

GERMAN-AUSTRALIAN OPERA GRANT

Molly Ryan - 2026 -

Molly, the German-Australian Opera Grant's most recent recipient, has already faced and risen to the first challenges in Wiesbaden and is revelling in the opportunities she has been afforded:



Photo: Jolanta Morgan

Last week officially marked my third month living in Germany, and I can happily report that I am thoroughly enjoying my time here! Since making the move in early June, I have undertaken an intensive German course at the Goethe-Institut in Freiburg, begun working at the beautiful Hessisches Staatstheater Wiesbaden (HSW), and already performed in two operas – *Tosca* and *Die Zauberflöte*.

A particularly memorable experience was my Erste Dame debut in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. What was originally meant

to be a role debut much later in my season unexpectedly became a weekend of many firsts.

On Sunday 13 September I made my first jump-in for a sick colleague, my main-stage debut, and my role debut as Erste Dame – all within just 48 hours' notice.

Although I had already performed the role of the Shepherd in *Tosca* twice, this was a smaller offstage role, so I had not yet had the opportunity to acclimatise to working on the stage, particularly in front of an audience.

Thankfully, I had prepared the role of Erste Dame before leaving Australia, which allowed me to successfully step into the production at short notice and learn the staging within a limited timeframe. The entire team was incredibly supportive, and the experience taught me so much about the realities of working as an ensemble member in Germany, as well as about myself as a performer.

It was a challenging but incredibly rewarding experience, and certainly a highlight of my first month working here.

Alongside performing, I have also been working on the upcoming revival of *La traviata*, in which I will sing Annina, as well as a new premiere production of *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, in the role of Stella.

It has been wonderful to experience both the fast-paced rehearsal process of reviving an established production and the opportunity to develop a new production from scratch alongside the director and creative team.

These first few months in Germany have been an incredibly exciting period of growth, both personally and professionally. I am incredibly grateful to the German Australian Opera Grant (GAOG) for making this opportunity possible and my dream of singing in Europe a reality.

I am incredibly excited to continue learning, performing and making the most of this opportunity throughout the remainder of my season and I look forward to everything that is yet to come.



Molly Ryan (middle) backstage at HSW

Darcy Carroll **- 2022/23 -**

Darcy will be the Special Guest Singer at this year's GAOG Opera Finale. Here he reflects on the past year:

This has been a bit of a quieter year, though not without a few memorable highlights.

I started off the year performing as Monsieur Lefèvre/Don Attilio in Opera Australia's production of *The Phantom of the Opera* at Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour. This was a dazzling production and an absolutely whirlwind experience. It was a stunning location to perform in every evening and a highlight for me as *Phantom* has long been on my list of musicals I would love to take part in.

Later in the year I appeared as Judge Redmond Barry in Victorian Opera's *Ned Kelly the Musical*. This production was a delight and was extremely well received.

The middle of the year also saw me reprising the role of Sir John Falstaff in Lyster's touring production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, which was as joyful a production as the first time around in 2025. .

Most recently I performed the role of Jupiter in ACOCO's production of *Orpheus in the Underworld*. Coming up at the end of the year I have concert appearances with the Heidelberg Choral Society, ACOCO, and more.



***Darcy (top row middle) backstage at Opera Australia's Phantom of the Opera on Sydney Harbour
(photo Michael Lampard)***

Darcy can be heard at the following concerts:

Maroondah Symphony Orchestra's concert of Händel's *Messiah* on Sunday 15 November

Heidelberg Choral Society's *Christmas Glory & Light* on Sunday 29 November

Opera by the Lakes 2027 in March 2027
(<https://www.trybooking.com/au/event/1656350>, bookings open on 22 November)

**GERMAN-AUSTRALIAN
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Fleuranne Brockway - 2019 -

Fleuranne's excitement is infectious and we are excited with her on hearing the new roles and debuts she is facing in the coming season, both at HSW and further afield:

It's always so wonderful to be able to share good news! Over the summer, I made my debut as the Komponist in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with the cover cast at Glyndebourne Festival, my first time working in the UK since COVID.

This season is shaping up to be my most exciting yet! I have just made my debut as Nicklausse in a fantastic production of *Hoffmanns Erzählungen* (*The Tales of Hoffmann* by Jacques Offenbach) at HSW, where I will also be returning to the glorious role of Hänsel and making my debut as Dido in *Dido and Aeneas* in January 2027.

My season has some wonderful house and role debuts ahead, including *Roßweiße* at the Salzburg Easter Festival (ed: in *Die Walküre*) alongside Lisa Davidsen in her first Brunnhilde, and my debut at Teatro alla Scala with Maestro Chung.

I will also be performing concerts with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal before heading home to Australia for the summer to sing one of my signature roles, *Carmen*, with West Australian Opera.

It is a wonderfully busy season, and I am incredibly excited about what lies ahead. I hope to visit the GAOG community when I am next home in Australia. The opportunity to live and work in Europe has been invaluable to my growth as an artist, allowing me to learn from world-class musicians, challenge myself and refine my craft.

I am deeply grateful to GAOG and HSW for making this possible and giving me the opportunities and support that have shaped my career in ways I could only dream of when I started singing.



Fleuranne on opening night as La Muse/Nicklausse in the HSW production of Hoffmanns Erzählungen (photo Max Borschardt)

Victoria Lambourn - 2014 -

Despite finishing her PhD - congratulations! - Victoria continues to have a very busy schedule. She sent her greetings between voice students:

This has been an exciting year. I finally completed my PhD on absolute pitch in singers and performed at the Coriole Festival, joining international artists in concerts that were broadcast on ABC Classics. I continue to teach at the Melbourne Conservatorium, where alongside individual singing teaching, my work includes lyric diction, repertoire coaching and voice research.

This year, I took on the role of Vice President of the Australian Voice Association. As always, I am grateful to GAOG for helping to further my career, and I hope the winner of this year's GAOG has as rewarding a time in Wiesbaden as I did.



Victoria (right) performing duets by Mendelssohn at the Coriole Music Festival in 2025

James Young - 2024 -

James has been extremely busy in the past year and becoming acquainted with the workings of various German opera houses as he widens his experience beyond HSW and wins accolades at a number of opera competitions:

When I arrived in Wiesbaden as the GAOG recipient in 2023, I could not have imagined how many opportunities that first season would lead to.

Three years later, I am returning to Wiesbaden as a guest in three productions, having spent the intervening years singing in some wonderful German opera houses, travelling to international competitions and taking on roles I had only dreamed of singing at this stage of my career.

One of the first surprises came towards the end of my scholarship year, when I was offered Dulcamara in Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* at Theater Trier. I was already incredibly busy in Wiesbaden, but somehow all the rehearsal and performance dates fitted together like pieces of a puzzle. Dulcamara is not a role you necessarily expect to secure in a German opera house so early in your career. A great deal of the evening's success rests on his shoulders, and theatres understandably need confidence that a singer can carry both the musical and theatrical demands.

I think having already sung some substantial roles at HSW, one of Germany's most renowned opera houses, gave Trier the confidence to cast me.

The production brought some extraordinarily generous reviews, and there were important agents in the audience at the premiere, which subsequently led to further opportunities. It was a wonderful example of how much one engagement can lead to another.

I have also taken part twice in the International Hans Gabor Belvedere Singing Competition, in Latvia in 2023 and Switzerland in 2024. The Belvedere is particularly inspiring because you meet singers from all over the world and have the chance to perform for many of the industry's leading casting directors and influential figures. Those experiences also helped lead to an audition and masterclass at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, which was enormously exciting.

Following Wiesbaden, I joined the ensemble at Theater und Orchester Heidelberg for the 2025/26 season, which was an absolute dream come true.

Heidelberg is almost a fairytale city, but also one of Europe's remarkable cultural centres, home to the home to the Heidelberger Frühling Musikfestival and a theatre with an excellent artistic reputation.

I sang Faninal in Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*, Don Alfonso in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, and Morales and Le Dancaïre in Bizet's *Carmen*, alongside the bass solos in Beethoven's

Symphony No 9 at the Stadthalle Heidelberg and Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem* at the Peterskirche.

What made Heidelberg especially memorable was the extraordinary calibre of the productions and the people I worked with.

Andrea Schwalbach directed *Der Rosenkavalier* and Magdalena Fuchsberger directed *Così fan tutte*, and both experiences were immensely rewarding, not just professionally but creatively. They were productions that really meant something to the audience and society as a whole.

It was also a fascinating moment in Theater und Orchester Heidelberg's history. The season marked the end of Holger Schultze's 15-year Intendanz, and *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Così fan tutte* were two of the biggest productions the house had undertaken. As some of the final operas of that era, there was an extra sense of expectation and pressure surrounding them, which made being part of them all the more special.



James (far right) on stage singing Faninal in *Der Rosenkavalier* with Theater und Orchester Heidelberg

And, once again, one opportunity led to another. A casting director who saw my Don Alfonso subsequently offered me two roles at another major German opera house this season. It is remarkable how an evening on stage can open a door without you even knowing who is sitting in the audience!

Outside the theatre, 2026 has brought some particularly exciting competition experiences. At the Concorso Lirico Internazionale di Portofino (CLIP), I was awarded the Emerging Bass Prize. Portofino itself was quite an experience, and singing in such a spectacular place on the Italian coast felt a little like stepping into a James Bond film!

I also travelled to Rome for the later rounds of the Ottavio Zino International Opera Competition. In 2025, I was also unbelievably honoured to become the first singer to win both the Herald Sun Aria and Joan Sutherland and Richard Bonyngne Bel Canto Award(s) in a single year, and I am so grateful to these scholarships as they have enabled me to continue pursuing my dream.

Another highlight was winning First Prize at the International Grand Prix Jacques Offenbach in Bad Ems. Offenbach spent many summers there and premiered eight of his works in the town's historic Marmorsaal, where the competition final also took place. In the opening rounds, I sang Rachmaninoff's "Ves' tabór spit" from Aleko, followed by Dapertutto's "Scintille, diamante" from *Les contes d'Hoffmann* and Dulcamara's "Udite, udite, o rustici" from *L'elisir d'amore* in the final. Winning a competition celebrating Offenbach in a room so closely connected with the composer was something quite special.

Now, in the 2026/27 season, I am preparing to make my debut at the Staatstheater Darmstadt in Giordano's *Andrea Chénier*, singing Pierre Fléville and Fouquier-Tinville. Darmstadt has long been one of my dream workplaces, so I am absolutely thrilled to have this opportunity.

But perhaps the most meaningful development is my return to HSW, where I will be singing Angelotti in Puccini's *Tosca*, Fiorello and Un Ufficiale in Nikolaus Habjan's extraordinary production of Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and the Regisseur in Donizetti's *Viva la mamma!*

Wiesbaden is a very special opera house, not only for the quality of the music-making, but for the interesting, ambitious and important productions they put on. I have enormous affection for the theatre and the people working there, and to be invited back to that stage in three different productions means a tremendous amount to me. It is a real pinch-me kind of experience.

I think my return to Wiesbaden also shows just how valuable GAOG can be. The programme is not simply a year of singing in Germany before moving on.

You are genuinely supported, encouraged and trusted with opportunities that can shape the direction of your career for years afterwards.

The experience gave me the foundation to establish myself here, and so many of the things I have been fortunate enough to do since can be traced back to that first season.

I am especially grateful to Franziska (Kaiser) and Dorothea (Hartmann) for their extraordinary support and the faith they placed in me from the beginning. In a profession as competitive and unpredictable as opera, having people who believe in you and are prepared to give you those opportunities is beyond priceless.

And somewhere in between all these professional commitments, James found time to marry his sweetheart Ellie Harrison in 2025.

Congratulations James and every happiness to the young couple!



James (right) on stage singing Angelotti in Tosca with HSW

Stephanie Gooch - 2010 -

We last featured Stephanie in 2016, when she was settling back into life in Perth and exploring a range of musical genres. Since then, her life has developed and expanded in a number of ways:

It has been a wonderfully busy and rewarding few years in my musical and personal life.

One of the biggest musical highlights has been the creation of my own ensemble, Meadowlark — an a cappella group with the added fun of a drummer. What began as a simple idea has grown into a much-loved creative project, with multiple performances and three original shows developed for the Perth Fringe Festival: *70s Record*, *80s Mixtape* and *90s Playlist*. The latter was particularly special, receiving a Fringe Weekly Award for Music and Musicals.

I am currently putting pen to paper for our next adventure: a children's show, which I am very excited to bring to life.



Stephanie's young daughter looks just like her mother and is doing a great job of looking after her little brother

Alongside Meadowlark, I have continued to perform regularly in concerts. However opera has taken a bit of a back seat for the moment, as our family has grown! Our little girl has just turned three, and in July we welcomed a baby boy into the family.

I am incredibly grateful to the German-Australian Opera Grant, its supporters, and its benefactors

for the encouragement and opportunities that have been part of my journey.

Although my career and life have taken some wonderfully unexpected turns, I am so pleased to still be creating, performing, and finding new ways to share music with audiences.



Meadowlark (Stephanie 2nd from right)



Meadowlark 70s Record, Fringeworld 2021, with Stephanie in hard hat, protecting the WA border

Nathan Bryon - 2025 -

Nathan has enjoyed his first year in Wiesbaden and has been given the opportunity to continue his stay at HSW for a second season:

Greetings from Wiesbaden!

It's difficult to believe it has been a year since my last update to the GAOG newsletter — time flies when you're having fun!

The past season and summer have been an extraordinary experience. Last season I took part in five productions in German, Russian and Italian, alongside a huge number of concerts and events. The variety of repertoire and languages really expanded my skills and, more importantly, gave me a great deal of confidence in my artistry.

Following a busy and fulfilling season, my goal for the summer was to make as many connections across Europe as possible, and the International Meistersinger Akademie provided a wonderful opportunity to do just that. I was fortunate to work with some fantastic artists and industry professionals from across the world, including those from the



Nathan Bryon with Fleuranne Brockway in the foyer of HSW

Metropolitan Opera, Vienna State Opera, Bayerische Staatsoper, Lyric Opera of Chicago and many others. I then continued my summer at the Tosti International Academy in the UK, where I had the opportunity to work with wonderful singers and pedagogues such as Dame Sarah Connolly and Jennifer Larmore, as well as coaches from Opernhaus Zürich, Staatsoper Stuttgart, Covent Garden and others.

Following such a productive summer, I am very excited to begin my second season in Wiesbaden. I am particularly thrilled about my debut as Tamino this season, amongst some interesting other assignments.

I am also excited about my first guest opera contract in Europe, and about signing with a fantastic artist management agency (details to come!).

I have also reached the final rounds of the wonderful Neue Stimmen competition in Gütersloh, Germany, which was a fantastic opportunity to meet and work alongside singers from around the world.

It means a great deal to have the continued support of everyone at GAOG and More Than Opera, as well as Dorothea Hartmann, Franziska Kaiser and all my colleagues at HSW, as I begin my second year at the theatre. It was also wonderful to see Hans and Petra Henkell here in Wiesbaden during the Maifestspiele and to attend performances of *Tristan und Isolde*.

It is especially wonderful to have another young Australian here in Wiesbaden. Molly Ryan has joined the ensemble this season, and as I write this, we have just finished our first performance of *La traviata* for the season. It is such a pleasure to share this experience with another Australian so far from home and a fellow Sydney Conservatorium of Music graduate as well.



GERMAN-AUSTRALIAN OPERA GRANT



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Celeste Haworth
- 2015 -

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When we last heard from Celeste she had just welcomed a baby into her life. The last year has seen her return to the opera stage:

This year has flown by, as I return to work and the opera stage after joyously becoming a mother for the first time.

I have upcoming soloist engagements with Opera Australia covering the role of Marthe in Gounod's *Faust*, performances of Bach's Christmas Oratorio Cantatas with the Orange Symphony Orchestra and the Allegri Players, and a yet to be announced project with the Kuringgai Philharmonic Orchestra, a Christmas Concert at the Concourse Concert Hall Chatswood, amongst other exciting projects.

Recently I sang at a Choral Mass of assorted works at Our Lady of Dolours Chatswood with organist Titus Grenyer for the St Acutis pilgrimage of Australia.

As I navigate these new waters, I am excited for what the future holds and so very grateful for how many blessings I have in my life. As always, it all began with the incredible GAOG and the GAOG team.

MTO German-Australian Opera Grant

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For current news about the German-Australian Opera Grant and HSW see the following websites:

www.mto-gaog.com

<https://www.staatstheater-wiesbaden.de/>

