

The Magazine of the Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust

da capo

EDITION 3 SPRING 2010



SEEKING THE
NEXT MELBA
OUR SCHOLARSHIP PROCESS

MELBA SCHOLARS
OUT AND ABOUT

KEEPING THE DREAM ALIVE
THE AMELIA JOSCELYNE SCHOLARSHIP

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Design by Dig Creative
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A NOTE FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER



AMY MCPARTLAN

WELCOME TO OUR SPRING EDITION OF DA CAPO. IN THIS EDITION YOU WILL LEARN ABOUT THE RECENT AND UPCOMING ACTIVITIES OF THE TRUST. READ OF THE HEARTWARMING GENEROSITY WITHIN OUR TRUST COMMUNITY AND CELEBRATE THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THIS YEAR'S SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS.

I met with our Melba Scholars recently to talk about their progress and the terrific successes that you will read about in their personal articles. They commented that their progress was due to the intensive training they have been able to access thanks to their scholarship funding.

There is no secret to success. It is always about hard work and dedication. But the funding from the Trust allows these young singers to have regular training

in the essential areas of development - training which these young singers would otherwise be unable to afford. It is the difference of having two singing lessons per week compared to one every two or three weeks. And the results really speak—or rather sing—for themselves.

Our scholarship program is unique. It has three very distinct streams; funding, support and performance. These streams combine to nurture the individual singer and help them to create a strong, secure foundation from which to build a successful career.

The training programs we fund must incorporate a balance of tuition in vocal development, languages, stagecraft and movement, as well as provide professional advancement. The programs are developed with industry experts to meet the individual needs of each young singer.

The support we provide goes beyond funding alone. We are developing a mentor program to help prepare our recipients with other skills that are vital to the profession. Skills such as self-promotion, networking, media training, public speaking, presentation advice, audition preparation and general business acumen. Through this program, and assisted by the professionals involved, we will help connect our recipients to the industry and encourage them to establish their own networks.

And finally, there is no better experience than doing! We create performance opportunities for our scholars through our Melba Artists program. From private dinner parties, to concerts, and to roles in mini-operas, our recipients are encouraged to get out there and practise their craft. In the process, we enlist industry professionals to help prepare our singers for their performances and to advise them on presentation, direction and programming. Everything we do focuses on fostering and nurturing the development of these talented young singers.

The progress of our scholars indicates that our formula is working. However to really promote excellence we need to continue to develop and invest in these programs, and we can only do this by building our endowment. John and Elizabeth Wright-Smith are proudly leading our cause in the hope that others will be similarly inspired to join them in the journey. We have the opportunity to create a fund that will continue beyond our lifetimes and that will change the lives of countless young opera singers in Australia.

In her novel, *I AM MELBA*, Ann Blainey concluded with a wonderful quote from Melba herself: "I know, that the best of me will live". And with your help it can, through the activities of the Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust.



SEEKING THE NEXT MELBA

WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR BECOMING A MELBA SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT?

The Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust is seeking the next cohort of talented young singers – so that another Melba may arise.

In 2011 the Trust will offer a number of scholarships valued at up to \$15,000 each, to be used within Australia for programs of study approved by the Trust.

Applications are open to young Australian singers aged 21-28, male or female, who have completed or are completing an undergraduate degree in voice or an equivalent program of operatic/vocal studies.

Stage one involves a DVD audition. Applicants must submit a completed application form (available at www.melbaoperatrust.com.au) along with a DVD of the applicant singing two contrasting operatic arias in different languages. Biographical details and letters of recommendation are also required. The closing date is 25 October. The DVD will be viewed by the selection panel, and twelve candidates will be called for a live audition and interview. The selection panel comprises leading vocal coach Sharolyn Kimmorley, Artist Manager Jennifer Eddy and celebrated baritone Peter Coleman-Wright. The panel will select a small number of scholarship winners for 2011.

With a total of \$60,000 available, the number of scholarships awarded depends entirely on the quality of the applicants – only the most exceptional will be selected.

Once the scholarship winners have been chosen, the Trust will work with each singer to develop a program of study, which may involve postgraduate studies in opera or individually tailored programs. The training must include a balance of vocal development, language tuition, stagecraft, movement, and professional advancement activities. The Trust also provides mentoring for each scholarship winner, providing skill sessions on professional presentation, media and promotion, and the business acumen required for success in the professional arena.

Successful scholars will have the opportunity to practice their craft through professional performances organised by the Melba Artists Program. Most importantly, the Melba Scholars will not be left to go it alone – they will be joining a community. "The scholarship has provided me with the invaluable experience of feeling as if I have a supportive base and a friendly community of other singers and supporters that are all passionate about the same thing," says current scholarship holder Janet Todd.

Find out more at www.melbaoperatrust.com.au. Applications close 25 October 2010.



OUR VISION

THE DAME NELLIE MELBA OPERA TRUST IS AN INDEPENDENT CHARITABLE ENTITY WITH A VISION TO ENSURE THAT PROMISING YOUNG SINGERS ARE SUPPORTED FINANCIALLY DURING THE POSTGRADUATE PHASES OF THEIR DEVELOPMENT 'SO THAT ANOTHER MELBA MAY ARISE.'

Our primary objective is to support the education, development and employment of young opera singers.

Our Mission:

- To provide financial support so that young singers can access quality training and education to continue their vocal development
- To support initiatives and projects that provide opportunities for outstanding young talent
- To actively improve, enrich, preserve and sustain opera as a vibrant and meaningful artform in our community
- To collaborate and connect with other organisations of shared interests
- To continue the great legacy of Dame Nellie Melba

Photo: Steven Godbee Publicity, Australian Brandenburg Orchestra



WELCOME PETER GARNICK

THE TRUST HAS A NEW MANAGING DIRECTOR.

As a young man, Peter Garnick had to make a choice between science, which his parents encouraged him to study, and music, which he loved. Music won that battle, but another decision loomed a few years later, when he was a violinist.

"I was a reasonably good musician but not exceptional, and to succeed as a performer you have to be exceptional. But I understood how the business side worked – marketing, fundraising, et cetera – so I found that niche and I did it for 30 years!"

Peter has had a successful career in management with orchestras in the United States and Australia. He was CEO of the West Australian Symphony

Orchestra from 1987-93, and CEO of Orchestra Victoria from 1996-2008. He took up the role of Managing Director of the Dame Nellie Melba Trust in June.

"Our work is to build that bridge to the professional sphere," Peter explains. "We select the small number of people who have the talent, drive and instinct to be successful – then, through money and contacts and mentoring, we help to build the bridge so they can take that step."

What does it take to succeed? "It's a combination of talent, drive, passion, insight and self-reflection. A beautiful voice is not enough."

"Dame Nellie Melba had an extraordinary voice but she

understood how the system worked. She realised that recording was a great way to get her voice out there and market herself, when some singers resisted it."

Peter sees a bright future for the Trust. "We have an endowment, and our challenge is to grow it to a level that we aspire to. We'd like to increase our scholarship support and to grow our mentoring program."

"Look at opera houses around the world, and you'll see that Australian singers are 'over-represented' in terms of our population. That's a result of incredible icons like Melba who create aspiration."

"Our cause is excellence, and the wonderful legacy of Dame Nellie Melba – it's a great cause!"



Melba

DAME NELLIE MELBA OPERA TRUST



MELBA SCHOLARS OUT & ABOUT

OPERA AT HOME 27 MARCH 2010

Amelia Joscelyne Memorial Scholarship recipient, Fiona Jopson, was joined by popular Australian tenor, Gaetano Bonfante, to present a program of operatic delights at a private Melbourne home earlier in the year. The exclusive dinner party enjoyed a program of Puccini and romantic opera - a special treat for a birthday celebration.

AFTERNOON TEA AND OPERA 14 APRIL 2010

St John's Anglican Church in Toorak regularly supports developing musicians through its music and cultural programs. In April, Stacey Alleaume and Sophie Yelland gave a recital to parishioners and guests, followed by an opportunity to enjoy some late April sunshine with afternoon tea in the garden.

OPERA IN THE GALLERY 2 MAY 2010

Throughout March-July this year, the Ian Potter Centre featured a retrospective exhibition of Rupert Bunny. Included within the exhibition was the famous portrait of Dame Nellie Melba, which usually adorns the State Dining Room of Melbourne's Government House. To commemorate the portrait and the close friendship Melba shared with Rupert Bunny, Ann Blainey, author of *I am Melba*, gave an insightful Melba presentation followed by a musical recital from Trust recipient Stephanie Gibson.

CHRISTMAS IN JULY 4 JULY 2010

Nathan Lay, graduate of the Melba Memorial Conservatorium of Music, gave a recital for 100 members of Melbourne's Opera Society to celebrate *Christmas in July*. Nathan helped to spread the good cheer, performing a program of opera, theatre and song. Organiser, Velma Allaway, described Nathan as "A young man of great personal talent and potential."

OPERA AND AUTOMOBILES 8 JULY 2010

The Trust was fortunate enough to share yet another performance with esteemed author and historian, Ann Blainey, to inform and entertain members of the RACV City Club on the life and career of Australia's most revered diva. Ann highlighted how appropriate the venue was given Melba's fondness for automobiles. We are yet to discover if Melba was a RACV member!

MUSIQUE FRANÇAISE FOR BASTILLE DAY

Around 80 guests joined the gathering for afternoon tea which concluded with a lively performance of some Melba favourites by Trust scholarship recipient Stacey Alleaume.

Sophie Yelland appeared as a guest performer for a private Bastille Day luncheon at an exclusive Melbourne club. Following a lunch of traditional French cuisine, the intimate gathering heard Sophie perform *La Marseillaise*, the French National Anthem, followed by the much loved *La vie en Rose*. A standing ovation and shouts of "encore" persuaded one final French aria from Saint-Saens' Samson and Dalila.

A SCOTTISH CELEBRATION 30 JULY 2010

Stacey Alleaume shared the stage with prominent historian and author Ann Blainey for the Melbourne Scots' annual dinner at Leonda by the Yarra. Ann presented on Dame Nellie Melba's Scottish heritage and performance of Scottish repertoire and Stacey performed three traditional Scottish folk songs previously recorded by Dame Nellie Melba.

LAW AND OPERA 17 SEPTEMBER 2010

Opera Australia's Taryn Fiebig was joined by Stacey Alleaume, Sophie Yelland and Nathan Lay for an evening of fine dining and opera in the heart of Melbourne's legal fraternity, *The Essoign*. Artists gave the audience an up-close and personal operatic experience, and the cause - to raise funds for the Ruskin Opera Scholarship.

YOUNG STARS OF OPERA 19 SEPTEMBER 2010

Over 200 people arrived for a Sunday afternoon of music and tea, as the Trust presented *Young Stars of Opera* at the RACV City Club. On Level 17, looking out over Melbourne, the concert featured scholarship recipients Fiona Jopson, Stephanie Gibson, Siobhan Stagg, Janet Todd, Stacey Alleaume and Sophie Yelland. Cameron Menzies directed a diverse musical program giving guests the opportunity to hear Australia's most promising operatic talent.

UPCOMING PERFORMANCES

MELBOURNE CONVENTION CENTRE 14 OCTOBER 2010

Siobhan Stagg and Stephanie Gibson will perform at the Opening ceremony of an international medical and nursing conference to be held in Melbourne in October. Over 1000 guests from around the world will enjoy hearing our scholarship recipients at the new Melbourne Convention Centre.

MELBA FESTIVAL GALA OPENING 15 OCTOBER 2010

Five Melba Scholars will perform alongside Antoinette Halloran for the Gala Opening of the Melba Festival in October. The performance will take place at Domaine Chandon, and is directed by Caroline Stacey, Cameron Menzies and David Kram. To purchase tickets visit www.melbafestival.com.au.

OPERA IN THE GARDEN 3 & 4 DECEMBER 2010

The Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust will again present Opera in the Garden at Beleura Estate on the Mornington Peninsula. This year's program will feature four Melba Scholars in concert, followed by a chamber opera performance. For tickets call (03) 5975-2027.

FROM ASHKENAZY TO SPICKS AND SPECKS, JACQUELINE PORTER'S CAREER IS TAKING OFF.

Jacqueline Porter did not expect to find herself singing *The Art of Playing Lawn Bowls* to the tune of *Ave Maria* on national television, but that is what happened when the talented soprano was invited onto the ABC musical quiz show, *Spicks and Specks*. One of her challenges was the 'substitution game' - in which contestants must sing the text of an obscure book to a well-known melody.

Versatility is definitely one of Jacqueline's strengths. A self-confessed lover of languages, she has studied German, French and Italian - but has also learned Russian, Spanish, Czech and Norwegian for particular roles.

Spicks and Specks was a lighter moment in what has been an intense year. During 2010, supported by her Dame Nellie Melba Scholarship, Jacqueline has received intensive coaching in German at the Goethe Institute, and in French and Italian with Nicole Dorigo. She has

worked on repertoire with vocal coaches Sharolyn Kimmorley and Tony Legge of Opera Australia which she describes as "without doubt, one of the most intensive and beneficial experiences for me to date".

This was intensive preparation for Jacqueline's appearance last July at the finals of the Hans Gabor Belvedere Singing Competition in Vienna, one of the world's most renowned competitions, to which 150 of the best emerging singers from around the world are invited. The international jury is composed of opera managers and agents, so the competition is a great opportunity for a young singer to be noticed.

Although she didn't win, Jacqueline found the experience invaluable: "I wanted to hear the winning singers, and find out what I needed to do. It was like a reconnaissance to see how the industry worked, and how I can take my career to the next level. I came away with a much greater understanding of what is expected of a world-class singer and

how I can work towards meeting those expectations." Whilst in Vienna, Jacqueline took the opportunity of receiving coaching at the Vienna State Opera.

Back in Australia, a highlight was performing *The Bells* by Rachmaninov, sung in Russian, with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Vladimir Ashkenazy. It was "exciting but daunting" to work with the maestro, who had requested Jacqueline after hearing her on a CD. "He is wonderful, generous and encouraging, an absolute genius - he gives you ideas, and you work with his musicality."

She also appeared with David Hobson in Opera in the Vineyard at Ballandean Estate in Stanhope, Queensland. "We had worked together once before and he asked for me. We performed arias, musical theatre numbers and duets - I really enjoy working with him."

Two open-air concerts with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, *Symphony Under the Stars* in Hobart and Launceston, attracted huge

audiences, with one little girl in the front row so impressed that she drew a picture of Jacqueline in her dress and pearls and presented it to her.

Coming up in the next few months are Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* with State Opera SA in November, and in February 2011, Grieg's *Peer Gynt* with the Sydney Symphony. Victorians will have the opportunity to see Jacqueline next year in Victorian Opera's production of 'The Fight Between Pheobus and Pan', part of the Baroque Triple Bill.

"My career has been gathering momentum," Jacqueline says. "The support of the Trust has allowed me to work with the best vocal and language coaches in Australia in preparation for some very exciting performances. One thing has been leading on to another, I've been making the most of every opportunity and challenging myself as much as possible."

Keep up-to-date with Jacqueline's activities and concert details at www.jacquelineporter.com.au.

JACQUELINE

PORTER

CLIMBING
TO THE
NEXT LEVEL





STEPHANIE GIBSON

The majority of the year so far has been spent dedicated to developing consistent vocal technique. With the help of language coaching from Andrea Katz in Italian and French, and Paul Broussard in German, I have been focusing on singing accurately in these languages with an emphasis on diction and vowel shapes.

I have also had the benefit of working with renowned director, Cameron Menzies. This tuition has focused on characterisation and movement as well as stage presentation and appearance.

The other major expense I would not have been able to afford without the scholarship is professional photography. These photos have enabled me to present a professional résumé and attractive publicity shots, which has really helped me advance my career.

In competitions, my major successes this year include making the final of the National Liederfest and the semi-final of the McDonalds' Aria in Sydney. I have just been announced as a Herald Sun Aria finalist for this year, and will be focusing my efforts on preparing for the competition in late October.

I will still have time to perform in a number of concerts through the Melba Artists program of the Trust, including the opening gala for the Melba Festival and as a feature performer for a medical conference in front of 1000 guests. These sorts of opportunities are invaluable, both for experience and for exposure!



INTRODUCING THE CAST

MEET OUR NEW DIRECTORS



FIONA MENZIES

Fiona is currently the Development Manager at the Wheeler Centre, where she leads the centre's fundraising and sponsorship strategies. Her previous roles included Executive Officer of the Australia New Zealand Children's Haematology/Oncology Group, and Corporate Affairs Director for Gersh Investment Partners. She began her career as an arts adviser to two federal arts ministers, Senator Richard Alston and Peter McGauran.

WHY DID YOU BECOME A TRUSTEE OF THE DAME NELLIE MELBA OPERA TRUST?

With a passion for both the arts and education, I was thrilled to be asked to become a Trustee. I believe everyone can excel at something given the opportunity, so it is a privilege to contribute to assisting young Australian singers to pursue their careers in opera. Our students have demonstrated focus and determination to get to this point, but they are still just starting out and need the support and encouragement the Melba 'family' provides.

AS A MOTHER, WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ARE THE BENEFITS OF EXPERIENCING THE ARTS FROM A YOUNG AGE?

Naturally, my children were exposed to the arts from the womb! Music is ever-present in our household, as it was when I was growing up. I remember the thrill of getting a three-record set of *Swan Lake* as a seven-year-old. My friends and I used to dance around for hours on end. Music provided both joy and a haven from the outside world. I have tried to create this same atmosphere for my children and their friends, and they have embraced it as I did. Performing at school concerts, singing in the school choir and learning ballet have contributed to my children's self-confidence, given them essential skills such as teamwork, and led to treasured friendships. It is a passion that will stay with them for life.

WHAT IS IT ABOUT YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH THE TRUST THAT MOST EXCITES YOU?

Many things, but the two most exciting are watching the scholarship recipients develop their skills and confidence over time, and sharing music and the love of music with others.



PAUL CRAPPER

Paul is a highly skilled Chief Financial Officer and executive, widely experienced across the public and private sectors in finance, strategic planning, corporate governance, risk management, media and marketing, and public relations. He is currently CFO and Director of Marketing and Business Services for the Building Commission and Plumbing Industry Commission. He is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and the Australian Society of CPAs. He is a director of Common Fate, an organisation dedicated to Aboriginal reconciliation, and has served on the boards of Arthritis Victoria, Scope Business Enterprises and the NEC Superannuation Fund.

WHY DID YOU BECOME A TRUSTEE OF THE DAME NELLIE MELBA OPERA TRUST?

I have always had a strong interest in the arts and a desire to give back to the community and support the development of others to be the best they can be, so a position as a Trustee with the Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust is a wonderful opportunity to make a contribution to the arts and opera more specifically. It is also very consistent with my development work with young Indigenous people in the Rumbalara FNC and the Indigenous Plumbing Apprenticeship Scheme through my work on the board of Common Fate.

HAVING BEEN ON THE BOARD FOR SIX MONTHS, WHAT ARE YOUR FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF OPERA AND YOUNG SINGERS?

I have been very excited by the level of talent and maturity the 2010 scholarship recipients have displayed. It has become very clear to me that the Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust has an enormous amount to offer opera and talented young opera singers.

YOUR PERSONAL BACKGROUND LIES IN THE SPORTING ARENA RATHER THAN THE ARTS. YET YOU ARE NOW ON THE BOARD OF AN OPERA TRUST. DO YOU BELIEVE THIS SORT OF DUAL INVOLVEMENT SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED MORE IN SOCIETY?

I think it is a very sound strategy for organisations to look outside their own sphere of influence when bringing skills and expertise onto boards and trusts. In addition, the connection for me from my sporting background and involvement in Indigenous projects to the Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust is simple – supporting the development of talented young people to be the best they can be, so that in this case "another Melba may arise".



ROSANNA (ROZ) ZALEWSKI

Roz Zalewski has over 20 years' experience as a lawyer. She has worked in a variety of roles in community law, asylum advocacy and as a barrister. From 1993-7 she was a member of the Refugee Review Tribunal and since 2000 she has worked in the field of professional standards and ethics. She is a board member of Western Chances and has taken on voluntary roles with Amnesty International, the Lady Gowrie Childcare Centre, the International Commission of Jurists in Victoria, and the International Humanitarian Law Committee of the Australian Red Cross. She is a patron of Opera Australia and the Melbourne Theatre Company, and a true-blue supporter of the Western Bulldogs.

WHY DID YOU BECOME A TRUSTEE OF THE DAME NELLIE MELBA OPERA TRUST?

I have had a long-standing interest in education and training that helps young people to achieve their full potential. As well as the Melba, I serve on the board of Western Chances, an organisation dedicated to assisting young people in Melbourne's west to develop their talent – whether it be in the pursuit of academic success, leadership, arts, technical training, etc. I see my role on the Melba board as an extension of this and a further opportunity to be involved in the development of young and talented singers of opera.

THE RUSKIN FAMILY HAS BEEN A CORNERSTONE OF THE MELBA COMMUNITY AND THE OPERA WORLD FOR DECADES. HOW DID IT ALL BEGIN?

My introduction to opera and the Melba came through my late parents-in-law, Alfred and Pamela Ruskin, whose passion and contribution to this endeavour was infectious. I am not even sure if Jeremy knows the full extent of his late parents' early involvement, but Alfred Ruskin loved opera and sang in an operatic chorus in his teens in Berlin. Like many gifted migrants, he followed his love in Australia and gave much time, energy and other resources to the establishment of the Melba Conservatorium. I have become a passionate fan of opera because of them and also because of Jeremy's love of opera. One of our first dates was a night at the opera!

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE RELEVANCE OF OPERA IN TODAY'S SOCIETY?

Opera is a vital part of any civilised society. I can't imagine life without it – it is an expression of brilliant creativity and representative of life in all its dramatic possibilities. It is uplifting, transcendental and evocative of the panoply of human relationships. I would love to see many more young people enjoy the opera and support organisations like the Melba.



A MUCH-LOVED DIRECTOR SAYS FAREWELL

A much-loved director, teacher and musician said farewell to the Melba on 10 June this year. Professor Mel Waters was honoured by a gathering of friends, students and colleagues at the Smart Artz Gallery in South Melbourne, and presented with a Melba Medal to recognise his remarkable contribution as Managing Director of the Melba.

Mel was appointed Director of the Melba Memorial Conservatorium of Music in 1999, and completed his tenure overseeing the transition of the Conservatorium into the Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust.

Prior to his time at the Melba, Mel was Director of Music and Principal Organist at Adelaide's St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, and Director of Music at Pembroke School, Adelaide. He has played organ and harpsichord in over 200 concerts with major orchestras, many broadcast by ABC FM.

"Mel was adored by the students and the staff of the Con," said Amy McPartlan, a former student, and now the General Manager of the Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust. "He is held in the highest regard for his musical knowledge, but more than anything else, his ability to make every student feel special and noticed."

"He has an incredible ability to see potential in others, and bring out the best in people. He is a mentor

in the true sense of the word and an educator through and through."

Reflecting on his years at the Melba, Mel mentioned the successful appeal that secured the refurbishments at Ruskin Hall, and the rapid growth of enrolments and programs at Richmond and Sunbury – all hallmarked by excellence.

"Now we're carrying forward the Melba ethos and legacy into a new and brilliant future, for the Trust and especially the scholarship recipients," he said.

"I am deeply honoured to accept the tenth Melba Medal, which I accept on behalf of each and every student, colleague, benefactor, volunteer, supporter and friend with whom I shared the Melba experience. It's a truly inspirational community, and one that I will always be grateful to have been associated with."

As a tribute to Mel and his wife Nina's dedication to the Melba, the Mel and Nina Waters Scholarship will provide annual funding in perpetuity for talented young opera singers to continue their training and development.

Fittingly, this scholarship will be 'all about the singers'.



MARGARET SCHOFIELD OPERA SCHOLARSHIP

HELPING NEW SINGERS ALONG THE ROAD



Photo: David Franklin

The next generation of Australian opera singers is receiving support from a scholarship in honour of one of Australia's leading pianists.

In recognition of Margaret Schofield's achievements as a musician and educator, her family has established the Margaret Schofield Opera Scholarship to assist a promising early-career singer. Margaret Schofield enjoyed a distinguished career as a piano soloist, accompanist and teacher. She lectured at the Melba Memorial

Conservatorium of Music, and was Chief Study Teacher at the University of Melbourne Conservatorium.

She studied music at the University of Melbourne and in London, where she gave recitals for the BBC. During the 1950s and 1960s, she regularly shared Australian stages with touring maestros such as violinist Jean-Pierre Wallez, cellist Edmund Kurtz and soprano Elisabeth Schwartzkopf.

In 1988 Margaret Schofield was awarded the OAM for her services to music and to the community. She continued to teach and play until almost 80 years of age.

"Our mother's life was devoted to music. She had a great affection for the Melba Conservatorium, as it existed during her life, and was a

great supporter of singers and opera in Melbourne," says Dr Andrew Cochrane.

"When my mother died in 2004 we established a charitable trust to fund educational scholarships." "We learned from our mother that music is a hard road for young people. We hope to make that journey a little easier through the Margaret Schofield Opera Scholarship by allowing a cohort of young singers to establish a career. "Our support is about assisting musical performers to enhance and complete their training."

The current holder of the Margaret Schofield Opera Scholarship is Sophie Yelland, who recently won praise from *The Age* for her "characterful" performance as Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*.

SOPHIE YELLAND

This year my scholarship has meant that I could enroll for the Opera School, Melbourne and it has been hectic over the last few months. All I've had time for is classes and rehearsals for our production of Don Giovanni where I played the role of Donna Elvira. We have had visits from professional artists and coaches along the way including Glenn Winslade, Sharolyn Kimmerley and Yvonne Kenny. I'm particularly enjoying the stagecraft element of the course.

We performed Don Giovanni in September and it was a great success receiving rave reviews. The Age said "Sophie Yelland was a characterful Elvira". It was such a great experience to work with conductor Trevor Jones and the orchestra of students from the National Academy of Music. The most exciting part for me was to work closely with director Cameron Menzies, who has been such an inspiration and support to me this year. I don't think I would have received that comment in the review without him!

I've performed a number of concerts through the Melba Artists program of the Trust, including several at exclusive clubs in Melbourne. These concerts give



the scholarship recipients a chance to collaborate more closely, practise what we have been learning and form friendships that will hopefully last a lifetime.

Thanks to the Trust and its Margaret Schofield Opera Scholarship, Opera School is my life and I'm loving it!



JOHN & ELIZABETH WRIGHT-SMITH SCHOLARSHIP



PASSION FOR MUSIC LEADS TO NEW SCHOLARSHIP

When John Wright-Smith and his wife Elizabeth attended a candlelight concert by singers of the Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust at Domaine Chandon in 2009, John felt the unmistakable "tingle at the back of the neck" that is only experienced in the presence of the finest voices. Quickly the Wright-Smiths decided that they would do what they could to support emerging singers. The result is a new scholarship to be offered by the Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust. A donation by the Wright-Smiths of half a million dollars over five years, will endow a scholarship with the Trust to be offered to a young singer every year in perpetuity.

As a boy, John Wright-Smith remembers being introduced at his father's knee to the likes of Caruso, Gigli, Tauber and Richard Crooks on radio station 3KZ. He soon formed the opinion that "the finest musical instrument is the human voice". When he was a medical student, he and a friend developed their love of opera by appearing as spear-

carriers in Australian Opera Company productions under Kenneth Neate, until a "spear malfunction" saw both John and his friend sacked. John went on to sing in amateur light opera, dubbing himself a "bathroom baritone".

As a consultant physician in geriatrics in Melbourne's eastern suburbs, John maintained his love of music. Quoting the novelist Aldous Huxley, he observes, "After silence, that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music."

Since John retired from medical practice four years ago, he and Elizabeth have devoted themselves to their large family, raising and training horses on their Woori Yallock farm, and music.

The purpose of the scholarship is to provide talented young singers with the funding to undertake a comprehensive operatic training program, continue their vocal development and help them to create

a strong foundation from which to launch a successful career. "I hope we see some young singers mature, go free, go wild, achieve their maximum potential – and be happy with themselves," John says.

"The exciting thing is that after 20 years there will be 20 singers, and so on – it will continue forever."

The Wright-Smiths are hopeful that their commitment will encourage others to follow suit.

"There are not enough scholarships of this kind," John believes. "That's why we decided to do something major. There are lots of people who could support the arts, but don't. People don't realise how much pleasure you can get from helping other people."

"Nothing will give us greater joy than to follow these singers along, watch their progress and go to their concerts."

Ovarations

SIOBHAN RECEIVES KEYS TO SUCCESS



David Jones and Michael Coleman with Siobhan Stagg at her new piano.

OWNING YOUR OWN PIANO CAN MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE TO A SINGER'S DEVELOPMENT. SO SIOBHAN STAGG WAS SURPRISED AND DELIGHTED TO RECEIVE A PHONE CALL TELLING HER SHE WOULD BE PRESENTED WITH A BRAND NEW YAMAHA CLAVINOVA PIANO.



Siobhan learned the piano while she was at school in Mildura, and quickly progressed to a grade six skill level. Since coming to Melbourne, she has been without her own instrument, relying on pianos at Trinity College and Melbourne University. When she completed her music degree, practise proved difficult.

"There are so many tricky arias that simply can't be learnt without spending the time 'note-bashing' them at the piano," she explains.

Fortunately, in November 2009 Michael Coleman, Director of Cranbourne Music, generously donated an electric piano to the

Trust's inaugural Gala Dinner as an auction prize. The piano was bought by David Jones, an opera lover and supporter of the Trust, who offered to donate it to a promising singer – Siobhan Stagg.

"I believe that the human voice is the best musical instrument and to know young talent like Siobhan is a great joy," David says. "She has a promising voice, and she has passion and dedication. The piano will help her with practice at a time where her funds are in limited supply. I have been fortunate to raise money for a number of promising young opera singers and it is a great pleasure to closely watch their development."

Siobhan was presented with the Yamaha CLP-330 Clavinova Digital Piano at a reception and morning tea on 31 March at Ruskin Hall in Richmond. To thank Michael and David for their generosity, she performed 'Caro Nome' from Verdi's *Rigoletto*.

"Perhaps some day I will follow in Dame Nellie Melba's footsteps and accompany myself playing one of her signature encores, 'Home, Sweet Home'," Siobhan says. "She was a truly multi-talented star – singer, pianist, teacher, entrepreneur, feminist, patriot, all in one!"

The Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust thanks Cranbourne Music and David Jones for their tremendous generosity.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT



STACEY ALLEAUME

This year the Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust Scholarship has allowed me to undertake a second year at the Opera School, Melbourne. So far, we have worked extensively with guest artists such as Glenn Winslade, Sharolyn Kimmorley, Dominic Natoli, Brian Castles-Onion, Merlyn Quail and Elke Neidhardt, just to name a few.

We performed Mozart's Don Giovanni at the National Theatre in St Kilda in September - I played Zerlina. It has been very exciting learning a new role, and I enjoyed tapping into Jane Fonda from Barefoot in the Park as inspiration for the character.

This year I have chosen to focus on stagecraft and acting skills. I have gained so much from working with Cameron Menzies, our resident director. Every week we learn different acting techniques in a stagecraft class. We have been learning and reciting monologues, something which is very new to me and extremely challenging. I am not confident with public speaking – but the experience has been incredibly valuable and I love the challenge!

I also love the chance to work extensively with other singers. Being surrounded by enthusiastic and passionate peers is such an encouraging environment!

I have competed in a few competitions, with the following results: 2nd in the St John of God Aria (South Eastern Arts Festival); 3rd in the Operatic Society Scholarship; 3rd in the Robert Salzer Vocal Championship Award at Boroondara Eisteddfod; 3rd in the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Aria and in September I reached the final six of the Herald Sun Aria competition – the grand final is on 26 October.



JANET TODD

The main thing that has happened since the start of the year has been my recent attendance at AIMS Opera Summer School in Graz, Austria. I've just returned from seven weeks there. I attended on scholarship through Opera Foundation Australia, the American Institute of Musical Studies Award. It was a great personal and professional achievement, not only to be selected from Australia-wide auditions, but to have the opportunity to learn so much in an immersive environment.

The knowledge, the international connections, and the musical and culturally enriching experiences have been extremely valuable.

I really feel that the funding from my scholarship with the Trust gave me the leg-up to help make it all possible. It allowed me to pay for my lessons, language classes and other musical studies without having to work full time, which gave me the time to concentrate on my singing and prepare for opportunities like AIMS. It also made other expenses, like the application fee, much more affordable from my own pocket!

Being given performance opportunities through the Melba Artists program of the Trust has been beneficial for the exposure it gives us to the people attending the events. I've been performing consistently at small events and concerts (Rosario and Anna-Maria La Spina's album launch being an interesting one) and working towards performances coming up throughout the second half of the year and in 2011.

I have recently been offered my first professional role with Victorian Opera, and believe that the developmental opportunities I've been given through the support of the Trust have directly contributed to my becoming more ready to sing professionally.

A CHANCE TO MEET THE MELBA SCHOLARS

The seven Melba Scholars for 2010 were introduced at a reception at Comoro House in South Yarra on 19 May. Family and friends joined the celebrations. Fittingly, the date matched Nellie Melba's birthday – she was born on 19 May 1861.

The seven scholars were introduced to supporters of the Trust, and all performed one of their favourite pieces. Each was then presented with a signed copy of Founding Patron Pamela, Lady Vestey's book *Melba: A Family Memoir*, a personal account of her grandmother's story.

Jacqueline Porter, the holder of the Dame Nellie Melba Scholarship for 2010, spoke on behalf of the recipients. She provided insight into the challenges facing young singers, and stressed the importance of the support provided by the Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust and its supporters.

"I have been challenged, questioned and encouraged to work at a higher level – now I feel inspired and excited by new possibilities for my singing," she said.

THE SEVEN SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS ARE:

Jacqueline Porter
Dame Nellie Melba Scholarship

Stephanie Gibson
Dame Nellie Melba Reserve Scholarship

Fiona Jopson
Amelia Joscelyne Memorial Scholarship

Siobhan Stagg
Amelia Joscelyne Reserve Scholarship

Stacey Alleaume
Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust Scholarship

Janet Todd
Beleura-Tallis Opera Scholarship

Sophie Yelland
Margaret Schofield Opera Scholarship



SCHOLARSHIP KEEPS AMELIA'S DREAM ALIVE



MORE THAN 20 YEARS AGO THE FRIENDS AND RELATIVES OF AMELIA JOSCELYNE, A YOUNG STUDENT AT THE MELBA CONSERVATORIUM WHO PASSED ON PREMATURELY, SET UP A SCHOLARSHIP IN HER MEMORY. AMELIA HAD CHERISHED HER SHORT TIME AT THE MELBA AND ABOVE ALL LOVED TO SING.

Today the Amelia Joscelyne Scholarship continues to help young female singers with their musical education. There have been more than 20 winners in all, including current scholarship holders Fiona Jopson and Siobhan Stagg.

The benefaction is made up of donations large and small from a group of individuals who remember Amelia. Each contribution is important, and the impact over the years has been profound. *Da Capo* spoke to several of the scholarship recipients and found that some have gone on to enjoy long and successful careers, while others are at the early stages of their journey.

Today Helena Dix (1997) is a successful singer, in demand for recitals around the world. The Joscelyne Scholarship made a crucial difference.

"My mother was a single parent and had provided me with a good education," Helena recalls. "I vowed I would not let her continue to have me as a burden and I worked so hard at getting the scholarship."

"It meant a whole load more than just the money. The Joscelynes were such lovely people and their support was from the heart. Not only did they support me financially but they became loyal supporters of my singing and this really touched my heart."

"This scholarship meant I could focus on the important part - the singing! And this has led to a very successful career." The very first winner of the Joscelyne Scholarship was Fiona Chatwin (1990).

"When I was offered a scholarship to the Melba Memorial Conservatorium of Music I thought I had gone to heaven," Fiona says. "This tiny college offered world-class training in what looked like someone's modest two-story home. But instead of opening the door into suburban life, the sound of music rang in every corner. Each day I would walk past the Director's office, secretly hoping one day to be her."

Today Fiona is the Director of Villa Musica, a nonprofit community music centre in San Diego, California, where she offers "world-class music education to people of all ages and backgrounds". In honour of Melba, one of the studios at Villa Musica is named the Dame Nellie Melba Vocal Studio.

Amelia's mother and Founding Patron of the Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust, Mary-Jane Joscelyne, says that over the years she has got to know the scholarship recipients, some of whom stay in touch with letters, updates, and invitations to performances.

"I'd like them all to go as far as they wish to go in their singing careers - it's lovely to see them fulfill their dreams," she says. "They give us a lot of pleasure when we hear them - you can hear the joy when they sing."

As well as financial help, the scholarship lifts a young singer's self-belief.

"Learning that the Joscelyne family were willing to recognise my application and ability in such a generous way gave me a great confidence boost," says Sally Hughes (1996).

"To have people believe in you at such an early stage definitely gives you an incentive to work towards your dreams," agrees Camila Rivera (2005-6). "When I learned the background of the scholarship I was struck with the responsibility to work hard and be the best singer I could be. I believe it was partly the reason why I pursued singing so far, up to post-graduate level."

"Studying singing has taught me much about life, people and myself," Camila adds. "I believe regardless of whether I have a successful singing career or not, the lessons that the Amelia Joscelyne Scholarship has facilitated will be ones I use and value for many years to come." Two of the most recent recent winners, Amy Spruce (2007) and Naomi Summers (2008) are in the early stages of their careers.

Amy recently completed her first professional tour around Victoria and South Australia, appearing in *Almost Anything Goes: A Tribute to the Songs and Shows of Cole Porter* with Style Musical Theatre.

"Financially, it was a great relief not to have to worry about fees for a year. Most importantly, it gave me the opportunity to get to know Mary-Jane Joscelyne, who is so supportive of my musical journey. I was always pleased to see that she was in the audience of one of my performances at the Melba and I looked forward to our chats afterwards."

For Naomi, the scholarship allowed her to be fully focused on her studies as she crammed two years of a Bachelor of Music into one year. She is now teaching singing and performing as a member of the Australian Music Events Opera Scholars, while she participates in competitions and eisteddfods to gain performance experience.

Camila Rivera says: "The Joscelyne family and their friends' approach to the mourning of their daughter by giving generations of young singers the opportunities they would have liked to give Amelia is a beautiful example of generosity and optimism."

After 20 years, the effects of that generosity continue to spread like ripples on a pond, and will no doubt continue to do so for many years to come.



AFTER 20 YEARS, THE AMELIA JOSCELYNE SCHOLARSHIP CONTINUES TO BENEFIT TALENTED YOUNG SINGERS.

Main Image: Past scholarship recipients with General Manager, Amy McPartlan, at Joscelyne celebration.



THIS YEAR'S RECIPIENTS OF THE AMELIA JOSCELYNE MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP ARE FIONA JOPSON AND SIOBHAN STAGG. FIONA AND SIOBHAN SHARE WHAT THEY HAVE BEEN UP TO THIS YEAR.



FIONA JOPSON PRESENT SCHOLARSHIP HOLDER

repertoire and languages is such an asset to the singers that she works with. Another highlight was participating in a master class with Rosario La Spina and Milijana Nikolic from Opera Australia.

I have undertaken intensive German classes at the Goethe Institute, studied stagecraft with Cameron Menzies and worked with a performance psychologist to help me get the best out of myself, my performance and my voice.

My plans for the second half of the year are to continue singing lessons with Raymond Cannell; further language coaching in Italian, French, Czech and Russian; and vocal coaching with Sharolyn Kimmorley and Tony Legge of Opera Australia. I hope to audition for the opera course at Guildhall, London in November.

For the first time in a long time I feel I am in the right hands. I don't have any worries with my voice - and I am reaping the rewards that come along with it.



HELENA DIX ALUMNUS



AMY SPRUCE ALUMNUS



NAOMI SUMMERS ALUMNUS



FIONA CHATWIN ALUMNUS



CLAIRE MCDONALD ALUMNUS



SALLY HUGHES ALUMNUS



FELICITY CATERER ALUMNUS



SIOBHAN STAGG PRESENT SCHOLARSHIP HOLDER

Recently I performed as a soloist with the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra. I sang 'Bid the Virtues' from Purcell's Birthday Ode to Queen Mary ('Come Ye Sons of Art') to eight sold-out audiences in Sydney's City Recital Hall and the Melbourne Recital Centre. It was one of the highest calibre performances I've given to date and received a good review in The Sydney Morning Herald. [Editor's note: SMH called Siobhan "the pick of the soloists".]

While in Sydney I met many singers and musicians, sat in on a masterclass led by soprano Amelia Farrugia at the Sydney Conservatorium and had coachings with both Stephen Mould (former head of music at Opera Australia) and Tahu Matheson (current

repertoire at OA). This Brandenburg season was their highest-selling concert series to date, so all in all it was an amazing fortnight!

In September I gave a concert called 'Chansons nouvelles de Paris' with The Renaissance Band. La Compania, in the salon at the Melbourne Recital Centre. Both they and the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra have invited me back to sing with them in concerts next year.

During September I sang at a lunchtime function for the Opera Society at the Swiss Club with associate artist David McSkimming, and performed two concerts of Russian repertoire with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra Chorus (for which I had Russian coaching courtesy of my scholarship). With these high-profile gigs developing in my schedule, the professional headshots I had done through my scholarship have been an important asset.

On a different note, I have been in touch with a distant cousin who links me to Lucille 'Lulu' Benstead, a soprano of note from just after Melba's time. It was such a buzz to find a connection to singing in my heritage, and the Bensteads have kindly given me some

of Lulu's original sheet music. They brought along some old photos of the diva, and said I bear a striking physical resemblance to her.

The support I am given from the Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust is invaluable in helping me maintain and improve upon my professional performance standard. It has also helped me make connections that have resulted in getting further engagements. Earlier in the year, I participated in a three-day French Baroque masterclass with acclaimed trio, Latitude 37. Through that experience, the group asked me to perform two tracks on their debut album, to be released by ABC Classics later this year.

On 19 September, several family members who had never heard me sing came along to the RACV Club concert which was a special reunion for us. My parents drove down from Mildura especially for the event.

Many, many thanks to the Trustees, staff and all of the supporters of the Trust. I am so grateful for your encouragement and for the incredible opportunity to be a Melba Scholar.



DE BORTOLI

DE BORTOLI OFFERS WINE-LOVERS A TASTE OF MELBA

Fine music and fine wine are a perfect match – never more so than in the case of Puccini’s opera *La bohème*, set among the taverns and bohemians of 1880s Paris.

Dame Nellie Melba first played the lead, Mimi, in 1899 and did so frequently throughout her career. It was one of her favourite and most well-known roles.

A new range of De Bortoli wines pays tribute to Melba in *La bohème*. Released in September 2010, there are three ‘acts’ in the range.

“Of course *La bohème* is made up of four acts - with the last ending in tragedy,” says De Bortoli Marketing Manager Toni Carlino. “Our *La bohème* has only three!”

“Act One is a blend of Sauvignon, Semillon and Rolle – dry and textural. Act Two is Pinot Noir Rose – pale, dry and delicious; Act Three is Pinot Gris with a hint of other aromatic varieties, Gewürztraminer and Riesling, for lovely harmony.”

De Bortoli has a tradition of wines with a connection to Melba. In 1992 De Bortoli released a premium Cabernet Sauvignon blend from the Yarra Valley called Melba Reserve. In 2006, they blended Sangiovese and Nebbiolo with Cabernet to create Melba Mimi and Melba Lucia. “We refer to them as our ‘naughty girls’ because of the rustic and savoury notes to the flavours,” says Toni Carlino.

In 2009 Leanne De Bortoli and Steve Webber, Chief Winemaker, developed a new range of wines referred to as the ‘Opera Series’, including the three new wines of the *La bohème* series.

De Bortoli was the event sponsor for the Dame Nellie Melba Opera Trust’s 2009 Gala. The Trust and De Bortoli continue to work on exciting projects combining fine wine and fine music, in honour of Melba’s legacy.

De Bortoli’s Yarra Valley vineyards and winery are located in Dixon’s Creek – on the Melba Highway, of course!



So That Another Melba May Arise

2011 SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS *now open*

APPLICATIONS TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE DAME NELLIE MELBA OPERA TRUST BY 25 OCTOBER 2010.
For more information or to download an application form, visit www.melbaoperatrust.com.au