

Joan Sutherland & Richard Bonyng Foundation Newsletter

Bel Canto

Est. 1978
45 Years of Excellence,
Education and Encouragement

Edition 33
April 2023



Celebrating our 45th Anniversary.
In memory of the greatest bel canto singer,
Joan Sutherland, seen here as Lucrezia Borgia.

A Message from the CEO | Artistic Director

Welcome to the thirty-third edition of *Bel Canto*.

Happy 45th Birthday?

In 1978, an Australian woman named Lynne Redknap heard Joan Sutherland sing in London. On returning to Sydney, Lynne decided to create an organisation in Dame Joan's name called the Joan Sutherland Society of Sydney. Its purpose was to help young singers by providing a \$200 a year scholarship. In 2010, the Society became the Joan Sutherland & Richard Bonyng Foundation in recognition of Richard's life-long achievements. Since that time, the Foundation has produced and assisted more singers than any other similar organisation within Australia - certainly something to celebrate in our 45th year.

If there was ever any doubt about our achievements, surely page three of this newsletter is proof that we are doing something right?

In addition to the Foundation's work, there are the accomplishments of the Elizabeth Connell singers. Combined, these two organisations are having a profound affect on the lives of many artists. Our success is incredibly vital in helping to sustain the art of opera singing in all its glory.

As I write this on a dull Sunday afternoon, having finally listened to all 172 ECP singers' two arias, my mind is thinking about all those artists out there desperate for careers. Sadly, they won't all make it, but many will and the support we give them early in life is incredibly important. This year, we had a record number of entries for the ECP from 41 countries. Having dissected all 344 videos and applications, 22 singers have been chosen to compete live in London with 6 eventually chosen to compete in the Final on 3 June. I am especially excited to be presenting the competition at Wigmore Hall in London this year, which will no doubt extend both organisation's reach into the opera world.

We have an esteemed panel of judges lined up for the Final, including conductor Simone Young, ECP Patrons, the dramatic soprano Dame Anne Evans (Bayreuth's Brünnhilde) and dramatic mezzo Bernadette Cullen, Peter Katona (ROH Covent Garden Casting Director), Isabel Murphey (BBC Cardiff Singer of the World judge and Longborough Opera Casting Advisor). We also hope that Richard Bonyng will be our guest-of-honour on the day. Do come along if you are in London - we'd love to see you.

Speaking of the Maestro, he's been in Venice recently working with 2022 Bel Canto Award finalist Jeremy Boulton at the Solti Accademia. This year's competition dates are still being finalised due to some late changes.

2023 Donations and Membership

I would like to thank all the donors who have contributed to the Scholarship Fund in 2023, including those friends of the late Dolores Donnelly who sadly passed away recently. Friends of Dolores donated to the Foundation in lieu of flowers and we are very grateful for that contribution toward the 2023 Bel Canto Award. This year we are looking for someone to help sponsor our \$30,000 first prize in the Bel Canto Award. If you know of anyone who would be interested in helping us in 2023, please don't hesitate to contact me.

2023 Donors

Jan Bowen AM
Elizabeth Corbett
& Mark Finlay
Cheryl Forrest-Smith
& Janine Burdeu
Renee Goossens
Trevor Grant
Roslyn Hancock

Diana Heath
Barbara Leser
Mr & Mrs D Neville
Richard Nott AM
Diane Openshaw
Mr & Mrs D Stubbin
Mr & Mrs N Tolley
Marie-Jeanne Urwyler
Mignon Wegner

Thank you to all our 2023 members, especially those who are new to the Foundation. Forty-five years is a remarkable achievement. Like Dame Joan, we like to think of ourselves as quiet achievers, however, I think we all deserve some applause on reaching this milestone. We couldn't do it without the collective contributions of all our friends.

With sincere gratitude, *Fiona Janes*

Special News

Sadly, the opera community farewellled the Australian conductor and coach Andrew Greene last month. BCA winners, Isabella Moore and Benson Wilson have tied the knot in London. BCA Soprano Olivia Cranwell and baritone Christopher Hiller have also tied the knot and welcomed a baby boy into their lives.

2019 Bel Canto Award winner and ECP grant recipient

Kiandra Howarth

as Rusalka at Hannover State Opera last month.

(photo) Sandra Then

SPOTLIGHT ON PENE PATI



Pene Pati in
La Favorita in Bordeaux

ELIZABETH CONNELL PRIZE

2023 Quarter-finalists

Iida Antola – Finland
 Angel Azzarra - USA
 Claire Barnett-Jones - England
 Georgia Mae Bishop – Jersey
 Menna Cazel – Wales/Germany
 Bronwyn Douglass - Australia
 Annabella-Vesela Ellis – Bulgaria/Britain
 Anna Erokhina - Ukraine
 Rebecca Gulinello – Australia/Italy
 Sonja Herranen - Finland
 Carolyn Holt - Ireland
 Inna Husieva - Ukraine
 Chelsea Laggan - USA
 Jihyun Cecilia Lee – South Korea
 Stephanie Pfundt - USA
 Anne-Lise Polchlopek - France
 Helena Sa Cavalcante Schuback - Sweden
 Oksana Sliubyk - Ukraine
 Libby Sokolowski - USA
 Felicity Tomkins – New Zealand
 Anne Marie Vergoossen - Netherlands
 Melissa Zgouridi - USA/Brazil

What are they up to?

In 2011, a young New Zealand tenor named Darren Pene Pati entered the first Bel Canto Award. That same year, the New Zealand soprano Amina Edris also competed in the Final of the competition with Pene, little knowing they would later go on to marry, each other! Both young singers showed enormous potential that year and were encouraged to come back and enter the competition again. As many of our patrons will remember, Pene returned in 2012 to take out the coveted JSRB Bel Canto Award and returned later as a guest. Since that time, he has sung in many of the major opera houses of the world, released various albums either through his group Sol3 Mio, or as a solo artist. He has become one of the most sort after tenors in the world. In December, he was in Monte Carlo singing the *Damnation of Faust*. *La Favorita* followed in Bordeaux. Next comes *Manon* in Barcelona, *La boheme* in Paris, *Lucia di Lammermoor* in Aix-en-Provence and *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* in Salzburg. The cherry on the icing is that his wife, Amina, will sing by his side in the *Manon* and *La boheme* in Paris, and for Canadian Opera. This powerhouse duo are unstoppable – catch them where you can.

Fleuranne Brockway After recent performances as Hansel in Germany, our most recent Bel Canto Award winner has a busy year ahead. Based in Wiesbaden, Fleuranne's year consists of Annina in *Der Rosenkavalier*, various roles in *Il trittico*, *The Makropulos Affair*, Carmen and Mercedes, and she will debut at the prestigious Bregenz Festival on Austria's Lake Constance as Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly* this July/August.

Naomi Johns, our 2013 winner, makes a major debut as Desdemona in *Otello* for West Australia Opera with mezzo Ashlyn Tymms as Emilia. Grant recipient Ashlyn, recently performed Carmen (right) in Perth for West Australian Opera.

Kiandra Howarth, our 2019 winner, sings Rusalka and Countess in Hannover this year, and Freia in *Das Rheingold* for the Opernhaus Zurich in 2024.

Benson Wilson, 2018 winner, was seen recently in English National Opera's productions of *Carmen* and *Akhnaten* and will appear in *Rigoletto* for Holland Park.

Alasdair Kent This remarkable Australian tenor is enjoying an outstanding career. 2016 BCA winner, Alasdair Kent, has a full season ahead starting the year with *The Abduction from the Seraglio* in Munich, *Carmina Burana* in Philadelphia, *Così fan tutte* in Luxembourg, *The Barber of Seville* in Cincinnati, and for the Opernhaus Zurich this year he will perform in *Il Turco in Italia* and Rameau's *Platée*.

Bronwyn Douglass (right) the 2017 BCA winner, has made her main-stage debut as Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* for Opera Australia next to the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World winner Andrei Kymach (also right). She covers Sieglinde later in the year for OA's Ring Cycle and is in the top 22 for the Connell Prize in London along with Rebecca Gulinello.

John Longmuir, 2011 BCA winner, appeared in *Alcina* for the National Opera in December and sings Frederic shortly in the *Pirates of Penzance* for South Australia Opera in Adelaide.





Anne-Louise Cole

Elsa in *Lohengrin* in Bologna

Lady Macbeth for Opera Qld

Venus in *Tannhäuser*
for Opera Australia

Brünnhilde & Sieglinde
in *Das Rheingold*

Brünnhilde & Sieglinde
in *Die Walküre*

Brünnhilde in Siegfried

Brünnhilde in *Götterdämmerung*
all for Opera Australia

Anna-Louise Cole as Lady Macbeth

Sopranos of our time!

The 2023 Elizabeth Connell Prize has attracted a record number of entries this year with 172 singers vying for the prestigious £15,000 first prize. The competition, which is presented by the JSRB Foundation, will take place in London over three days in late May with the Final held at Wigmore Hall on 3 June at 1pm. Tickets are on sale through the Wigmore Hall box office. www.wigmore-hall.org.uk
See page 3 for the full list of singers competing in the quarter-finals.



A word from some of our past winners.

Sophie Burns *It was an immense honour to receive the award last year. It was the recognition and support of my voice and my path that I cherished in that moment and took on as inspiration for the work I did for the remainder of the year. The award gave me the financial support to work on new repertoire, and to prepare new roles such as my debut of both Lola in Cavalleria Rusticana in Italy and Mercedes in Carmen in the UK. I was able to record new repertoire in a professional setting in Berlin and attended an intensive masterclass with the much celebrated vocal coach Giulio Zappa in Milan. In addition, I was able to study German and Italian further in language courses. In short, the award allowed me the opportunity to grow as an artist, as a person, and performer. I want to give my thanks once again to the Elizabeth Connell Prize Competition and the Joan Sutherland and Richard Bonyngue Foundation.*

Beth Taylor Beth is in the Final 20 for the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World and will sing Anna in *Les Troyens* for the Salzburg Festival. *I have already worked with a few coaches on a wide variety of repertoire, alongside role and house debuts at Opernhaus Zürich, Glyndebourne Festival and Deutsche Oper Berlin. I have some very exciting projects in the pipeline up to 2025!*

Sigrid Vetleseter Bøe *I wanted you to know that I now have spent large parts of the grant I received in 2021 on a large amount of coachings and lessons, and it is surely paying off. I am soon making my debut as Lady Macbeth here in Sweden and more roles are to come in the future, both in Sweden and Norway in the coming seasons. Again - thank you so much from the bottom of my heart. Please pass on my gratitude to the rest of the jury.*

Julie Adams sang Sieglinde in Bern in January, Gerhilde for the Opernhaus Zurich follows then Elsa in *Lohengrin* for San Francisco Opera later this year.

Teresa Romano (right), having changed fach to mezzo, has revelled in singing the Principessa in *Adriana Lecouvreur* in Moderna recently.

Arminia Friebe (below) has been enjoying performing Tosca in Trier and will sing Ellen Orford in Avignon.

Maria Natale will sing Tosca for Opera San Jose.

Carolina Lopez Moreno

will sing Fedora, Adriana and Mimi this year.

Deirdre Angenent has sung her first Verdi Requiem in Zurich.

Katie Lowe has sung Freia at English National Opera. She will sing the 3rd Norn for Longborough in 2023 and Helmwig in Brussels at La Monnaie in 2024.



OFFICE HOURS
Mon-Fri 9am to 5pm

POSTAL ADDRESS

P.O. Box 2692, Bowral NSW 2576
Tel: 0402 024 118 | 02 4861 2440
enquiries@jsrbfoundation.com
generalmanager@jsrbfoundation.com
belcantoaward@jsrbfoundation.com
econnellprize@jsrbfoundation.com

**DON'T FORGET TO
RENEW YOUR
MEMBERSHIP AND
UPDATE YOUR EMAIL
ADDRESS TO RECEIVE
NEWS**



www.jsrbfoundation.com

Lauren Fagan

Below as Countess in
Le nozze di Figaro for
Vancouver Opera

Coming up,

Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*
in Victoria, Canada

Helena in *A Midsummer
Night's Dream* for
Glyndebourne Opera

Gutrune in
Das Rheingold for
Opernhaus Zurich

The Elizabeth Connell scholarship gave me the ability to work on this lyric repertoire and consequently I started getting cast in these roles, I am very thankful to the panel for seeing my potential and awarding me this celebrated prize.



Margrethe Fredheim (right)

*I am happy to share that I am participating in a complete Ring Cycle at Staatstheater Kassel this year, singing Freia in *Das Rheingold*, Gerhilde in *Die Walküre* and Gutrune in *Götterdämmerung*. I am so grateful for the cash prize I received which made it possible for me to travel for auditions.*

