

OPERA ZOOMS INTERNATIONALLY FROM MELBOURNE

On August 14 and 15, 2020, More Than Opera's German-Australian Opera Grant team were the first ever to audition and select an opera singer from Australia for a full-time job in Germany – via Zoom. For the last eighteen years, live auditions were the norm.

The German-Australian Opera Grant is giving the State Theatre of Hessen in Wiesbaden (Near Frankfurt) the opportunity to engage part-subsidised solo opera performers from Australia one year's full-time employment and Australian opera singers in the early phase of their career the possibility to jump over the standard audition path, which is costly, lengthy and uncertain.

After a debate within GAOG's team and Business-Arts Partner HENKELL BROTHERS as to whether it would be better to delay the auditions until health conditions improved in Australia, multiple factors, not least Wiesbaden's far-sighted planning policy, determined the e-choice.

GAOG's Artistic Director contacted the twelve semi-finalists to ensure that they were comfortable with their choice of equipment and Zoom settings. They also had to secure backing tracks. This is easy in the case of pop or rock but much more difficult with the more subtle and fluid musical style of opera. In the end, the expert adjudication panel were very impressed with the creativity, resourcefulness and positive attitudes of the auditionees and their support teams.

After two days of auditions, Victorian baritone Darcy Carroll secured the plum job as the GAOG recipient. South Australian soprano Karina Bailey secured the MTO Development Grant including a \$3500 cash prize. Georgia Melville (soprano) and Andrew Williams (baritone) from NSW also walked away with a \$1500 cash prize each.

Our special panel member representing Wiesbaden stayed up the whole night in torrid summer temperatures but thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Conductor and Chorus-Master Albert Horne remarked how highly our GAOG recipients are prized, citing Victorian Daniel Carison (2018-19) and West Australian Fleuranne Brockway (2019-20) as "bringing the house down". They know their work, are reliable colleagues and adapt very well to European production styles. He also praised the community spirit.

Much as we hope that things will return to normal in August 2021, the GAOG team is relieved that the adjudication team was able to come to a decision based on E-auditions and congratulates all who enabled this to happen.

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