, I'm moved that now I can give support to other performers as well."

Melba training helped with this, too. Emily says she vividly remembers a "practice" interview in the ABC Melbourne radio studios as part of a workshop with Mairi Nicolson. "I recall that moment with a lot of gratitude and joy every time I sit down to be interviewed or interview someone!"



## Stephen Marsh

**Baritone  
Paulette Bisley Opera  
Scholarship and Eleanor  
Blakemore Opera Society  
Scholarship – 2018, 2019**

Diverse performance opportunities stand out for Stephen during his two Melba years, most notably one at Cloudehill Gardens and Nursery in the Dandenong Ranges in January 2019. "We performed in this beautiful natural amphitheatre surrounded by all the sights and smells of the gardens. The concert was an absolute blast and the icing on the cake was that at the conclusion of the concert the sun had not quite set and the clouds glowed a beautiful pink and orange colour. It has stayed in my mind ever since."

That romantic vision helps balance the enormous amount of hard work invested and the amount of information he absorbed from across all areas of the opera profession. "We had rare insights from mentors who are professional performers in some of the largest and most prestigious opera houses in the



2018 Meet the Scholars performance at Deakin Edge, Federation Square.

world. Through this combined mentorship, I have a much better understanding of what is required for a successful career as a performer. Now I allow myself to take the time to think clearly

before making choices that will ultimately define my career direction."

Stephen says he has been lucky enough to put into action

**Stephen has continued performing with Victorian Opera and Melbourne Opera. In 2020 he received a scholarship from The Richard Divall Emerging Artist Programme and Rotary Central Melbourne to study in Germany for three months.**

all the skills he learnt through the program, from negotiating contracts to public speaking. "Everything has been incredibly useful, and I find myself drawing on many Melba aspects, on a daily basis."

The 2018 mid-year performance at Deakin Edge in his first year as a Melba Artist has left a lasting impression. "I had so much fun performing with Cleo Lee-McGowan, Samuel Piper, Adam McMillan, Fleuranne Brockway, Paull-Anthony Keightley and Jessica Harper. "At the end of that performance I felt that, in addition to working with some pretty amazing colleagues and human beings, they will also be lifelong friends."





2017 Melba Artists at Government House, Melbourne



Teresa Desmarchelier

# Panayiota Kalatzis



Herald Sun Aria Competition winner 2016. Image: Stuart Walmsley

**Soprano**  
Ruskin Opera Award  
and Mel & Nina Waters  
Award – 2013

Much of the know-how Pana developed at the Melba is regularly used not only in her singing, but in her everyday life. "Melba Opera Trust has a very organised program which opened my eyes and helped me plan, organise, understand and develop many important skills. This ranged from daily lessons and coaching planning, time-management for travel and preparing music and roles, to other important tools that help build you professionally. These include networking, vocal health, mentor master classes, stagecraft, public speaking and

website development. I had these skills, but had not quite mastered them."

Pana says the generosity and modesty in the Melba family has been wonderful. "They welcome with open arms and nurture the development of young singers. This is something I am very grateful for and that I try to emulate in my life."

She well remembers being able to perform in Dame Nellie Melba's home Coombe Cottage as an absolute honour and privilege. "My year at Melba was filled with so many wonderful memories that I will cherish. The master classes with industry professionals, social gatherings, meeting and greeting and working alongside other amazing singers and mentors, the

performance opportunities... and to do that while being able to fully focus on my artistry in a safe and nurturing environment."

**Pana won the Australian International Opera Award in 2014 to study under Dennis O'Neill at the Wales International Academy of Voice and in 2016 won the Herald Sun Aria competition. She has performed roles with The Mediterranean Opera Studio and Festival in Caltagirone, Sicily and Berlin Opera Academy and is a regular performer with The 7 Sopranos and The Underground Opera Company. Pana is also a singing teacher.**

## THE MELBA MENTORS



### CECELLIA TELKES

**An extremely experienced corporate trainer, Cecellia brings an international level of expertise to all that our artists need to know about etiquette and protocol.**

From international dining customs to graceful ways to exit a prolonged handshake, the art of etiquette includes a range of useful skills to which young artists may not have previously been introduced. The training that Cecellia shares is based on international and official visits practised by various governments when hosting foreign dignitaries and, while these can never cover every possible situation, they are superb guiding principles for decision-making in any given scenario.

Cecellia's sessions range from image management and perceptions – both personal and professional – and the various cultural differences affecting meeting and greeting, to networking, joining and leaving a group, and the art of making conversational small talk.

"These are essentially life skills that we hope the artists will embrace and practise. I always emphasise that it's not about showing what you know, but to give them the confidence to modify and adjust their actions and reactions to make people around them comfortable. It's also to give them the confidence to speak to anyone about anything and be able to network and mingle in order to have authentic conversations and interactions."

Cecellia has had many different positive responses from Melba Artists to the content of her etiquette sessions, but they are generally surprised by the different dining styles practised within certain cultures.

"I generally receive good feedback about the segment on networking, how to interact positively (breaking into groups and exiting) and tips on how to address someone when their name absolutely slips your mind. This can happen very easily when you meet so many gracious and enthusiastic patrons and supporters at each event!"

# Robert Barbaro

**Tenor**  
Opera Society Vocal  
Scholarship – 2013

From vocal development to how to prepare roles, language coaching, musicianship, musical/operatic style, physical awareness and

exploring appropriate repertoire as a tenor, Robert says the Melba scholarship introduced him to all aspects of singing. Not having come from a conservatorium background, he initially felt he didn't belong in the classical music world. That changed. "It not only gave me the confidence to keep going, but the program planted the seed of discipline needed to pursue opera as a career."

As well as many performance skills, Robert was encouraged to value other endeavours such as building contacts and professional relationships, and to be a courteous and organised professional. Flexibility was a key notion he explored, too. "Flexibility in terms of being prepared to think outside the box or perform and

take on responsibilities not initially asked of us." In a recent West End London show called *Opera Undone* (a mini double bill of Puccini's *Tosca* and *La bohème*), Robert was required to prepare the tenor role of Cavaradossi in *Tosca*, but also the soprano role of Mimì for a new gay version of *La bohème*. "When I encounter these requests, I am reminded of the times that Melba mentors such as Sharolyn Kimmorley AM stressed to us the importance of taking on the tasks head-on and being flexible and prepared. It is super advice and it has continued to pay dividends in my international singing career."

Performing at Dame Nellie Melba's estate was a highlight of Robert's Melba days, immersing him in the singer's life and history. "It



also acted as a benchmark of success and inspiration for us to push ourselves to make it on the international stage. There is a sense of familial belonging in the Melba Opera Trust community."

# Stefan Cassomenos

**Repetiteur**  
Associate Repetiteur –  
2014, 2015

Stefan's immersion in the study of opera during his years at Melba Opera Trust has been formative for career pathways in following years. "It inspired me with skills to continue working with singers in various contexts."

Among these have been his experiences as the Co-Artistic Director (together with Monica Curro) of the Port Fairy Spring Music Festival, as a curator and as a collaborator. "The knowledge I acquired about operatic voices has been extremely helpful in programming works like Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and Mahler's symphonic masterpiece *Das Lied von der Erde*.



Stefan as repetiteur in a master class given by Yvonne Kenny AM at Cranlana in August, 2015.

It also informed the Festival's commissioning and collaborative development of new works like *At Sea* and *Continuum* composed by Melba Opera Trust alumna Shauntai Batzke, premiered at the 2019 Festival."

Stefan's ongoing work in opera has included being guest performer with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra in Brett Dean's opera *Hamlet* for its Australian premiere in 2018. He has also developed his own chamber opera composition *Herodias* with Victorian Opera, as part of the triple-bill *Three Tales* that has culminated in three performances in VO's planned 2020 season. Stefan notes that his deep engagement with opera singers through Melba is only part of what he received. Other artistic skills now help him to coach opera

singers, working collaboratively with them on their compositions or his own and working with school-aged singers.

Performing during his Melba time was special. "A particularly memorable Melba performance was Stephen McIntyre's fabulous presentation entitled *Nellie in Her Own Write* at the Port Fairy Spring Music Festival in 2015. A definite highlight."

**A highly accomplished, versatile and in-demand musician, Stefan performs extensively with chamber group Plexus and with Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, whilst also developing and performing his own compositions.**





Xenia Puskarz Thomas and Samuel Piper



Nikki Hill



Matthew Reardon and Daniel Carison



Cleo Lee-McGowan and Emma Matthews

## THE MELBA MENTORS



## JAMES WILLIAMS

**James is a Sydney-based lawyer and trained tenor, who mentors the artists in legal issues.**

It is impossible to compress an entire law degree into one mentor session, but James manages to cover an enormous amount of territory about legal issues as they might affect opera singers and performers. Starting with an overview of the constitutional basis of Australian law and basic rights, he outlines the levels of government, the rule of law, various court systems and specialist courts, common statutes, torts and equity, and the kinds of actions – civil and criminal – that can be brought against someone.

Part two of his work with them examines copyright and contracts – the two areas most likely to come into an artist’s orbit. James teaches them about the circumstances in which contracts arise, how they are constructed and how courts handle them when in dispute. “With a contract for singers, we discuss what is important, what you commit to do, exclusivity, and if there are agents acting for you.” In the copyright arena, he examines giving permissions, making recordings, who owns copyright in a performance, moral rights and the types of defences used for a breach of copyright.

James also covers areas some artists may not have contemplated as being relevant, such as vehicle law and insurance, relationships (marriage and de facto), making a will, establishing a business and structuring financial affairs. Defamation and slander are also covered, as are confidentiality clauses, legal privilege and what happens if a court appearance is required as either a party or a witness.

“I can’t turn them into lawyers in a short space of time, but this is a way of introducing them to areas they may not have thought about, areas I think may be useful for performers and singers, and areas of which they really should be aware. It is fantastic the way the Melba wants to equip them for a life as elite performers.”

## Samuel Sakker

**Tenor**  
Margaret Schofield Opera Scholarship – 2011, 2012

“I built a strong sense of accountability for my own development and trajectory.” Sam believes his Melba study plan made him take stock of areas for development and with whom he wanted to work.

Discovering his “colours” at a Melba styling session was an unforgettable experience. “As someone generally oblivious to fashion, it was fascinating to be categorised as ‘Winter’ by styling mentor Suzanne Dekyvere and have pointers on what styles suit my distinctly oblong body shape. It serves my performance wardrobe well, to this day.”

A session with a L’Oréal consultant about make-up and skin care was an eye-opener, too. “It was only then I learnt about



As Federico in *L’arlesiana* with Opera Holland Park, 2019.

the importance of moisturiser and how to cope with heavy stage make-up. I also learnt how to do a killer ‘smokey eye.’”

Sam values connections with other Melba alumni. “It’s great to take stock, compare notes and gossip. I love regularly running

into fellow Royal Opera Young Artists and Melba alumni Lauren Fagan and Samuel Dale Johnson.”

After completing the Melba Program Samuel became a member of the prestigious Jette Parker Young Artist Programme at The Royal Opera. He has performed extensively overseas with companies including Scottish Opera, Danish National Opera and Opera Holland Park. In Australia, Samuel has sung with West Australian Opera, State Opera of South Australia and Opera Australia.



## Stephanie Gibson

**Soprano**  
Dame Nellie Melba Scholarship – 2009, 2010

Developing confidence was a crucial part of her valuable time at the Melba, Stephanie says. “The key opportunities I took from Melba were the performances that gave me the time I needed to develop my confidence. This was the backbone of Stephanie’s audition process where she learned from both failures and achievements. “The ability to focus and to develop an inner voice in my audition approach has given me

confidence to come out of my shell.”

This was also enhanced by the different artists she met through Melba. The mentoring gave Stephanie confidence for work internationally with conductors and how to connect meaningfully within the industry. “This has made my career flexible, enjoyable and hugely fulfilling.”

The performance part of the Melba Program had an impact on Stephanie. “At Melba, we were regularly given the opportunity to sing for people who really felt connected to music”, which is at the heart of the craft. She also recalls movement classes

opening her mind to “the way the body talks” artistically. “This is an area I pursued with great interest over time.”

After Melba, Stephanie studied at the Wales International Academy of Voice. She has performed the roles of Queen of the Night in *Die Zauberflöte*, Frasquita in *Carmen*, covered the role of Violetta in *La traviata* and performed in Opera Australia’s *La bohème* on Sydney Harbour. She has also been an English National Opera Operaworks Scholarship Holder.

## Fiona Jopson

**Soprano**  
Amelia Joscelyne Memorial Scholarship – 2010

Joining the Melba when the Mentor Program was being developed has meant Fiona has benefitted from many opportunities to receive continuing support and advice “on our journeys in this career” from the Melba family.

Fiona was living in regional NSW and working full-time when she started her scholarship, discovering “a new level of commitment, passion and the strength to follow my chosen career path” as she travelled to Melbourne for Melba classes

and to Sydney for coaching. “The following year I moved back to Melbourne and from that time I was working and furthering my career as a professional opera singer until I moved to Vienna in 2017 to commence work at the Vienna State Opera.”

One of her Melba highlights was the 30-year celebrations of the Amelia Joscelyne Memorial Scholarship, which she had received. “I made a surprise trip back to Australia to perform. It was a wonderful night celebrating Amelia’s legacy with her family and with award recipients from the past thirty years.”

Invited back to Melba for a master class with Yvonne Kenny AM in 2013 also stood out.



Fiona in *Götterdämmerung* with Wiener Staatsoper  
Image: Michael Pöhn

“She was the most giving, supportive and encouraging mentor I’ve worked with. From this session I forged a wonderful working relationship with her that is ongoing to this day.”

Fiona won the Herald Sun Aria in 2015 and The Opera Foundation for Young Australians Vienna State Opera Award in 2017. Fiona is now a full-time Ensemble member at the Vienna State Opera.





2018 Meet the Scholars, Melbourne



Simon O'Neill and Paull-Anthony Keightley



Paull-Anthony Keightley and Jessica Harper



Jonathan Wilson with Johannes Fritzsche

# Shauntai Batzke

**Soprano**  
Harold Blair Opera  
Scholarship – 2014, 2015

"I was so excited and incredibly grateful for the opportunity to be a Melba Artist and represent Indigenous singers, following the likes of Harold Blair and Deborah Cheetham AO." Shauntai knew she was at the beginning of a journey but immediately felt surrounded by family at the same time.

A performance highlight during her scholarship was singing at the Melbourne Cricket Club Australia Day Lunch at the MCG. This event also inspired her ongoing composition work. "On this occasion I prepared an *a capella* medley of 'My Island Home' and 'We are Australian'. The arrangement included my own lyrics that represented the many nationalities of which Australia is now comprised. I felt so proud that day singing of my heritage, culture and community." This was enriched knowing her late father, Wally Carr, the famous boxing champion, has his name on the Boxing Hall of Fame showcased at the MCG. "I recall a warm and grateful reception from the audience and I later read they had even mentioned my medley in their newsletter to members."



Performing at the 2015 Artist Farewell Soiree at Cranlana.

Shauntai says that throughout her career so far, she has drawn on all aspects of her Melba training, strengthening her confidence as an artist and a person. "Based on relationships I built with fellow Melba Artists,

I have collaborated on exciting new projects enriching further musical and creative development. The experience at Melba is ever-present with me, especially when making career choices."

**Shauntai is a Principal Artist at Short Black Opera and in 2020 made her debut with Melbourne Symphony Orchestra at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl. Among a number of achievements since leaving Melba, Shauntai has sung roles with The Production Company and world premiered her original compositions as an Emerging Composer at the Port Fairy Spring Music Festival.**

## THE MELBA MENTORS

### GIUSEPPE D'ORAZZI

**Giuseppe is a PHD candidate and a tutor in applied linguistics at University of Melbourne. He coaches Melba Artists in Italian language.**

Giuseppe necessarily divides his Melba classes into those artists with more or less proficiency with the Italian language – some may be beginners, while others may have studied it throughout university. Tailoring in this way means he can focus on getting them ready for the sorts of encounters they are likely to have as professional artists, especially when working in Europe.

For the more advanced, he prepares them to have any sorts of conversations with actors, directors or musicians in an artistic environment. Various scenarios are set in which this might occur, such as being in the foyer of a theatre, ordering drinks and talking about their performance, or the performance of other singers, with an Italian person.

The beginner level sessions are more basic, rooted in grammar and vocabulary. "We have to give them more essential, basic tools, the foundations of the language in order to be able to speak." This might include learning how to introduce oneself, or ask for directions to a theatre, but it is always related to opera in some way.

Giuseppe says most Australians have a monolingual mindset, but the Melba Artists have an advantage because, as opera singers, they tend to be acquainted with Italian words and phrases through their repertoire. "When we have lessons, they can memorise the meaning of words really quickly because they are exposed to the Italian language through opera, even if it is a passive knowledge."

Giuseppe finds the Melba Artists very interesting because, while they all have differing backgrounds in terms of their Italian language understanding and knowledge, they all help each other. "You would imagine they just compete with each other, but when they study together, they form a really good group. They cooperate and whenever someone doesn't know something, they help each other instead of showing off. That was striking for me."



Mentoring Melba alumna Jessica Harper

# Brenton Spiteri



Celebrating the 30 year anniversary of the Amelia Joscleyne Memorial Scholarship in August, 2019.

**Tenor**  
John & Elizabeth Wright-Smith Scholarship – 2012, 2013, 2014

Whether he is thinking about his performing presence, industry and career issues, or about more practical skills, Brenton says he brings his Melba-learned skills into life on a daily basis. "There is so much that I experienced during those years that helps me almost every day."

This includes the diversity of the Melba Mentor Program. "I think the most important practical skill I developed during that time was simply the ability to sing a little better and with more confidence

**Brenton spent two seasons in the Young Artist Program at Opéra de Lyon where he performed multiple roles. After returning to Australia, he performed with Victorian Opera, State Opera South Australia, Opera Australia and Pinchgut Opera. Brenton has now relocated to London to study at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama Opera School.**

and meaning. I became more determined than ever to commit to my passions and sort out why I wanted to sing and how I could best do it. That is definitely an ongoing journey, but my time on the Melba Program enabled me to take the first few steps."

Brenton says it was a big moment for him in 2012, during his first Melba year, when he won the Herald Sun Aria award. "I had never stepped onto such a big stage or sung with such a large orchestra before. I was as nervous as nervous can be, but I had such great support from Melba staff, mentors and community, as well as from my own wonderful friends and family. I will never forget the incredible people who were part of my life at that time and who helped me through that unforgettable experience."

"I'm still friends with many of the singers who went through Melba during those three years or just after, as well as some of the amazing supporters from among the Melba community. I will cherish those friendships forever. They often remind me that I'm not on this crazy adventure alone and that is about the most valuable piece of knowledge one can have in this industry."





2019 Melba Artists

Cleo Lee-McGowan and Xenia Puskarz Thomas

2019 Melba Artists ©Michelle Grace Hunder

## THE MELBA MENTORS

### RICHARD THOMAS

**A Melbourne-based accountant and music theatre singer, Richard presents a seminar on accounting with an emphasis on tax.**

Because he is also a performer, Richard brings an inside view on the importance of accounting and tax when he has sessions with the Melba Artists. Explaining how tax works regarding prize money and scholarships, what are the available deductions and specific tax rulings that are applied to performing artists: these are just some of the finer details he covers.

"I think because I can get on their level and know what they are thinking as performers, I can demystify tax and accounting for them. Tax can seem boring, so of course they ask the usual questions about what they can deduct, what incentives there are and I can let them know what to be wary of."

More broadly, Richard discusses contract negotiations with the artists, explaining that they will initially not have a lot of bargaining power so should not expect to be setting out a list of demands.

He encourages them to absorb the idea that they should only take on doing free gigs with a specific reason in mind. "In the world of opera, you can find there are people who might be seemingly influential but when you talk money, careers or introductions that can fall by the wayside." While it is a fine balance between doing free work and doing free work with the possibility of advancing one's career, Richard encourages them to understand that the reality is they are going into an industry with a lot of unemployment. At the same time, it is important not to put aside visions of grandeur on stage.

"I hope they come away with a clear message that they have to keep up to date with their tax compliance. As far as what new knowledge they get out of it, hopefully that they have a business mindset and a personal profile mindset and that they come away thinking of themselves as a business. The tax is a by-product of that."



#### Kyla Allan – Mezzo-soprano Melba Opera Trust Scholarship – 2012

Since Melba, Kyla has performed regularly with Opera Australia as both a principal in its Schools Company and a chorus member in their mainstage productions. She is also a regular member of The 7 Sopranos having toured extensively with them as well as being featured on their CD *Popcorn*.



#### Simon Bruckard – Repetiteur Margaret Schofield Opera Scholarship – 2016

Conductor, composer and pianist, Simon works regularly with Opera Australia and Victorian Opera. He won the 2020 Musical Achievement Green Room Award for his new Australian youth opera *The Selfish Giant*, premiered by Victorian Opera in 2019.



#### Angela Brun – Soprano Melba Opera Trust Scholarship – 2011

Before leaving Australia, Angela was a regular artist with Opera Australia. She now resides in the UK where she is a freelance singer and has directed the Guildhall Singers Choir in Norfolk.



#### Daniel Carison – Baritone Opera Society Vocal Scholarship and Beleura-Tallis Opera Scholarship – 2015 Paulette Bisley Opera Scholarship and Ruskin Opera Award – 2016-2017

During his last year with Melba, Daniel was the winner of the German-Australian Opera Grant. He relocated to Germany in 2018 to take up an ensemble position at the Hessisches Staatstheater Wiesbaden where he continues to perform. Daniel is set to make his debut with Landestheater Coburg this year as Lord Enrico Ashton in *Lucia di Lammermoor*.



#### Hannah Dahlenburg – Soprano Melba Opera Trust Scholarship and Mel & Nina Waters Award – 2011-2012

Beyond her Melba scholarships, Hannah found success through numerous singing competitions and also completed a Master of Music with Distinction at the Royal Northern College of Music in 2015 as the Leverhulme Scholar. She has performed her signature role of Queen of the Night from Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* to great acclaim over 200 times throughout Australia, Germany and the UK, in addition to several other roles, and is a frequent concert and recital performer. Still performing, Hannah is also completing a Master of Music Psychology and Performance Science by research at University of Melbourne under renowned music psychologists Professor Jane Davidson and Dr Margaret Osborne.



#### Stacey Alleaume – Soprano Melba Opera Trust Scholarship – 2010 Amelia Joscelyne Reserve Scholarship and Ruskin Opera Award – 2012

After Melba, Stacey performed with Opera Australia, first as a principal in their Schools Company and Oz Opera tour whilst covering roles on the mainstage. In 2016 she became a member of the Moffatt Oxenbould Young Artist Program and has since sung many roles for the company including Leïla in *Les Pêcheurs de perles*, Micaëla in *Carmen*, Violetta Valéry in *La traviata*, Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro* and Gilda in *Rigoletto*. In 2019 she also made her international debut singing Gilda for the Bregenzer Festpiele Seebühne.



#### Fleuranne Brockway – Mezzo-soprano Ruskin Opera Scholarship and Annie McFarling Opera Scholarship – 2018

In 2018 Fleuranne was the recipient of the Australian International Opera Awards' Royal College of Music Scholarship and the winner of the German-Australian Opera Grant. She relocated to London for her studies at the Royal College of Music before moving to Germany in 2019 to take up an ensemble position at the Hessisches Staatstheater Wiesbaden. Fleuranne continues to perform there regularly and has just been renewed for the 2020/2021 season.



#### Leilah Fox – Soprano Margaret Schofield Opera Scholarship – 2013

Leila has relocated to Western Australia where she has performed with the WA Opera chorus and the WASO chorus. She also runs a singing studio in Perth.

#### Rebecca Gulinello – Soprano Amelia Joscelyne Memorial Scholarship – 2013-2014

Rebecca is completing a four-year resident artist program at the prestigious Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia. She has recently performed the roles of 2nd Wood Sprite in *Rusalka*, Una novizia in *Suor Angelica* and Anna in *Le Villi*. Other highlights include Tait Memorial Trust Award, 2016; Finalist, Herald Sun Aria, 2015; Finalist, IFAC, Australian Singing Competition, 2015; Lisa Gasteen National Opera School, 2015; Acclaim Awards Scholarship Winner, 2015; and Grant winner, Ian Potter Cultural Trust, 2015.



#### Georgina Hall – Soprano Harold Blair Opera Scholarship and Mel & Nina Waters Award – 2017 Harold Blair Opera Scholarship and Ruskin Opera Scholarship – 2019

In October 2020 Georgina Hall will join the cast in Short Black Opera's production of *Pecan Summer*. She will be understudying Shauntai Batzke's role of Old Alice and Deborah Cheetham's role of Ella.



# ALUMNI





Brenton Spiteri and Morgan Balfour



Celebrating Mary-Jane Joscelyne OAM with Adam McMillan, Paul-Anthony Keightley, Fiona Jopson and Siobhan Stag



Stephen Marsh

# UPDATES



**Nikki Hill – Soprano**  
Ruskin Opera Award and Mel & Nina Waters Award – 2014  
Margaret Schofield Opera Scholarship and Ruskin Opera Award – 2015

Nikki has moved on from singing to complete a Master's of Speech Pathology. She completed the graduate program at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, working with adults. Nikki has recently relocated to Dubai with her fiancé and is now providing speech pathology services to children, specialising in telehealth.



**Samuel Dale Johnson – Baritone**

RJ Hamer Opera Scholarship – 2013

Samuel became a member of the prestigious Jette Parker Young Artists Programme at The Royal Opera in London. In 2017 he joined the ensemble at the Deutsche Oper Berlin where he has regularly performed ever since. Performing highlights have included the title role in *Eugene Onegin* for Scottish Opera and *Guglielmo (Così fan tutte)* for Northern Ireland Opera.



**Adam McMillan – Repetiteur**

Margaret Schofield Opera Scholarship and Mel & Nina Waters Award – 2018-2019

Since honing skills as a repetiteur with Melba Opera Trust, Adam remains a sought-after pianist in recital and chamber music and has expanded his teaching online during the COVID-19 pandemic.



**Jade Moffat – Mezzo-soprano**

Dame Nellie Melba Scholarship and Patrick & Vivian Gordon Award – 2014-2015

Jade has relocated to the UK where she completed the Guildhall School of Music and Drama Opera Course. She has performed as Marcellina in *Le nozze di Figaro* with Clonter Opera and has since been performing in the chorus and covering roles for Glyndebourne Festival Opera. Most recently she undertook the Spring Highlights Tour with Scottish Opera singing with fellow Melba alumna Zoe Drummond.



**Timothy Newton – Bass**

Stuart Leslie Opera Scholarship – 2016

After Melba, Timothy sang and covered principal roles with Victorian Opera and performed with Opera Australia's Schools Company as Sarastro in its production of *Die Zauberflöte*. In 2018 he sang the role of Colline in *La bohème* with Opera New Zealand and was awarded The Opera Foundation for young Australians Deutsche Oper Berlin Award. Timothy has now relocated to Berlin to take up a permanent ensemble position with that company.

**Tiriki Onus – Bass-baritone**  
Harold Blair Opera Scholarship – 2012-2013  
Tiriki is a Yorta Yorta man and was the inaugural recipient of the Harold Blair Opera Scholarship. He is now Head of the Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Cultural Development at the University of Melbourne and continuing a career in visual art.



**Samuel Piper – Baritone**  
John & Elizabeth Wright-Smith Scholarship – 2017, 2018 and 2019  
Ryman Healthcare Opera Scholarship – 2019

Following his Melba scholarship, Samuel has been based in Treviso, Italy developing his bel canto repertoire and Italian language skills. He made his Italian debut at the Teatro Pasolini in Cervignano del Friuli and sang in a matinee performance at Castello di Roncade with partner and Melba colleague Xenia Puskarz Thomas.

**Jacqueline Porter – Soprano**  
Dame Nellie Melba Scholarship and Patrick & Vivian Gordon Award – 2010

Jacqueline's singing career in Australia has flourished since her Melba scholarship. In addition to performing with State Opera of South Australia and Victorian Opera, Jacqueline is a regular featured soloist with many of Australia's choral societies and symphony orchestras including the Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestras. She is a sought-after guest artist at major Australian festivals and particularly enjoys giving recital performances.



**Matthew Reardon – Tenor**  
Opera Arts & Support Group Award – 2013

Beleura-Tallis Opera Scholarship and Margaret Schofield Opera Scholarship – 2014

Following Melba, Matthew completed his Master of Opera at the Wales International Academy of Voice in Cardiff with Dennis O'Neill while on a full scholarship from the Australian International Opera Award and the Tait Memorial Trust. In 2016 he spent time working with Marilyn Horne at the Music Academy of the West Summer Festival in Santa Barbara, California, where he sang the role of Vašek in *The Bartered Bride* by Smetana. He made his role debut as Don José in *Carmen* with Festival Opera in New Zealand. In Australia he performs with Opera Australia, WA Opera and Short Black Opera, with roles in *Pecan Summer*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Così fan tutte* and *La bohème*.

**Sophie Yelland – Mezzo-soprano**  
Margaret Schofield Opera Scholarship – 2010

Sophie is currently based in Cardiff. She joined the Welsh National Opera in 2014 and covered a role as well as singing in the chorus at The Royal Opera. Sophie is now a full-time chorus member at Welsh National Opera. She has also performed with English National Opera chorus and in the Glyndebourne Opera Festival. In 2017 she was part of the chorus in Opera Australia's revival of Wagner's *Ring* and covered the role of Rossweisse in *Die Walküre*.



**Jonathan Wilson – Repetiteur**  
Margaret Schofield Opera Scholarship – 2016-2017

Jonathan won the 2017 Geoffrey Parsons Award for collaborative pianists. He continues to work as an accompanist and soloist in Sydney and is on staff with Opera Australia.

## THE MELBA MENTORS



### SUZANNE DEKYVERE

**Suzanne is a corporate and personal style consultant. She assists the artists to manage appearance, understand dress codes and industry expectations.**

Suzanne gives Melba Artists group-based and individual sessions in which they learn much about discovering their own style and personality, while also adhering to the sorts of expectations and codes the industry holds dear.

Dividing the artists along gender lines, Suzanne discusses what clothes say about a person and how to decipher dress codes. "But it is also about their clothes being authentically them. It is not about being a cookie-cutter and looking the same, but knowing that there are expectations."

With the female group, Suzanne takes them through discussions about line and design, tricks that stylists use to accentuate height and width, "camouflaging bits they might not be so comfortable with and highlighting the parts of themselves they like and are very comfortable with". For the males, there is far less variety, but still a lot of things to learn about wearing a suit, from buttons and vents to pockets, ties and lapels.

In the individual sessions, Suzanne goes into finer detail about the sorts of outfits and colours that are best suited to a particular person. "And I get really beautiful responses from them. It is confidence that they take away from it. They feel good and know what direction they are heading in. It is not about spending a lot of money, but about confidence. The thing I love about the Melbas is that they are generally very receptive and they want to know all about it."





## Melba Alumni 2009-2019

Kyla Allan 2012  
 Stacey Alleaume 2010, 2012  
 Damian Arnold 2017  
 Morgan Balfour 2015  
 Robert Barbaro 2013  
 Shauntai Batzke 2014-2015  
 Fleuranne Brockway 2018  
 Simon Bruckard 2016  
 Angela Brun 2011  
 Daniel Carison 2015-2017  
 Stefan Cassomenos 2014-2015

Hannah Dahlenburg 2011-2012  
 Bronwyn Douglass 2016-2017  
 Zoe Drummond 2015-2017  
 Emily Edmonds 2013  
 Lauren Fagan 2011-2012  
 Amir Farid 2013  
 Alexandra Flood 2014  
 Leilah Fox 2013  
 Stephanie Gibson 2009-2010  
 Christian Gillett 2013

Rebecca Gulinello 2013-2014  
 Georgina Hall 2017, 2019  
 Jessica Harper 2018  
 Tessa Hayward 2019  
 Nikki Hill 2014-2015  
 Samuel Dale Johnson 2013  
 Fiona Jopson 2010  
 Panayiota Kalatzis 2013  
 Paul-Anthony Keightley 2018  
 Jeremy Kleeman 2014-2015

Nathan Lay 2011  
 Cleo Lee-McGowan 2017-2019  
 Stephen Marsh 2018-2019  
 Adam McMillan 2018-2019  
 Jade Moffat 2014-2015  
 Timothy Newton 2016  
 Tiriki Onus 2012-2013  
 Michael Petruccelli 2016  
 Samuel Piper 2017-2019  
 Jacqueline Porter 2010

Xenia Puskarz Thomas 2019  
 Matthew Reardon 2013-2014  
 Samuel Sakker 2011-2012  
 Brenton Spiteri 2012-2014  
 Siobhan Stagg 2009-2012  
 Janet Szepei Todd 2010-2012  
 Nicholas Tolputt 2015-2016  
 Shakira Tsindos 2016  
 Jonathan Wilson 2016-2017  
 Sophie Yelland 2010

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