



NZ OPERA

Annual Report
2023

Reimagining Opera

OUR PURPOSE

He whakarangatira i te oranga ahurea o Aotearoa mā te whakakite i te puoro whakaari e tūhono nei, e toro nei, e whakaawe nei i te huringa o ngā whakaaro ki te āhua o te ira tangata.

Enriching the cultural life of Aotearoa through an experience of opera that connects, engages and inspires reflection on our human condition.

OUR AMBITION

He ārahi i te puoro whakaari i Aotearoa kia kitea rerekētia ai tēnei tū toj, kia awhitia ai ngā tuakiri ā-ahurea, ā-pāpori hoki o ō tātou hapori kanorau, ā, kia ora ia, kia toitū ai hoki te puoro whakaari i Aotearoa.

Leading opera from Aotearoa in a way that reimagines the art form, embraces the cultural and social identities of our diverse communities, and ensures a vibrant and sustainable presence for opera in New Zealand.

OUR VALUES

MANA TOI

He toi whakairo. He mana tangata.

Where there is artistic excellence. There is human dignity.

We love opera and we celebrate the difference it and our artists make to our lives. We value the creativity within our culture, and we honour the arts and artists of the tangata whenua, our Pasifika peoples and our many diverse communities.

MANAAKITANGA

Manaakitia ai te katoa e mātou.

The best way forward is to look after all.

We are welcoming and responsive to all. We are a community of purpose, inviting and welcoming the participation of all who share our purpose and ambition for the future of opera in Aotearoa.

MAHITAHĪ

Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takimano, takitini.

Success is not the work of one, but the work of many.

We work together with others so that we can achieve more. We collaborate with artists, arts practitioners, arts organisations, and our partners and supporters to co-create programmes that embrace the diversity within our community and contribute to the development of opera in New Zealand.

AUAHATANGA

Poipoia te kākano kia puāwai.

Nurture the seed and it will blossom.

We present innovative work that is connected to the time and place we live in. Our programmes are well thought through, produced to a high standard and challenge ourselves and our audiences to explore different points of view.

New Zealand Opera at a Glance

TOTAL ATTENDEES

31,370

people came to see opera

TOTAL EVENTS AND
ENGAGEMENTS

204

opportunities to engage with opera
in the last year

MAINSTAGE, CONCERTS
AND SITE-SPECIFIC
PERFORMANCES

62

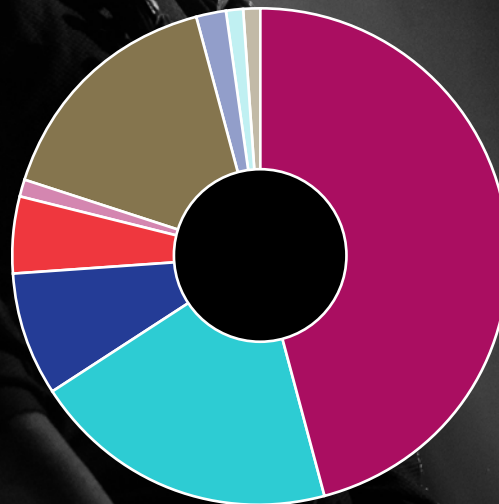
opera performances

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS

532

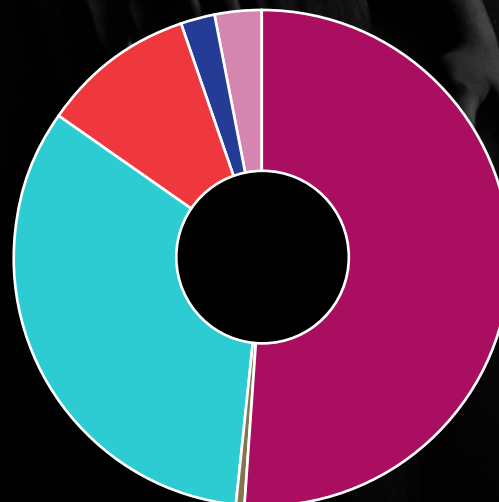
artists, arts workers, creative and
technical crew engaged in opera

Income Streams



- 46% Creative NZ
- 20% Auckland Regional Amenities Funding Board
- 16% Box office
- 8% Grants and Trusts
- 5% Donations
- 2% Sponsorship
- 1% Other income
- 1% Christchurch City Council
- 1% Wellington City Council

Expenditure



- 51% Production Expenses
- 33% Personnel (Creatives, Cast, Crew, Admin)
- 10% Operating Expenditure
- 3% Depreciation and Impairment
- 2% Rent
- 0.5% Auditors Remuneration

Message from the Chair



The people at NZ Opera are adventurous and curious, and so too are the talented artists and creatives who bring our stories alive through opera on our stages. NZ Opera is committed to exploring what opera can be in Aotearoa, New Zealand, while connecting with our audience.

The impact of our work is highlighted in this Annual Report. Notably, in a year that wasn't affected by pandemic lockdowns, postponements and cancellations, the Company produced more opera than ever before in a year.

We showcased the extensive singing and creative talents who live here and several who perform internationally. They all engaged with existing and new audiences, both behind the scenes and in the theatre.

We've been opening up what opera can be through intimate settings and collaborative pieces. It was with great anticipation that we welcomed audiences to *(m)Orpheus*, our collaboration with Black Grace Dance Company and Director Neil Ieremia. I looked on with heartfelt appreciation, watching singers and dancers share traditions and cultures, as a piece of NZ Opera history played out on stage.

The Board knew that 2023 would be the year of delivery, with a full programme that not only included the touring, main stage production *Così fan tutte*, but also the works postponed due to Covid 19 – *The Unruly Tourists* and *(m)Orpheus*.

It was to be a year that would stretch our team beyond what our Company provided in pre-Covid years, and a programme which would also impact our financial resources. We had accumulated a level of funds over the Covid period and felt that we had an obligation to dip into those funds. Of course these funds are finite, and we now have to reduce our output to a more sustainable level. But at least during 2023, we were able to ensure artists and creatives were well employed providing our audiences with a diverse and excellent series of productions.

The Board is grateful for the support of our treasured Patrons - Helen Clark ONZ SSI PC, Dame Patsy Reddy GNZM CVO QSO DSIJ, Jonathan Fa'afetai Lemalu ONZM and Auckland Deputy Mayor, and Wellington and Christchurch Mayors - who champion our art form.

Thomas de Mallet Burgess departed NZ Opera in June 2023 after five years leading the Company, through what were disrupted and challenging times. I would like to acknowledge the intellectual rigour and artistic treats Thomas programmed, challenging both perspectives and tastes. Of particular joy was Handel's *Semele*, performed in the Holy Trinity Cathedral, directly following the Auckland lockdown of 2020. I would like to thank Thomas for focusing the Company on Aotearoa during his tenure, and wish him well in his new role.

I turn now to welcome Brad Cohen, the Company's newly appointed Tumu Whakarae, General Director. Brad has made an immediate impact with the artists with whom he has connected through extensive international and national auditions, and the warmth he has brought many conversations with benefactors and those curious about opera. Nau mai, haere mai e Brad.

I would like to acknowledge Carol Hirschfeld (Ngāti Porou) and her contribution to the Company as she stepped down from the Board during the year, and welcome Julian Knights AO. Julian brings to the Board great experience and knowledge in philanthropic giving and governance of arts organisations.

While the past year was notable for the works NZ Opera delivered, the audiences we delighted, and the comings and goings of people, all of this was only possible due to the strong and consistent support of our funders. These ranged from those who bought tickets to an opera, to Creative New Zealand, the Auckland Regional Amenities Funding Board, and both the Wellington and Christchurch City Councils.

As we've already noted above, the output delivered over 2023 is not sustainable and the financial challenges are not limited to just the volume of work. Cost pressures not only affect the Company's cost of production but also reduce the ability of people to buy theatre tickets. The funds available to trusts, sponsors and benefactors are also affected similarly. Higher costs and lower revenues are an uncomfortable combination.

The Board and our Tumu Whakarae, General Director, are very focused on improving NZ Opera's income and financial resilience. This is critical if we to present and perform opera nationally, while providing a hub for the opera ecosystem in New Zealand. We also want to deepen our connection with our community through telling our stories through the power of the singing voice. Financial support and sustainability are critical if we are to do this effectively across the country.

NZ Opera both exists for and arises from our communities; community is our heart, audiences are our reason for being, and artist development is our future. With these thoughts in mind, it is with deep gratitude that I extend our appreciation for the support

our benefactors and sponsors give the Company. I personally enjoy the feedback on our various endeavours, and the passion for opera that we all share.

As Board Chair, I would like to thank our independent committee members on Te Reo Ruruku, and Julien Van Mellaerts for speaking to the Board, during the season of *Così fan tutte*, about New Zealand singers' experiences working abroad. I would also like to acknowledge my fellow board members' tireless commitment to NZ Opera; each bring a rich diversity in experience, background and perspective to the table. Their support is critical when leading an arts organisation, one which balances national expectations without true national recognition. It is the desire of the Board and our General Director that we progress that discussion at a higher level. We aspire to provide a range of employment opportunities for our artists, and to entice audiences to build a deeper and more comprehensive connection to opera in Aotearoa New Zealand.

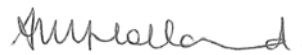
Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, he toa takitini

My strength is not as an individual, but as a collective

Your direct involvement is critical, and the Board is truly appreciative of the support you give in bringing opera to the nation.

Kia māia,

Be brave



Annabel Holland



Message from the Tumu Whakarae, General Director



2023 has seen NZ Opera back to strength with a full range of events, bringing opera to Aotearoa. Challenges remain, of course, but we are grateful that many of our productions cancelled in 2022 were able to be presented to audiences in 2023.

I arrived in June, in the midst of our *Così fan tutte* production. This gave me the perfect opportunity to meet with our industry, community and audiences as part of the tour, and to see firsthand both the standard and the challenges of the work that NZ Opera creates. As we come to the end of the year, it has been a pleasure to see the company's hard work paying off and we all look forward to having a well-deserved break.

Since joining NZ Opera, my focus has been on three main areas of the business: Philanthropy & Fundraising, Operations and Artistic. I have been received with great kindness and generosity by those I have met in Aotearoa, and people's aliveness to our potential for developing and sustaining opera in NZ is heartwarming to encounter. I acknowledge my predecessor, Thomas de Mallet Burgess, for his work in reimagining opera in Aotearoa New Zealand. Thomas provided a variety of opportunities for many to engage with the art form, while successfully navigating the nation's pandemic-affected years.

We began the year with the much-anticipated production of *The Unruly Tourists*. Presented at The Bruce Mason Centre, a stone's throw away from where the real story began, this fun production also provoked questions about what it means to live now in Aotearoa. The blend of opera, music theatre and comedy appealed to a wide range of people and the season sold out.

The serious floods in Tāmaki Makaurau and the subsequent cyclone in the Hawkes Bay had an impact on both our *Music in Parks – Opera in the Park* event and our *Opera in Schools* tour. We were able to move

and shift our activity, but some of the worst-affected schools were unable to host us. We will make sure we are able to visit these schools again in 2024.

June saw our new production of Mozart and da Ponte's *Così fan tutte*. With a formidable cast of New Zealand talent, the production was set in present-day Auckland, bringing this well-known story into today's landscape. Our director, Lindy Hume, leant into the problematic subject matter, asking questions about female empowerment and contemporary relationships. Touring to Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch, with this production we were able to showcase opera at scale, alongside local musicians, singers and artists.

In August we presented our first co-production with NZSO. The Theatre of Sound's (UK) original production of *Bluebeard's Castle* was presented to audiences in Wellington and Christchurch. This production had a profound impact on our audiences and showcased the exceptional artistic quality of both NZSO and NZ Opera in collaboration.

Our final remaining postponed season from 2021, (*m*)*Orpheus* with Black Grace Dance Company, was delivered triumphantly in Auckland and Wellington, to great reviews and near sold-out houses. It was powerful for Pasifika culture and performers to be seen on the operatic stage, in a weaving together of our artforms. A Foundation North community engagement initiative was realised by Frances Moore (Participation Manager; Rangitāne o Wairau) and Kawiti Waetford (Te Reo Ruruku, Ngāti Hine, Ngātiwai, Ngāti Rangi, Ngāpuhi) alongside Black Grace dancers at Ngā Oho Marae (at Ngā Puna o Waiōrea Western Springs College). A masterclass was also held onstage with Deborah Wai Kapohe (Te Ātihaunui-a-Pāpārangī, Te Aitanga-ā-Māhaki) and Claire Caldwell with students from Taradale High School on the closing night of the Wellington season.

We had a successful season launch in November and were thrilled to be able to have in-person benefactor events in Auckland, Wellington & Christchurch, after a hiatus during the pandemic. The response to our 2024 programme has been encouragingly positive, and there seems to be a feeling of excitement amongst our audiences. Alongside our season launches, we held a “Te Rā Tūwhera” public Open Day at The Opera Centre, Parnell. This event is an important outworking of our values, opening our doors and inviting the community to walk alongside us. As part of this offering we had a chorus sing-along which allowed us to trial our soon-to-be-onboarded new surtitle technology. People were able to use their own mobile devices and select how they would like to view the surtitles, which ran alongside the music in real time. It was awesome to see this technology in practice and it is exciting to imagine the benefits it will have for our rehearsals and performances in 2024.

In November, NZ Opera practitioners Awhimai Fraser (Kaihere Ao, Te Reo Ruruku, Waikato, Ngāi Tāmanuhiri, Ngāti Pūkenga, Ngāti Kahungunu), Moana Ete (Ngāi Tahu/Te Hapu o Ngāti Wheke, Samoa) and Taylor Rogers (Ngāti Kahu, Ngāti Kuri, Te Aupōuri, Ngāi

Takato, Te Rarawa) travelled to He Puāwai Teen Parent Centre in Kirikiriroa, Hamilton and Te Āhuru Mōwai Rotorua School for Young Parents to deliver the Carnegie Hall programme – *The Lullaby Project*. This is now our fourth year of delivering this beautiful kaupapa.

November also saw us start rehearsals for *Te Hui Paroro* – a newly commissioned bilingual work for tamariki from creative powerhouse Rutene Spooner (Ngāti Porou, Ngāruahine, Ngāti Kahungunu). This is the first project from our Tū Tamariki space, and will go on tour in 2024.

The company continues to commit to honouring its Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations, which ensures everyone who is working with the company is on a journey to better understand Te Ao Māori and tikanga Māori. Te Reo Ruruku continues to support the company alongside Pou Matua and Manu Tāiko from external consultancies, ensuring an authentic approach and cultural consciousness is considered through the stories we tell, the communities we engage with, the audiences we attract and the artists we support. We continue to honour the unique and rich cultural identity of Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Me Mahi Tahi Tatou Mo Te Oranga O Te Katoa

We work together for the well-being of everyone



Brad Cohen,
Tumu Whakarae
General Director of NZ Opera

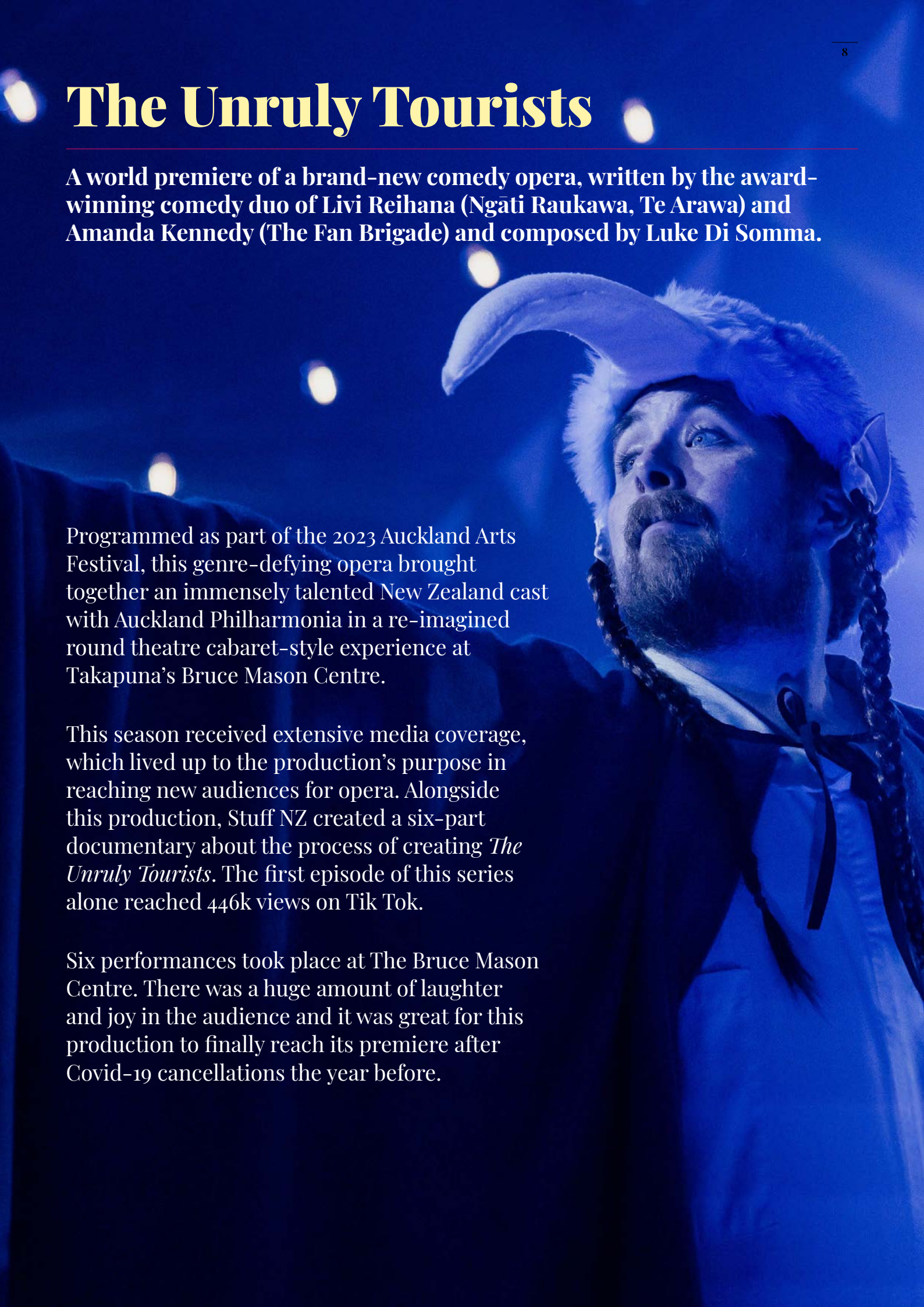
The Unruly Tourists

A world premiere of a brand-new comedy opera, written by the award-winning comedy duo of Livi Reihana (Ngāti Raukawa, Te Arawa) and Amanda Kennedy (The Fan Brigade) and composed by Luke Di Somma.

Programmed as part of the 2023 Auckland Arts Festival, this genre-defying opera brought together an immensely talented New Zealand cast with Auckland Philharmonia in a re-imagined round theatre cabaret-style experience at Takapuna's Bruce Mason Centre.

This season received extensive media coverage, which lived up to the production's purpose in reaching new audiences for opera. Alongside this production, Stuff NZ created a six-part documentary about the process of creating *The Unruly Tourists*. The first episode of this series alone reached 446k views on Tik Tok.

Six performances took place at The Bruce Mason Centre. There was a huge amount of laughter and joy in the audience and it was great for this production to finally reach its premiere after Covid-19 cancellations the year before.



Show Statistics

3,126

people saw a performance in either Ōtautahi, Christchurch or Ōtepoti, Dunedin

48

creatives, cast, musicians, crew

6

performances

81

students and their teachers joined us for the dress rehearsal

Culture Counts Highlights

35%

of the respondents are first-time opera goers – the highest percentage of first-timers recorded via a Culture Counts survey so far

74%

were motivated to attend because of this specific production

91.5%

rated the overall experience as Excellent or Good

The Net promoter score (NPS) was 60, with 60% of respondents “extremely likely” to recommend this production to others.

The highest attended age group was 55–64 years, as opposed to the 65–84 age group that NZ Opera normally records as highest attending. It is also worth mentioning that 8% of the respondents are aged between 25–34 years and 11% between 35–44 years – the highest figures recorded via Culture Counts for both age groups.





The Unruly Tourists

Reviews

“Commissioning this piece is by far the smartest thing NZ Opera has done in years. This smart, fresh and outstandingly funny show is bound to bring in new audiences ... and the production values, sharp writing, and gorgeous music and vocals will hopefully convert the crowds from cultural tourists into full-blown natives.

NZ Herald

“A fast-paced show, sparkling with action and irreverent, down-home Kiwi wit

Theatreview

Audience feedback

“It’s a great night out – laugh-out-loud funny and the chorus sounds beautiful. It’s also a very thoughtful piece that explores the role of the media, the way public outrage gets so quickly out of proportion, and what ‘Kiwi’ values really mean.

“It was amazing, I loved it from start to finish.

“I haven’t been so happy in so long, *The Unruly Tourists* was just outstanding! My cheeks hurt and my heart is full and I am forever grateful for the experience. I’m just blown away.

Così fan tutte

***Così fan tutte* opened in Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland on 31 May 2023 to a fantastic and very receptive audience.**

Our predominantly female creative team for this show was led by the formidable Lindy Hume (*The Marriage of Figaro*, *The Barber of Seville*, *Rigoletto*), conducted by Natalie Murray Beale with set and costume design by Tracy Grant Lord. Lighting Designer Matthew Marshall and Assistant Director Matthew Kereama (Ngāti Manomano) rounded out our fine creative team.

The cast consisted of New Zealanders: Emma Pearson, Julien Van Mellaerts, Jonathan Abernethy & Georgia Jamieson Emms, alongside international singers Hanna Hipp and Andrew Foster-Williams, and New Zealand Opera's local chorus. This production travelled to Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington and Ōtautahi, Christchurch at the end of June.





Show Statistics

7,886 people attended a performance of *Così fan tutte*

9 performances across Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland; Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington; and Ōtautahi, Christchurch

9 pre-show talks took place with 722 people attending

292 artists, creatives and technicians were employed

95 people joined 6 initiatives with our participation tīma

Culture Counts Highlights

12% of the respondents were first-time opera goers

64% were motivated to attend because this was an NZ Opera production

95% rated the overall experience as Excellent or Good

There was a good range of ethnicities represented with NZ European/Pākehā continuing to show at 85%.



Così fan tutte

Reviews

“Hume’s direction is refreshingly uncomplicated, focusing on the emotional journeys of the principal characters, as they become more and more psychologically lost and untethered from one another through a series of estranging interactions.

Bachtrack

“The cast for this production is superb, six great singers and actors in a splendidly balanced ensemble.

Five Lines

“Directorial insight and superbly balanced singing delivered with confidence and relish

Theatreview

Audience feedback

“A wonderful performance last night. It truly was a feast for the senses.

(m)Orpheus

In collaboration with dance company Black Grace, New Zealand Opera presented (m)Orpheus in Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland & Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington in September 2023.

This reimagining of Christoph Gluck's eighteenth-century masterpiece *Orpheus and Eurydice* was directed by Neil Jeremia, with support from Jacqueline Coats as Assistant Director.

Blending rich Pasifika storytelling with the themes of Greek tragedy, (m)Orpheus tells a story of a man willing to risk everything for love but unable to find love in himself. Set in a dislocated future, where Pacific ceremony and traditions are still honoured, Orpheus struggles to come to terms with the loss of his wife. The gods agree to let Orpheus rescue his wife, Eurydice, from the underworld, but there is a catch. To be together again, he must lead her out without turning to look back at her, or she will be lost from him forever.

Well known New Zealand composer and percussionist Gareth Farr reorchestrated the work through the use of modern instruments changing the atmosphere of the piece. New Zealand's leading scenographer Tracy Grant Lord created a stunning visual feast of Pacific Island culture and creativity for the set and costumes. Marc Taddei conducted the Auckland Philharmonia and Orchestra Wellington for the performances in their respective home cities.





Show Statistics

4,342 people attended a performance

7 performances in Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland & Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington

7 pre-show talks attended by 255 people

100 creatives, cast, musicians, crew

Culture Counts Highlights

13% of the respondents were first-time opera goers

60% were motivated to attend because this was an NZ Opera production, followed by 47% attending because of Black Grace's involvement

95% rated the overall experience as Excellent or Good

76% stated they were "very likely" to attend an NZ Opera event in the future.

Email (43%), Direct Mail (25%) and Word of mouth (21%) raised the most awareness for this production.



(m)Orpheus

Reviews

“Once again NZ Opera reveals strength, innovation and rising stars while Neil Jeremia continues to astound and amaze.

NZ Arts Review

“Transposing Gluck’s 1762 opera to the present-day South Pacific is a bold move, with a powerful cast of Māori and Pasifika performers and a fairly radical re-working of the original music, crisply conducted by Marc Taddei.

NZ Herald

“This effective and moving reinterpretation, with its piquant instrumentation and affecting dance-work, truly communicates the universal ideas of love and loss.

Bachtrack

Audience feedback

“Can’t recommend this highly enough. A really moving re-imagining using our wonderful young Maori and Pasifika talent to full advantage. I defy anyone not to be deeply moved by the final chorus (sung in Samoan!) and dance sequence. Go, people!

“Absolutely excellent, wonderful evening – outstanding staging, choreography and Samson Setu steals the show – and then shares the stage!

Other events and concerts

Opera in the Park

With the horrific floods in Tāmaki Makaurau on 27 January, our annual *Music in Parks – Opera in the Park* event was postponed and eventually held on 4 March. Our performers included NZO Studio Artists Shiddharth Chand, Tayla Alexander, Ridge Ponini and Rhiannon Cooper. The event also featured a special guest appearance from baritone Edward Laurenson, with fine support from Ben Kubiak as not only accompanist but MC.



Opera in Concert with APO

On July 8, New Zealand Opera collaborated with Auckland Philharmonia to present *Die tote Stadt* by Erich Korngold. 30 members of the New Zealand Opera Chorus along with the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra came together to present this powerful and moving work, under the impressive direction of Frances Moore (Participation Manager; Rangitāne o Wairau).



Bluebeard's Castle in concert with the NZSO

In August we embarked on our first collaborative presentation with the NZSO. *Bluebeard's Castle* was presented to Wellington and Christchurch audiences using the original production by The Theatre of Sound [UK] at the Michael Fowler Centre, as well as the Christchurch Town Hall. Featured artists Susan Bullock and Lester Lynch were conducted by Lawrence Renes. This production had a profound impact on our audiences and showcased the high artistic quality of both NZSO and NZ Opera.



Tē Rōpū Whakaurunga Participation overview

The participation programme encapsulates three strands – Connecting Children, Connecting Young People and Connecting Communities.

	2022	2023
Total participants reached	2,794	12,216
Total participation events	20	87
Contracts issued	42	62
Artists and contractors	33	53
Schools/educational organisations engaged	6	100
Venues hosting participation events	14	56

Connecting Children

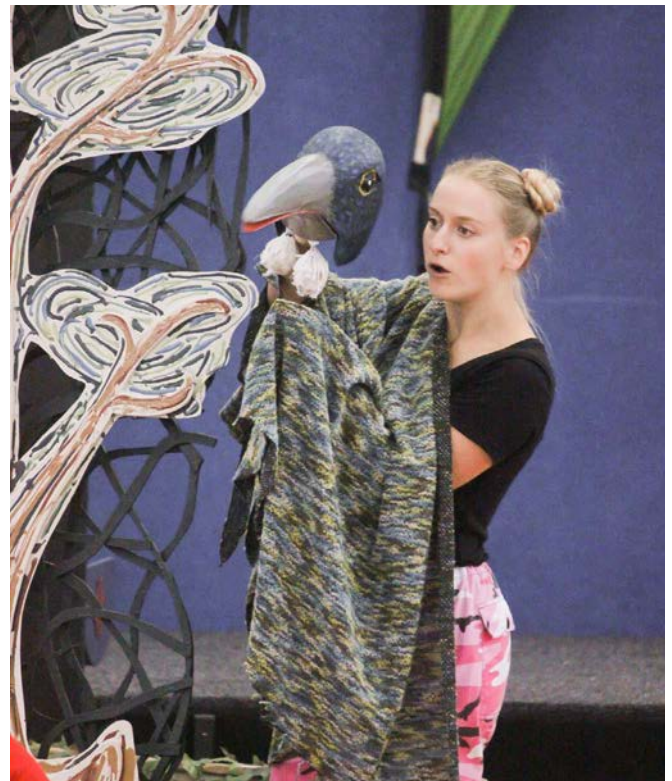
Engagements are designed for primary & intermediate aged tamariki. This includes our annual *Opera in Schools* programme.

Opera in Schools

After two years of Covid cancellations, it was a thrill to resume our *Opera in Schools* tour and re-engage with tamariki. Our *Opera in Schools* tour for 2023 was a 40-minute performance of Respighi's opera *The Sleeping Beauty*, directed by Jacqueline Coats; costume design by Elizabeth Whiting; set design by Jan Ubels; with Music Direction from David Kelly and Claire Caldwell. This project involved touring six young opera singers across Aotearoa: Rhiannon Cooper, Alexandra Francis, Fa'amanu Fonoti-Fuimaono, Erica Paterson, Olivia Pike, and Ridge Ponini. Our *Sleeping Beauty* was a fun re-telling of the story, where it is the prince who falls asleep, and a sparky princess who saves the day.

The start of the OiS Tour was impacted by the devastating floods and impacts of Cyclone Gabrielle with a number of schools having to cancel due to the impact of the flooding. As the cast and crew toured by van, getting to some areas such as Havelock North was challenging due to the number of road closures.

Our Auckland season included a special performance at the Blind and Low Vision school, BLENNZ in Homai, South Auckland. For this performance, we offered a touch tour of the set, props and costumes both before and after the performance.



10,677 Students and teachers attended a performance

40 Performances

33 Schools/education organisations

11 Towns/cities across Aotearoa

Letter from Pauline Cornwell – Principal of Papatoetoe Intermediate School

Thank you all for the wonderful experience provided to our students this week.

Most students (and staff) have never sat through a full opera performance, have never heard just what the human voice is capable of and what training can achieve... and have never understood the beauty that can be experienced through an operatic show.

Your generous support has meant that 650 students and 40 staff members had an experience that they might never have had without your show coming to our school and the show being free for them. While many of our students can be described as those who fit easily into the group that is 'impoverished' and 'underprivileged', it is important that all children are provided with similar experiences. This show provided some of that 'equity of experience'.

Ngā mihi,
Pauline Cornwell

NZ Opera would like to acknowledge the generous support of the FehI Foundation, which enabled us to offer this *Opera in Schools* performance at Papatoetoe Intermediate School.

Tū Tamariki

Tū Tamariki is a space for works specifically by, with and for Māori.

Te Hui Paroro is our first project under Tū Tamariki and is a new bilingual work for tamariki from creative powerhouse Rutene Spooner (Ngāti Porou, Ngāruahine, Ngāti Kahungunu). This work is inspired by the story of Hinewhaitiri and the children of the Weather Gods. This development has been an important opportunity for the company: we are involved in a process steeped in Te Ao Māori, including te reo Māori and Māori Pūrākau as key foundations of a work.

Unfortunately, the performance element of this development stage was interrupted due to cast sickness, and the tour to schools in Auckland to trial the performance was postponed.

Schools touring the NZ Opera studio

Murrays Bay Intermediate School Visit: On Wednesday 13 September, 40 tauira from Murrays Bay Intermediate School came to our NZ Opera studio in Parnell to explore our space, and learn more about the world of opera. Together we explored our costume and make-up rooms, trying on some fun pieces including the animal masks from our recent production of *Così fan tutte*. It was a fun and informative visit, during which our space and our artform were shared with the next generation.

Connecting young people

Focusing on engagement with 12 to 21-year-old students, the opportunities in this stream are devised to foster interest in and deeper discovery of opera as an artform, and as a possible career path.

The Unruly Tourists

Dress Rehearsal

We were delighted to welcome back schools by opening up our dress rehearsals again (after having to close these to visitors in 2022 in order to keep our cast and crew safe from Covid-19). We were joined by members of Auckland Theatre Company's Youth Company and Youth Associates, as well as a significant student cohort from Te Awamutu College.

Così fan tutte

Explore Opera Workshops & Masterclasses

Across our season of *Così fan tutte*, we offered a range of nine masterclasses and workshops. Three masterclasses were offered with conductor Natalie Murray Beale for students across Auckland University, Waikato University, Victoria University and Christchurch University, as well as members of our NZO Chorus. These masterclasses featured university student-singers, as well as student collaborative pianists. We also offered a masterclass with Hanna Hipp at Waikato University and one with Hanna and Julien Van Mellaerts at Chilton St James School in Lower Hutt. In Ōtautahi, Christchurch, we held two further masterclasses with répétiteur Claire Caldwell and Shiddharth Chand at St Andrew's College.

While our Lighting Designer Matthew Marshall was creating our lighting design, we also held a lighting workshop at the Kiri Te Kanawa Theatre for students from Massey High School and St Mary's High School. While in Te Whanganui-a-Tara, design and costume students were invited for a tour and Q & A session with our Head of Costume Construction, Sophie Ham. In this session, students were able to examine costumes from *Così fan tutte*, while Sophie revealed aspects of the design process, talking about the nature of the relationship between maker and designer, re-using and re-purposing costume elements from previous shows, and techniques used to preserve and protect costumes during a performance season.

Dress Rehearsal

We opened our dress rehearsals to high schools as a part of our Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch seasons.



(m)Orpheus

Dress Rehearsal

For our Tāmaki Makaurau season, we welcomed groups from Howick College, Diocesan School for Girls, Good Shepherd Intermediate School, Manurewa High School and Northcote College to attend our Dress Rehearsal. We also welcomed into this rehearsal young people from the Thriving@Crossroads programme, and youth from Auckland Theatre Company's Youth Company. Following the performance, our cast and members of the creative team met with students in the foyer to take photos, answer questions and even sign programme books!

For our Te Whanganui-a-Tara season, we welcomed groups into our Dress Rehearsal from Mana College, St Orans College, Naenae College, New Zealand School of Music, Toi Whakaari The New Zealand Drama School and the Theatre Department from Victoria University.

BLENNZ

On opening night, we had five tauira from the Blind Low Vision Education Network NZ school attend the show. As a part of this, we ran a Touch Tour of the set, including some props and costumes ahead of the performance. The performance was also audio-described by Kevin Keys, with thanks to Audio Described Aotearoa.

School Workshops *Te Whanganui-a-Tara*

Taradale High School brought 17 tauira and their kaiako Matthew Pipe to Te Whanganui-a-Tara from the Hawkes Bay to experience a weekend of performing arts. This experience included NZ Opera's *(m)Orpheus* performance. We held a masterclass for this rōpū with soprano Deborah Wai Kapohe (Te Reo Ruruku, Te Ātihaunui-a-Pāpārangī, Te Aitanga-ā-Māhaki) and repetiteur and vocal coach Claire Caldwell. It was powerful for this masterclass to be delivered on the stage of the Wellington Opera House, where emerging singers could experience taking centre stage in one of this country's most storied performing arts venues.

Following the masterclass, this cohort participated in our Touch Tour of the set, props and costumes. There is an added excitement in being able to touch and see up close key set elements, such as the suspended car, and the traditional mats that then play such an important role in the performance itself.

The Lullaby Project

On 1 November, NZ Opera Kaihere Ao and Lullaby Project practitioner Awhimai Fraser (Waikato, Ngāi Tāmanuhiri, Ngāti Pūkenga, Ngāti Kahungunu), alongside practitioner Moana Ete (Ngāi Tahu/Te Hapu o Ngāti Wheke, Samoa) and kaiāwhina Taylor Rogers (Te Aupōuri, Ngai Takoto, Ngāti Kurī, Ngāti Kahu, Te Rarawa) travelled to He Puāwai Teen Parent Centre in Kirikiriroa, Hamilton, to deliver this programme in collaboration with Carnegie Hall. 12 lullabies were written in collaboration with māmā and pāpā from this teen parent centre and celebrated alongside members of He Puāwai staff and whānau. The team then ventured down to Rotorua where they collaborated with māmā from Te Āhuru Mōwai School for Young Parents. There they wrote 11 lullabies in collaboration with tauira and again, performed these beautiful pieces for members of staff and whānau.

This is now our fourth year delivering this project to tauira around the motu alongside our initial pilot project in 2019.



Korokī Te Manu

New Zealand Opera, with the support of Foundation North, invited kura from Te Reinga to Tāmaki Makaurau for a specially organised wānanga noho marae. In association with our collaboration with Black Grace Dance Company, tauira were invited to attend a performance of *(m)Orpheus* at the ASB Waterfront Theatre on Saturday 9 September. The following morning, tauira participated in workshops on singing from NZ Opera artists including Kawiti Waetford (Te Reo Ruruku (Ngāti Hine, Ngātiwai, Ngāti Rangī, Ngāpuhi)), Samson Setu and Te Ohore Williams (Ngāti Kahungunu ki Heretaunga, Ngāti Porou, Te Arawa, Ngai Te Rangī, Ngāti Pūkenga); dance workshops from Black Grace Dance Company; and Māori movement & haka theatre, led by artists from Hawaiki Tū.

This wānanga was the first of its kind from NZ Opera, and was a response to previous outreach activities in which tauira from Northland travelled south to experience a matinee performance from NZ Opera, and then return home directly. This offering, devised and led by Kawiti Waetford (Te Reo Ruruku, Ngāti Hine, Ngātiwai, Ngāti Rangī, Ngāpuhi), NZ Opera Participation Manager, Frances Moore (Rangitāne o Wairau) and NZ Opera Kaihere Ao, Awhimai Fraser (Te Reo Ruruku (Waikato, Ngāi Tāmanuhiri, Ngāti Pūkenga)), was created to offer a more in-depth experience: to open up the world of opera to our tauira and build a bridge between opera practice and more familiar kapa haka practices and to fulfil our vision: for NZ Opera to be a company which belongs to our communities.

“We are still on cloud 9 after our incredible weekend. Honestly, things just don't get any better. How lucky were we?”

“Kawiti and Frances, we are extremely grateful to you both for giving us the opportunity to be part of a dynamic and powerful wananga. A huge thank you and acknowledgement to New Zealand Opera and Foundation North for inviting us and supporting this brilliant initiative for our tauira.”

Connecting Communities

We believe opera has the power to bring joy, inspire and build community. We want our activities to be accessible and relevant. We celebrate the opportunity that comes from human connection through the arts.



Così fan tutte

Preshow talks

Our pre-show talks were a huge hit for *Così fan tutte*, with almost double our predicted numbers in each city. These conversations were held with our international Conductor, Natalie Murray Beale and Assistant Director, Matthew Kereama (Ngāti Manomano).

Accessibility

Audio described performances: As with most of our productions, we worked with Audiodescribed Aotearoa to deliver audio-described performances of *Così fan tutte* in each city. This was accompanied by a touch tour of our set, props and costumes.

The Unruly Tourists

Accessibility

Audio described performances: We were able to offer an audio described performance, attended by 10 people from the blind/low vision community, who enjoyed the unique experience of *The Unruly Tourists*, particularly getting to put the show's elf ears on their guide dogs!

TANZOS Residency

In collaboration with the newly established The Aotearoa NZ Opera Studio (TANZOS) programme at Waikato University, NZO hosted students from this programme across two weeks. Throughout this residency, students were able to closely observe rehearsals as well as the final technical rehearsals in the Kiri Te Kanawa Theatre, ahead of our opening night. Students covered roles in the opera and were able to work with the artists performing as a part of this invaluable role preparation.



Bluebeard's Castle

Therapeutic Music Sessions

In association with our performances of Bartok's *Bluebeard's Castle*, and in collaboration with the NZSO, we offered two Music and Dementia Workshops. These were led by Principal Harpist Carolyn Mills, who has trained as a specialist in this area, and delivered alongside soprano Barbara Graham and violinist and NZSO Education and Community Senior Manager Pascale Parenteau.

Accessibility

Audio described performances: NZO and NZSO offered Touch Tours and Audio Descriptions for both performances. We were fortunate to have NZSO Principal Percussionist Lenny Sakofsky participate in the touch tours, guiding patrons through the different percussion instruments involved in the Bartok score. Kevin Keys from Audio Described Aotearoa delivered the audio description.

Preshow talks

We offered pre-performance talks ahead of our performances in Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington and Ōtautahi, Christchurch. Both talks were structured as a conversation between re-staging director Stevie Higgins (Theatre of Sound) and NZ-based experts in the field of dementia.

“We would like to take a moment to express our deepest gratitude for the absolutely enchanting orchestra and opera performance you arranged for our residents living with dementia. The event was truly a gift that touched our hearts and left a lasting impact!”

“Kevin Keys did his usual highly skilled Audio Description that balanced description of performers' movements in relation to each other, their movements through the orchestra itself, to props and lighting changes, while leaving room for the full orchestral finesse. This was a one-hour performance offering a fully immersive experience for me as a deafblind person!”



(m)Orpheus

Pre-concert talks

For our season of *(m)Orpheus*, each performance was preceded by a twenty-minute discussion with members of the singing ensemble. These conversations spoke to the experience of working in a Pasifika-led creative environment, the importance and challenges in this re-interpretation of Gluck's original opera into a distinctly Pasifika context, and each singer's journey into the world of opera and performance.

Accessibility

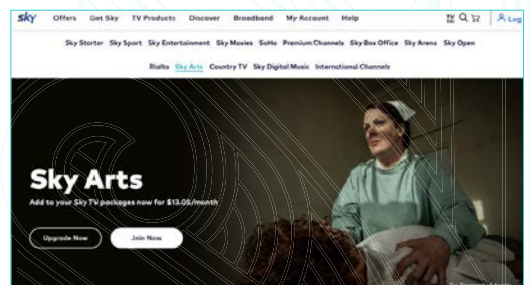
Audio described performances: As a part of our Sunday matinee on 10 September, NZ Opera gave a Touch Tour of the set, some props and costumes ahead of the performance. The performance was audio-described by Kevin Keys from Audio Described Aotearoa.

Our closing-night performance in Te Whanganui-a-Tara was also audio described by Kevin Keys. Ahead of this performance, we also held a Touch Tour of the set, some props and costumes.

We would like to acknowledge the support of our assistant directors and stage management teams in the delivery of our Touch Tours across our 2023 season.



Opera online and on screen



The Strangest of Angels film

In 2022 we filmed *The Strangest of Angels*, directed by Rebecca Tansley. The film was presented in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin as part of the New Zealand International Film Festival. A market screening took place at IMZ's Avant-Première market in Berlin in the presence of the New Zealand Ambassador, who is now assisting with contacts for NZ Opera projects, and it is also being presented at international film markets by Rebecca Tansley. In addition, this film played across the Sky Arts channel in the second half of this year. We were also thrilled that the film won a Special Mention for Extraordinary Artistic Achievement at the 60th Golden Prague International Television Festival; Rebecca Tansley was in attendance to accept the award. This shows the reach and success of our digital film offerings, in collaboration with Minerva Productions.

Artist Development Programme

Te Ara Whakawhanake Kaizaiata o New Zealand Opera New Zealand Opera Artist Development Programme

Our studio artists for 2023 were Ridge Ponini, Shiddharth Chand, Tayla Alexander and Rhiannon Cooper.

This programme was designed to offer emerging opera singers an introduction to development, and employment working within a professional opera company.

The programme enables Studio Artists to attend the New Zealand Opera School, held in Whanganui from 8–22 January 2023. The teaching roster included international tutors Sharolyn Kimmorley, Emma Pearson, Professor Russel Smythe, Professor Richard Jackson and the teaching faculty of Professor Terence Dennis (Accompanist & Vocal Coach), Bruce Greenfield (Accompanist & Vocal Coach), David Kelly (Accompanist & Vocal Coach), Somi Kim (Pianist & Accompanist), Francis Cowan (Accompanist & Organist), Dr. Luca Manghi (Vocal & Language Coach), Mark Wigglesworth (Intern Accompanist), Jacqueline Coats (Stage Craft Director, Movement and Acting) and Michael Vinten (Conductor).

A significant portion of our Studio Artist programme involves performances in our scheduled operas. Shiddharth Chand and Tayla Alexander were cast as ensemble members for *The Unruly Tourists*, while Rhiannon Cooper and Ridge Ponini were cast in our six-week national *Opera in Schools* tour, performing for almost 10,000 tamariki. Ridge Ponini workshopped the role of Omid in the *Du'a (prayer) for a Broken Shelter* workshop, held at the Auckland Theatre Company's rehearsal studio on Dominion Road. Shiddharth Chand, Tayla Alexander and Rhiannon Cooper were offered role understudies, as well as being contracted members of the NZO chorus for our mainstage tour of *Così fan tutte*.

Our Studio Artists are also the central feature of our annual and beloved Opera in the Park concert, as



a part of Auckland Council's Music in Parks series. While this event was impacted by the Auckland floods in January, we were delighted to re-schedule this event at Glover Park on March 4, with an estimated audience of more than 3,000.

As a part of this programme, our Studio Artists have also taken part in masterclasses with guest artists Phillip Rhodes (Ngāti Awa and Ngāti Kahungunu), Natalie Murray Beale, Hanna Hipp and Jonathan Abernethy. They have also undertaken workshops in many different disciplines central to a performance career, including Feldenkreis Technique, stagecraft, acting, role preparation, languages, BodyFit training, script preparation and voice physiotherapy.

New Zealand Opera Chorus

Così fan tutte was NZ Opera's touring production of the year in May/June. This chorus consisted of 24 singers in Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland and 24 in Ōtautahi, Christchurch led by chorus director Claire Caldwell, and 24 in Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington led by chorus director Michael Vinten.



In July, 30 of our Auckland chorus had the opportunity to perform in *Die tote Stadt* with the Auckland Philharmonia, guided by chorus director Claire Caldwell.

For the first time since 2021, we held chorus auditions, hearing 166 singers across Wellington, Auckland, and Christchurch in October.

Our panel this year consisted of Tumu Whakarae, General Director Brad Cohen in all cities, chorus director Michael Vinten in Wellington, director of artistic planning and participation Joanne Cole in Auckland, and Mark Dorrell (former Head of Music) in Christchurch. This audition process resulted in over 130 contract offers between the centres for the 2024 season.

To wrap up the year with our Auckland chorus we held our annual Open Day. One of the activities of the day included a chorus sing-along, where 20 of our chorus members led the public attendees in an open singing rehearsal conducted by Brad Cohen.

New Zealand Opera Conference

Our annual Opera Conference is a way to support and nurture the sector and bring forward important conversations. In 2023, the Opera Conference focused on how opera producing companies can better support one another and therefore strengthen the opera sector in Aotearoa. Companies in attendance included Toi Toi Opera, Opera Otago, Festival Opera, Wanderlust Opera and TANZOS. In the afternoon, we opened up the conference to the wider opera community where we had 17 people join us online. This gave people the opportunity to hear about the conversations that had taken place and ask any questions or provide responses. This day was a real step in the right direction for ensuring the sustainability of the opera sector as a whole and we look forward to continued discussions in this area.

Internships

We brought in two interns for *The Unruly Tourists* – Vanessa Immink (Ngāti Hāua, Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa) as a directing intern, and Blake Scanlan as music intern. Vanessa Immink's internship was initiated through the first iteration of the company's newly founded initiative, Te Toi Hāpai-o-Muri, under the directorship of past tumu whakarae, Thomas de Mallet Burgess for *The Unruly Tourists*. This engagement took form as an observation of the rehearsal process through to performance of *The Unruly Tourists*, and provided an introduction to an artform this practitioner had not yet encountered in her professional practice.

We hosted three interns for our season of *Così fan tutte* across Aotearoa. This included conducting intern Nathaniel Griffiths for our Auckland season, mech intern Caleb Grainger for our Te Whanganui-a-Tara season, and arts management intern Joseph McAllum while we were in Ōtautahi. We received positive feedback from our interns, especially in terms of gaining experience in opera at such a significant scale. Our mentors also gave glowing feedback on our interns, valuing their contribution to our production.

Ngā whenu Māori

Ka mua, ka muri

E ū ana a Puoro Whakaari Aotearoa kia tū hei hoa pūmau ki te Tiriti i runga i te ngākau pono, i raro hoki i ngā mātāpono o Te Tiriti o Waitangi, ka mutu e whai wāhi ai te iwi Māori ki ngā tukanga whakataua kia tika ai tāna whakakanohinga ake me tana pupuri i ana matatika, mā reira rawa e whakapai ai te ahurea kauawhi o tēnei tōpūtanga, ngā pāhekoheko, ngā hononga hoki me te iwi Māori.

Under the new leadership of Tumu Whakarae, Brad Cohen, NZ Opera continues its commitment to its bi-cultural haerenga and the importance of standing as a Te Tiriti o Waitangi partner, within the arts landscape of Aotearoa.

The Unruly Tourists required the company to engage with Te Ao Māori Advisor, Mikaere Paki (Ngāti Apa, Ngā Wairiki, Tūwharetoa, Irish, Ngāti Kauwhata, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Porou, Ngāi Tahu, Tūmatakōkiri, Ngāti Poua, Welsh) for tikanga and cultural support for the production in March 2023. This support was invaluable, creating cultural safety for the entire process, production and creative team.

This production also required support from an independent Māori consultant, Tiare Tito (Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Whātua, Ngāti Manawa, Tainui, Raukawa ki te Tonga) for the company's leading character Manaia, a wahine Māori. This support was based around mātauranga Māori for elements such as karanga, pao, ā-ringa and karakia, alongside intentional incorporation and execution of te reo Māori. Tiare's experience, understanding and implementation of mātauranga Māori for multiple kaupapa plays a huge part in creating cultural safety for the company.

A newly established relationship with Tātaki Auckland Unlimited has been forming since January this year. Helen Te Hira (Ngāti Whātua ki Kaipara, Te Rarawa, Te Aupouri, Ngāti Kahu and Ngāpuhi) has been a key contact with this organisation, providing invaluable insight to connecting with kaupapa steeped in mātauranga Māori such as Te Matatini and M9, "Taku Ihi, Taku Wehi, Taku Wana".

The company spoke alongside Helen at an arts sector hui around engagement with Māori in August 2023, and were supported by Wairangi Jones (Te Arawa, Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga, Ngāti Maniapoto), Pou Matua of Tira NZ (formerly known as Tūtira Mai NZ) in delivery of this kōrero and kaupapa.

Another form of collaboration has been alongside the company's Te Reo Ruruku committee, which has been a crucial source of support for this haerenga and the change of general directorship. It was put forward by this committee to organise a joint celebration for both outgoing and incoming Tumu Whakarae, aptly named "Ka mua, ka muri". Tikanga Māori led this celebration in pōwhiri, reminding the company and all in attendance the crucial role that Te Ao Māori plays in the ecosystem of opera in Aotearoa. Te Reo Ruruku continues to play an important part in influencing and guiding the company's overall Strategic Agenda. This relationship is an on-going and evolving one.

'He Mahere Kaiaka Māori, Mahi Tahī hoki,' is an ongoing Māori engagement strategy and plan that the company previously engaged Lynette Amoroa (Tūhoe) Principal at Te Amokura Consultancy, to devise when in its initial steps of engagement with Māori. The company is internally devising its next 'He Mahere Kaiaka Māori, Mahi Tahī hoki 2024 – 2026 plan'. Elements within this plan include knowledge and skills, environment, relationships and recruitment.

In October, all staff participated in a full day staff Marae Wānanga at Te Mahurehure Marae in Auckland. Wairangi Jones (Tira NZ, (Te Arawa, Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga, Ngāti Maniapoto)) facilitated the day and structured the learning in an accessible, meaningful, and enjoyable way for the different competency levels of our staff. This all-day wānanga consisted of te reo Māori, learning how best to embody the company's core values of Mana Toi, Manaakitanga, Mahitahi and Auahatanga within the workplace, and also looked at the whakapapa and



core functions of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The investment in cultural competency amongst staff is crucial for learning how best to support Māori within the Arts, giving voice and space to tangata whenua.

Alongside presenting with Wairangi Jones at the sector-wide hui in Auckland, NZ Opera continues to grow their relationship with Tira NZ, most recently taking part in a case study amongst their clients, profiling businesses and companies that have undertaken a companywide journey to better understand and support Te Ao Māori in non-Māori led organisations.

Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou, ka ora ai te iwi

With your contribution and my contribution, the community will prosper

In recent months, we have redesigned our website in line with our season launch. Part of that process has been ensuring that a reflection of the company's journey is present and felt throughout the site.

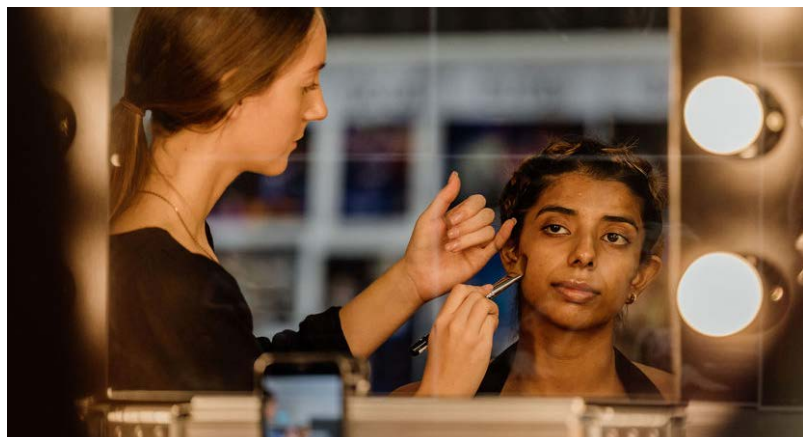
New Zealand Opera is committed to operating as a sincere Te Tiriti partner, adhering to the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi by involving Māori in decision-making processes and representing their interests and rights, all while fostering a cultural shift within the organisation towards authentic engagement and partnership with Māori.





The Opera Centre

The Opera Centre in Parnell is the base for New Zealand Opera's administration and artistic activities, and is the national hub for opera in Aotearoa. It houses our wigs, makeup, and costume departments, and some of our prop and costume collections. The music room and studio serve as rehearsal coaching and performance spaces for New Zealand Opera and other arts organisations as required when available – organisations who have used our space include Auckland Theatre Company, G & T Productions, Auckland Choral Society and the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra.



Rā Tūwhera | Open Day



On Saturday, 11 November, we were delighted to open our roller door and welcome the public into our studio space for the NZ Opera Open Day.

Throughout the day we were able to share a rich variety of all the artistry involved in creating large-scale opera. Costumes from NZ Opera productions including *Tosca*, *Xerxes*, *Macbeth*, *The Unruly Tourists*, and *Così fan tutte* were all on display, while members of the public particularly had fun trying on costumes from our wardrobe store as well as our *Così* animal helmets.

In the studio, we had our design team from *Te Hui Paroro*, Izzy Ptak and Tash Hoyland, demonstrating some of the puppet maquettes, and a vocal masterclass was held with Te Ohore Williams (Ngāti Kahungunu ki Heretaunga, Ngāti Porou, Te Arawa, Ngai Te Rangī, Ngāti Pūkenga), Tayla Alexander, Emma Qiu and Brad Cohen.

To conclude our Open Day, members of the public were invited to join our NZ Opera Chorus to sing through Verdi's '*Va, pensiero*' from *Nabucco*. With more than 150 members of the public coming through our space for this event, this was a wonderful and affirming way to celebrate what was a very busy 2023 artistic year!



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E mihi ana a NZ Opera ki ngā rōpū e whai ake nei i tā rātou tautoko me tā rātou manaaki mai

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We value the support of our benefactors. Together we can achieve much more and ensure the future generations of Aotearoa can experience and enjoy opera as much as we do.

“*Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takimano, takitini.*
Success is not the work of one, but the work of many.

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