



Season Report

2022





2022 Season Report



After an unprecedented couple of years in which plans had to be made, jettisoned and remade – often several times – we took great pleasure in planning and presenting a strong and busy year’s activities in 2022.

Our season included two large-scale productions as well as a number of smaller stagings. We added two more competitions to our collection, and planned international residencies and masterclasses to complement our core programme.

Our large-scale productions in the past had invariably been mounted in collaboration with Cape Town Opera. We were delighted that Cape Town Opera were able to join us on our November opera. However, we are also proud to have mounted our main large-scale production independently, a tradition that we are building on in 2023 with our relaunch as Opera UCT.

Jeremy Silver
Director of Opera UCT, University of Cape Town

Le poète disait...



UCT singers involved: Christine Bam, Shadi Eshraghi, Siphe Kwani, Sakhumzi Martins, Yonwaba Mbo, Mosidi Mere, Mzi Nodlayiya

Piano: Jeremy Silver

10th and 11th March, in Cape Town and Stellenbosch

After the success of *Winterreise* in 2021, the vocal division of Stellenbosch University and the UCT Opera School held our second collaboration in a concert that celebrated female creatives in music and poetry.

The majority of songs came from Lili Boulanger's cycle *Clairières dans le ciel*, to poems by French symbolist poet Francis Jammes. The remaining songs were by Jules Massenet, all to poems by female poets. All songs explored the theme of lost love.

Seven singers from each institution sang one song and performed the poem of another song in English. The aims of this project were to develop deeper sensitivity to subtle shades of meaning in language and the precise expressivity of music. During the process, students created an expressive and communicative translation by discussing the possible meanings of the poems and through examining the composer's setting of the poem.

The Aviva Pelham

Operetta Competition



Operetta has a long and distinguished performance history in South Africa, and Aviva Pelham was frequently to be seen and heard on the operetta stages of Cape Town. More recently, there has been less focus on this very charming repertoire, though German theatres still often programme an operetta as part of their season.

For this reason, Aviva Pelham and Opera UCT inaugurated this important competition to raise awareness amongst our young singers and to promote a reacquaintance with a repertoire which they may well be called on to perform as part of their international careers.

The winners of the inaugural competition were:

1st prize – Sanele Mwelase (countertenor)

2nd prize and audience prize – Christine Bam (mezzo soprano)

3rd prize – Setsoane Ntseki (soprano)

Tuesday 10th May, 2022, 19h30

Baxter Concert Hall

Marry me a little

STEPHEN SONDHEIM (1930 – 2021)

This project started life as an in-house, semi-staged presentation of Sondheim's revue-like musical and took on a life of its own. In the event, we performed a full staging to a packed out Baxter Concert Hall – something that felt particularly joyous after the years of restrictions on audience numbers. The show follows two lonely New York people, who are in emotional conflict, during an evening in their separate one-room apartments. Despite knowing of the other's existence, they never get up the courage to talk to each other, though they imagine what such an encounter might be like.

The cast comprised 22 singers, mainly in their 3rd and 4th years of undergraduate study.



Musical direction: Ean Smit & Jeremy Silver
Staging: Christine Crouse

Thursday May 12th, 19h30
Baxter Concert Hall

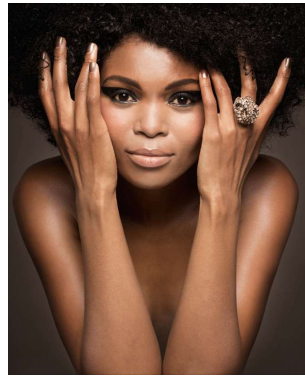
UCT Opera School Masterclass Series

Pumeza Matshikiza

We were thrilled to welcome Opera School alumna, Pumeza Matshikiza, to the Baxter Concert Hall for the first in our Masterclass Series for 2022.

She has been described as “one of today’s most exciting new operatic voices” (Independent), and is also an exclusive Decca Classics recording artist.

Jeremy Silver interviewed her on stage to set the evening in motion, after which she worked with Sanele Mwelase (countertenor), Fanele Mkhwanazi (soprano) and Smelo Mahlangu (baritone) – the latter of whom is now a Young Artist at the National Opera Studio in London.



Monday 23rd May
19h30
Baxter Concert Hall

UCT Opera School Masterclass Series

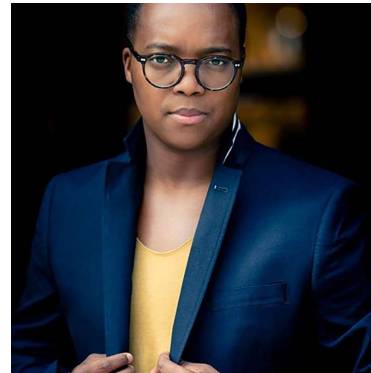
Levy Sekgapane

The 2nd event in our Masterclass Series 2022 was led by star alumnus tenor **Levy Sekgapane**.

After studying at the UCT Opera School, Levy went on to win the 1st prizes at the International Belvedere competition and the Monserrat Caballé competition in 2015 and 1st prize at Operalia in 2017.

Since then he has sung at many of the great opera houses of the world and is in demand, particularly as a Rossini tenor.

In the beautiful surroundings of Casa Labia, Levy worked with several of our tenors on his specialist repertoire. The excitement in the room was electric!



26th August, 18h00
Casa Labia,
Muizenberg

Sara Baartman

by Hendrik Hofmeyr

Sara Baartman, also known as “Saartjie” or the “Hottentot Venus”, was a famous Khoikhoi woman exhibited as a freak show attraction in Europe during the 19th century.



Two centuries after her death, she is now regarded as a female icon and a symbol of the struggle for human rights in debates on race, gender and otherness.

The original version of the opera, in one act, dealt with the night that Baartman died as a lonely, solitary figure in Paris at the end of 1815. It was performed in 2009.

...Sara Baartman...

The full 3-act version was completed in 2019 and received its première by Opera UCT in September 2022 at the Baxter Theatre Centre. The opera traces Baartman's journey from Cape Town to London and Paris. The opera is sung in English but incorporates two French songs, a Nguni lullaby, and Afrikaans folk song and a Khoi prayer.

The Composer

Hendrik Hofmeyr was born in Cape Town in 1957. His first major success as a composer came in 1988 with the performance at the State Theatre of *The Fall of the House of Usher*, which won the South African Opera Competition and was also awarded the Nederburg Opera Prize.

In the same year, Hofmeyr, who was furthering his studies in Italy during ten years of self-imposed exile as a conscientious objector, obtained first prize in an international competition with music for a short film by Wim Wenders.

In 1992 he accepted a post as lecturer at the University of Stellenbosch, and in 1997 won two further international competitions, the prestigious Queen Elisabeth Competition of Belgium (with *Raptus* for violin and orchestra) and the Dimitri Mitropoulos Competition in Athens (with *Byzantium* for high voice and orchestra).

Hofmeyr, whose oeuvre includes some 90 commissioned works, is currently professor and Head of Composition and Music Theory at the University of Cape Town, where he obtained his Doctorate in 1999.

...Sara Baartman...



Fully staged, in a production by South African award-winning director, **Janice Honeyman** and Associate Director **Zenobia Kloppers**, and conducted by **Jeremy Silver**.

In collaboration with the **Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra**

Performances took place at the **Baxter Theatre** on 7th, 9th and 10th September 2022

...Sara Baartman

THE CAST

Sara Baartman A servant in the house of the Cesars	Bongiwe Nakani/Molly Dzangare
Anna Staal Sara's employer and friend	Christine Bam/Ntombi Nkosi
Zachary Macaulay Head of the African Institute in London	Luther Sakhumzi Martins/Vuyisa Xipu
Hendrik Cesars a free black, Anna's husband	Luvo Maranti/Mziwamadoda Nodlayiya
Alexander Dunlop a Scottish doctor at the Cape	Lwazi Dlamini*/Siphe Kwani
Georges Cuvier Director - Natural History Museum	Smelo Mahlangu
Barker and Henry de Blainville assistant to Cuvier	Eric van Rooyen/Oliver Druce
First rake	Dumisa Masoka/Sinalo Gxalaba
Second rake	Sisa Mjekula
Third rake	Lathitha Mdena
First woman	Zizipho Funzo/Lauren Pharaoh
Second woman	Mosidi Mere/Anne-marie Mailovich

CHORUS OF LONDONERS, PARISIANS AND ANCESTRAL SPIRITS

SOPRANOS: Jodi Carr, Zizipho Funzo, Siphosihle Letsoso, Lauren Pharaoh, Karabo Raboloi, Miné Smit
MEZZO SOPRANOS: Mia-Lana Hough, Anne-marie Mailovich, Mosidi Mere, Owethu Mxutu, Nica Reinke, Michaela Veldschoen,
TENORS: Iviwe Boms, Sinalo Gxalaba, Dumisa Masoka, Mthunzi Mbombela*, Simphiwe Mfazwe, Simbongile Ntlahla,
BASSES: Garth Delpoort*, Lindile Kula*, Lathitha Mdena, Sisa Mjekula, Thando Mpushe*

**Guest from Cape Town Opera*

First international residency



We were honoured and excited to welcome British vocal coach, **Janet Haney**, to work in close detail with our students on repertoire and vocal development between 12th and 24th September 2022.

Janet's amazing work as a vocal coach and répétiteur has had an important impact at Wexford Festival Opera, Welsh National Opera, English Touring Opera, Opera Holland Park, Longborough Festival Opera, Dorset Festival Opera, Islenska Operan (Iceland), Opera Africa (South Africa), Gärtnerplatz Munich, European Chamber Opera and Opera Project.

Janet has worked at most of the UK's leading Conservatoires, including as Music Director for opera scenes at Guildhall School of Music and Drama and at Birmingham Conservatoire. She is a visiting coach at the Royal College of Music and is on the staff at the Royal Academy of Music. She also regularly prepares singers for important débuts at other major European opera houses.

In concert, she has performed as an accompanist at many of Britain's Concert Halls including St David's Hall, Cardiff, The Symphony Hall, Birmingham and the Cadogan Hall, London. Internationally she has given recitals in Spain, Russia, Qatar, New York, Iceland, Ireland and Japan alongside singers such as Kiri Te Kanawa, Claire Rutter and Rosalind Plowright.

Fifteen of our singers received multiple sessions with Janet over a two-week period. They all demonstrated the most impressive vocal growth of the year! We have consequently invited Janet to visit us every year as our Principal Guest Coach.

UCT Opera School Masterclass Series

Michelle Breedt

Michelle Breedt's extensive repertoire ranges from the Mozart mezzo-soprano repertoire to bel canto roles like Adalgisa and Romeo *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, in addition to Diana/Giove *La Calisto* and Anna *Die sieben Todsünden*, Mélisande *Pelléas et Mélisande* Octavian *Der Rosenkavalier*, Charlotte *Werther* and Brangäne *Tristan und Isolde*.

Michelle has been a regular guest at the Wiener Staatsoper, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Semperoper Dresden, Hamburgische Staatsoper, Bayreuth as well as making appearances in Paris, London and Tokyo amongst other cities.



Friday 16th September, 19h30, informal recital
with Violina Anguelov and Jeremy Silver
Saturday 17th September – all day masterclasses
Sunday 18th September, morning – Gala Concert

It was a privilege to be joined by South African mezzo soprano. **Michelle Breedt**, to lead our concert and masterclass weekend hosted by **Diemersfontein Wine Estate** in this 3rd event of our Masterclass Series 2022. Never have we witnessed such a focused, hard-working and valuable masterclass as this, and the public who attended were as enthralled as we were! The weekend culminated in a gala concert with the four singers, Ondelwa Martins, Christine Bam, Sakhumzi Martins and Sakhiwe Mkosana accompanied at the piano by Jeremy Silver.

Two competitions:

David Aldred Memorial Prize

Inaugurated in 2021, this competition for sopranos stipulates that each competitor will sing one of the Strauss *Four last songs*. The 2022 competition took place on Tuesday 13th September in a packed Baxter Concert Hall, and was won by Ondelwa Martins. The three runner-up prizes for the remaining finalists were awarded to Fanele Mkhwanazi, Setsoane Jeannette Ntseki and Shadi Eshraghi.



Schock Foundation Prize for Singing

Now in its 21st year, this competition, open to all voice types, counts some of our most illustrious alumni amongst past winners.

Finalists this year included Sakhumzi Martins, Lauren Pharaoh, Setsoane Jeannette Ntseki and Yonwaba Mbo, with Sakhumzi Martins winning 1st prize.



Tuesday 8th November 2022,
Baxter Concert Hall

HANDEL'S ALCINA

In collaboration with Cape Town Opera and the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra

The UCT Opera season closed with Handel's masterpiece **Alcina**, written for his first season with the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden.

Set on a magical island belonging to **Alcina** – a beautiful but dangerous enchantress who seduces every man that lands there, and transforms them into rocks or wild animals when she has grown tired of them!



When dashing knight Ruggiero succumbs to this *femme fatale*'s dangerous charms, his fiancée Bradamante takes on a daring disguise to free her betrothed and break the curse. But is Alcina finally falling for the man of her dreams? In this cruel paradise, can anyone tell what's real?

Director: Matthew Wild - Conductor: Jeremy Silver
12, 13, 15, 16 November 2022, Artscape Opera Theatre



HANDEL'S ALCINA

Production & rehearsal
photographs



THE CAST

Alcina	Ondelwa Martins/Ané Pretorius*
Morgana	Setsoane Jeannette Ntseki/Alida Stoman*
Oberto	Shadi Eshraghi/Fanele Mkhwanazi
Ruggiero	Megan Kahts/Sanele Mwelase
Bradamante	Christine Bam/Anne-marie Mailovich
Oronte	Luther Sakhi Martins/Vuyisa Xipu
Melisso	Yonwaba Mbo/Sakhiwe Mkosana
Extras	Eric Hunt*/Vuyisa Notshe*/Van Wyk Venter*
Chorus	Opera UCT students <i>*Cape Town Opera</i>

THE COMMENTS

In the cast of seven there is no weak link. Each voice is as clear as a bell and the notes trill seemingly effortlessly from every singer... Whether new to opera or a seasoned lover of this artform, all will fall under ALCINA's spell.

Jaime Uranovsky, Broadway World

Phenomenal voices, young talents and really extraordinary achievements for a cast so young to tackle so formidable an opera.... over 3 hours of some of the most difficult Baroque writing in the repertoire and putting it in a production that holds audience interest for three hours plus...

Albert Combrink

... proof that if opera is presented at this superb level it could inspire a new generation of opera lovers

Magriet Stemmet

...an extraordinary piece of theatre: Opulent, lavish, excess, magical , enchanting... Entire company – a knowckout – and chorus at the end – when all ends well – wow.

The Cape Robyn

Two international exchanges

Opera UCT, in conjunction with the vocal department at the SACM, is part of two separate Swedish exchange programmes - one with the University of Gothenburg and the other with the Stockholm University of the Arts.



We have completed staff teaching exchanges in both directions, and one of our 3rd-year baritones, Eric van Rooyen, is doing a 3-month residency in Stockholm between April and June 2023.

International Competition Successes

Reuben Mbonambi (bass)

3rd prize in the International Hans Gabor Belvedere Singing Competition

Nombulelo Yende (soprano)

1st prize for female voice, the Maria Fołtyn Prize for the best performance of a Stanisław Moniuszko piece, a Tdeusza Pszonka award, the Moniuszko Music Lovers prize, and the Audience Prize in the 11th International Stanisław Moniuszko Vocal Competition

Sakhiwe Mkosana (baritone)

2nd prize in the Neue Stimmen Competition

Selected alumni news

Pretty Yende

Jan 2022 Les contes d'Hoffmann, 4 heroines
Valencia, Spain
May 2022 Don Pasquale, Norina
Royal Opera House, UK
June 2022 I puritani, Elvira
Wiener Staatsoper

Golda Schultz

Jan-Apr 2022 Le nozze di Figaro, Contessa
Metropolitan Opera, New York
Apr 2022 L'elisir d'amore, Adina
Opéra Nationale de Bordeaux
May-Jun 2022 The Rake's Progress, Anne
Metropolitan Opera, New York

Levy Sekgapane

Feb-Mar 2022 Il barbiere di Siviglia, Conte
Malmö Opera, Sweden
May-Jun 2022 Don Pasquale, Ernesto
Staatsoper Hamburg
July 2022 Rossini-Gala
Wiener Staatsoper, Vienna