



# Australian Opera Singers

The Rotary Club of Canterbury “Let’s Stay Connected Project” has been developed as a response to an identified need within the Aged Care sector.

At times when it’s difficult to connect in person with family and friends, the Rotary Club of Canterbury has pleasure in offering you this booklet, designed to promote conversation, recollection and engagement for those who are in isolation and without their usual social activities.

The booklets have been designed for people in an aged care residence, village or at home to read by themselves, or to have a family or staff member share the booklet with them.

You can download this and other booklets from the Rotary Club of Canterbury website ([www.canterburyrotary.org](http://www.canterburyrotary.org)).

Source references for this book are held at the Rotary Club of Canterbury. Contact [president@caterburyrotary.org](mailto:president@caterburyrotary.org) for further details.

Material in this book was reproduced in accordance with Section 113F of the Copyright Act (1968).



Hi

My name is Val and I'm a member of the Rotary Club of Canterbury in Melbourne, Australia.

It's been fun researching the story of so many famous Australian opera singers for you. I've learnt such a lot.

Regards

Val



# Australian Opera Singers

Australia has a long history of opera singers, the most famous being Dame Nellie Melba and Dame Joan Sutherland

Australia has had a whole alphabet of operatic singers, both male and female.

Dame Nellie Melba  
(right)



Dame Joan Sutherland  
(left)

# Robert Allman

Robert Joseph Edward Allman (1927-2013) was a bass baritone who sang at the Royal Opera and Covent Garden. He became a principal artist with the Australian Opera in 1965.



# Marie Angel

Marie Angel (1953) is a contemporary soprano opera singer but also sings standard repertoire.

She is one of today's most thrilling dramatic sopranos and is known for the versatility of her voice, her stage presence and her extraordinary ability to move audiences.





# Florence Austral



Florence Austral (1892-1968) was born Florence Mary Wilson but adopted the professional surname Austral in 1921 in honour of her homeland. She was an operatic soprano renowned for her interpretation of the most demanding Wagnerian female roles.



During the mid-1920s she made the first of more than 100 recordings for HMV. In her later years with declining health, she taught singing at the Newcastle Conservatorium.

# Maroochy Barambah

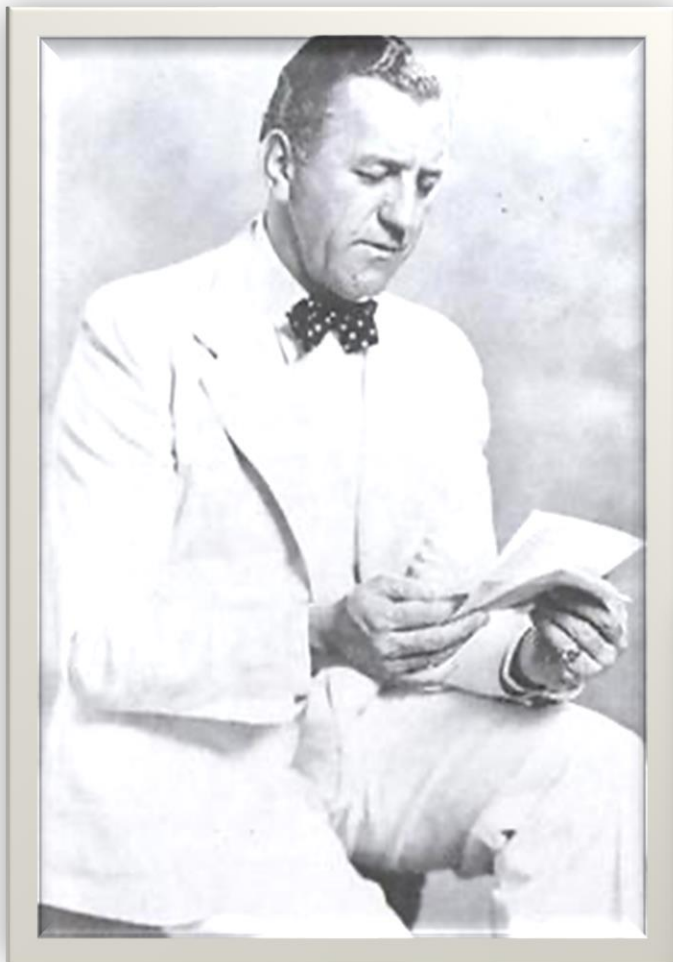
Maroochy Barambah (born Yvette Isaacs in the 1950s) is an Aboriginal mezzo-soprano. As a tribute to her Aboriginality she took the names Maroochy (meaning "black swan") and Barambah (meaning "source of the western wind").



Her most famous performance was in “Black River” at the Sydney Opera House.



# John Brownlee



John Brownlee (1900-1969) was a baritone who won a singing contest even though he had had no singing lessons.

Nellie Melba saw him at a performance of *The Messiah* and encouraged him. He debuted in the performance of *La Boheme* where Melba made her farewell appearance.



Brownlee in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*.

# June Bronhill

June Bronhill (1929-2005) was a coloratura soprano, performer and actress. Born June Gough, she changed her name to reflect the town of her birth – Broken Hill.



June as Vilja in *The Merry Widow*.



June sang light opera musicals at the West End theatres and towards the end of her career she played a role in the TV comedy *Are You Being Served*.

# John Cameron



John Cameron (1918-2002) was a baritone who won a national singing competition along with Joan Sutherland in 1948.

In his role in *Lilac Time* by Schubert.

He performed with the Elizabethan Opera Company between 1949 and 1974, preferring modern operas such as *Diary of a Mad Man* and *Cadillac*.



Cameron (left) as Point, in *Yeomen of the Guard*.



# Joan Carden



Joan Carden AO OBE (1937) is an Australia operatic soprano. She was an understudy for June Bronhill in *The Merry Widow* in 1960.

Her debut with Opera Australia was in 1971 as Liù in Puccini's *Turandot*. She has been described as "a worthy successor to Dame Nellie Melba and Dame Joan Sutherland.



As  
Countess  
Almaviva  
in *The  
Marriage of  
Figaro*



As Madame Butterfly

# Conal Coad

Conal Coad is known for his dramatic interpretations of the bass repertoire. He performs with the New Zealand Opera Company and Opera Australia. Coad has performed many Benjamin Britten roles such as Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Valencia, Spain, Timur in the Handa Opera at the Sydney Harbour production of *Turandot*.

He is shown in the role of Don Pasquale in two different performances – an Opera Australia production above and below at the Kerikeri Centre.





# Peter Coleman-Wright

Peter Coleman-Wright (1958) is a baritone and has performed many traditional roles with the English National Opera. In 2002, he won the Helpmann Award for Best Male Actor in a Musical for his role in *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*.

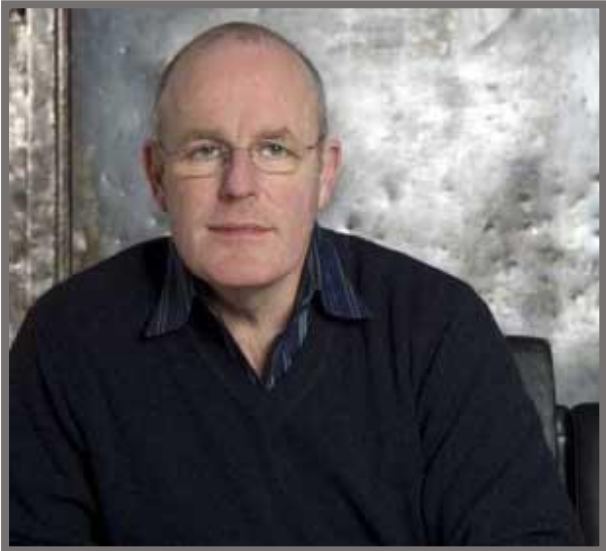


As Gunther in  
*Gutterdamerung*



As Beckmesser in  
*Die Meistersinger*

# Martin Cooke



Martin Cooke (1955) is a baritone and is the first Australian to become a member of the Bavarian State Opera Chorus.



As **St Peter** in *Il Lutto dell'Universo – The Mourning of the Universe*.

# Jacqueline Dark

Jacqueline Lisa Dark was born in Ballarat and trained as a mezzo-soprano at the Victorian College of the Arts.

Dark has played most of the major classical female roles: Donna Elvira – *Don Giovanni*, Marcellina – *Marriage of Figaro*, Maddalena – *Rigoletto*, Emilia – *Otello*, Flora – *La Traviata*, Suzuki – *Madam Butterfly*, and Carmen. She also sings music theatre, cabaret, theatre restaurant and concerts.

As Katisha in *The Mikado* (right).



As Herodias in *Salome* (left)

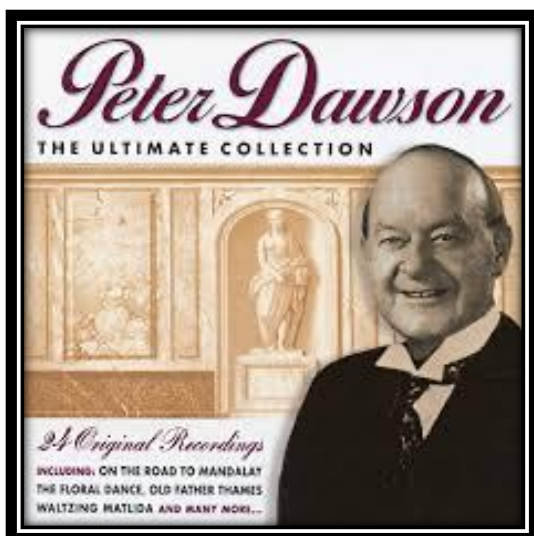


# Peter Dawson

Peter Dawson (1882-1961) born in Adelaide, was a baritone and song writer. While Dawson didn't perform operas, he was known for his technically excellent vocal abilities through his renditions of operatic arias, oratorio solos and rousing ballads.



In 1984, Dawson was chosen by the *Guinness Book of Recorded Sound* as one of the top 10 singers on disc of all time.

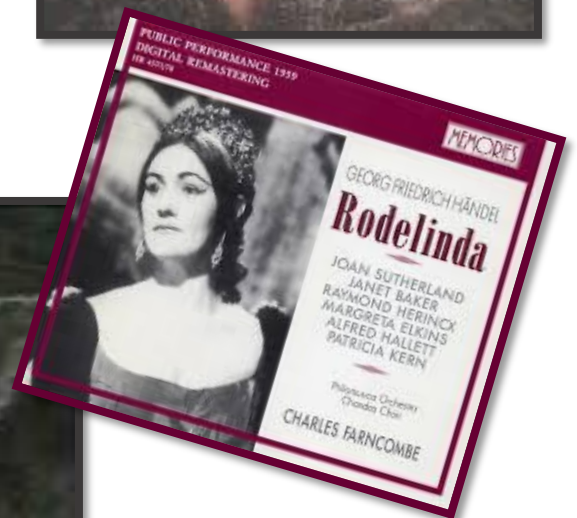


In 2007, Peter Dawson's 1931 recording of *Along the Road to Gundagai* was added to the National Film and Sound Archive's Sounds of Australia registry.

# Margreta Elkins

Margreta Elkins (1930-2009), a mezzo-soprano, sang on many of the world's opera stages and with Maria Callas and Joan Sutherland.

Callas had heard Elkins in rehearsal and chose her to sing Alisa for the EMI recording of Lucia di Lammermoor.



With Joan Sutherland in Vincenzo Bellini's *Norma*



# Sylvia Fisher



Sylvia Fisher AM (1910-1996) was an operatic soprano, especially distinguished in German opera.



She also appeared as soloist with the leading choral societies and orchestras, and at music festivals under the batons of the most famous conductors.



# Clifford Grant



Clifford Grant (1930) is a bass singer. He had his debut at the Royal Opera House in *The Marriage of Figaro*, in the role of Doctor Bartolo.



Grant participated in numerous recordings of operas, such as: *Norma*, *Esclarmonde*, the collection of all late Italian operas by Mozart, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Tosca*, *Rigoletto*, and Wagner's *Ring cycle*.

# Dame Joan Hammond

Joan Hilda Hood Hammond, DBE, CMG (1912-1996) was an Australian operatic soprano, singing coach and champion golfer. What a combination!

Her final performance was at the funeral of Lady Gowrie, at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle. Hammond was the first woman ever granted royal permission to sing in that chapel.



# Eilene Hannan



Eilene Hannan AM (1946-2014) was an operatic soprano with an international reputation. She was particularly associated with opera sung in English, although she also sang in other languages.

In the 1990s she toured as the Mother Abbess in *The Sound of Music*.

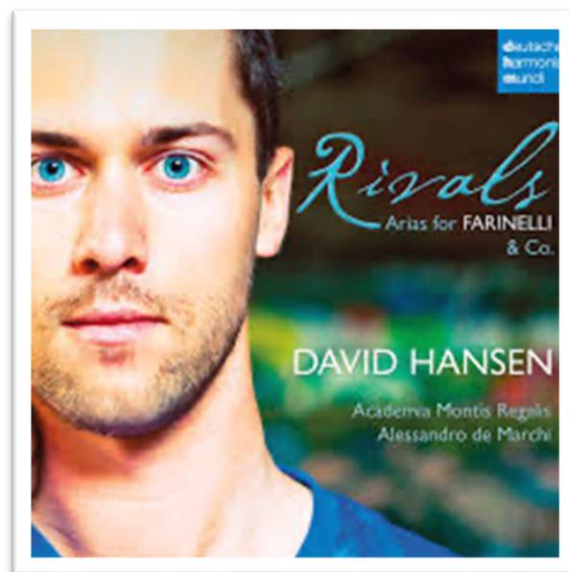


As Janacek's  
*Katya  
Kabanova* in  
1995.



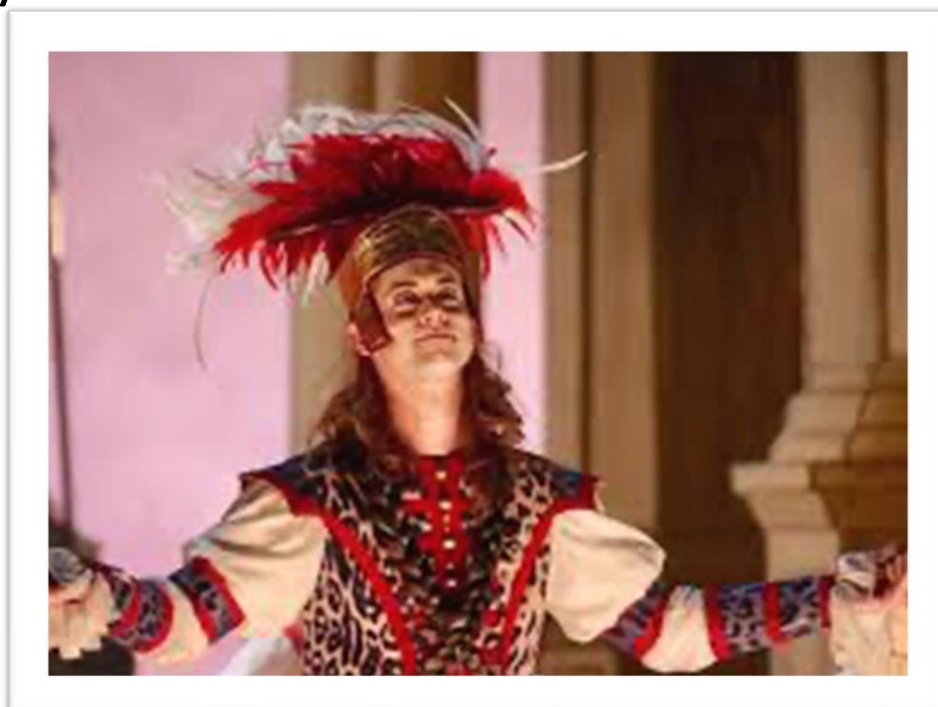
# David Hansen

David Hansen (1981) is a counter tenor, the highest register for the male singing voice. He studied at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music.



He made his European debut in 2004 at the Aix-en-Provence Festival in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*.

Hansen is pictured here as Farinelli in Broschi's *Merope* which was performed for the first time in 287 years at *Alte Musik* in Berlin.





# Suzanne Johnstone



Suzanne Johnstone (1958), a mezzo-soprano, was born in Murrumbidgee! She had singing lessons with Joan Hammond.

She has the rare distinction of being recognised for her performances across opera, musicals and as a concert performer. Along with Judi Connelli she won the 1999 ARIA Award for Best Original Cast or Show Album for their album *Perfect Strangers*.



Suzanne in *The Pirates of Penzance*.

# Glenn Kesby

Glenn Kesby (1970) is a counter tenor specialising in Baroque music. Glenn made his professional singing debut at the 25th Handel Festival in Karlsruhe, Germany, where he played Adelberto in *Ottone*.

Glenn (left) is shown with the cast of 2005 Baroque Encounter production of Handel's *Parnasso*.

Aren't the costumes wonderful?





# Arnold Matters



Arnold Matters AO (1901-1990) was a baritone who performed with Saddler's Wells in the 1930s and 40s.

He started a career as an accountant, but after winning the Sun Aria prize, Dame Nellie Melba invited him to join her touring company.

As Tonio in *Pagliacci*.



# Dame Nellie Melba

Dame Nellie Melba (1861-1931) was born Helen Porter Mitchell. She was an operatic lyric soprano who took the professional name 'Melba' after her hometown of Melbourne.



Dame Nellie studied singing in Melbourne but became famous once she went to Paris.



Melba made her Covent Garden début in May 1888, in the title role in *Lucia di Lammermoor*.



# Dame Nellie Melba



Dame Nellie was an active fundraiser for the war effort, singing for charities.

She returned to Australia many times during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and sang up until the last months of her life. She actively supported up and coming singers.



She is featured on the current \$100 note.

Melba as **Desdemona**





# Eva Mylott



Eva Mylott (1875-1920) was born in New South Wales and was a contralto.

Dame Nellie Melba helped Eva by sending her to Melba's own Parisian singing coach.

Eva appeared at the Metropolitan Opera with Nellie Melba in 1914.

Eva Mylott was the paternal grandmother of Mel Gibson.



# John Ralston



John Ralston (1882-1933) was a baritone (or perhaps bass-baritone) singer noted for his work in musical comedies and Gilbert and Sullivan operas.

While travelling with the Lilliputian Opera Company in the early 1900s, he was discovered by JC Williamson, with whose Light Opera Company he remained the rest of his life.

Ralston as The Sergeant in *Trial By Jury*.

# Donald Shanks

Donald Robert Shanks, AO, OBE (1940-2011) was a bass-baritone who sang over 65 principal roles with Opera Australia and other companies in Australia and overseas.

He joined the Elizabethan Theatre Trust Opera Company in 1964, aged 23.

He was also a talented Wagnerian singer.



# Dame Joan Sutherland



Dame Joan Sutherland (1926-2010) was taught piano and voice by her mother until she was 19.

In 1951 she won Australia's most prestigious singing award: the Sun Aria.



She joined the Covent Garden company where she made her debut on 28 October 1952, as the First Lady in *Die Zauberflöte*.



# Dame Joan Sutherland



In 1959, after a long apprenticeship, she appeared in *Lucia di Lammermoor* which launched her career.

Her vast repertoire and magnificent voice earned her the nickname “La Stupenda”.



# Anthony Warlow



Anthony Warlow, AM (1961) is an opera and musical theatre performer, noted for his character acting and considerable

vocal range. He is a classically trained lyric baritone.

Warlow's roles with Opera Australia range from Papageno in *The Magic Flute* to Ko-Ko in *The Mikado*, though it is in his role as The Phantom in *The Phantom of the Opera* that caused him to become so well-known.



# Anthony Warlow



As the Wizard in *The Wizard of Oz* (above).



The role as Dr Zhivago (above) was created specially for Warlow.



As Sweeney Todd (above) and as Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof* (left).

Thank you for taking this journey through time.



It has been fun to compile and I hope it has been enjoyable for you too.