



2025

SEASON REPORT

Welcome

Thank you for your curiosity to read this report. It narrates the heart-warming successes of many of our young singers as they venture forth onto the next step of their career journey; it documents our multi-dimensional activities here in Cape Town, whether in professional-level performances, public masterclasses, competitions or intense training; and it celebrates our pivotal place in the international operatic landscape as we prepare singers to make their mark at home and abroad, while top-level artists and coaches from all over the world come to give of their time and expertise within our four walls.

Opera UCT at the University of Cape Town repeatedly shows up as the most wide-ranging, prestigious operatic entity in South Africa. We are proud to be the only institution in South Africa with the capacity to take young singers from school to international career-level in all the facets and skills they need to flourish on the operatic stage. At the same time, we are humbled by the central role our performance output plays in the cultural life of this world-class city.

Please turn the pages and join us in celebrating South Africa's unbelievable young vocal talents as they dedicate themselves to the craft and artistry that is opera. A young opera singer's success is not only a personal triumph, but a real, lived moment of transformation for a family and community. If you feel inspired by what they achieve with us, then your support could not only benefit the singer, but also the country's arts scene and South Africa's continued presence on the world stage.

Jeremy Silver
Director of Opera UCT, University of Cape Town





Our story

UCT began staging operas in 1929, presenting a diverse range of works from early Italian repertoire through to new commissions by South African composers. As the only company in the Cape for many decades, the UCT Opera Company not only programmed regular seasons in Cape Town, but also undertook several tours across the country, as well as to Zimbabwe and Namibia. The company also became the premiere opera training academy on the African continent and, with the change of government in 1994, could boast the discovery and training of such current opera stars as Pretty Yende, Levy Sekgapane, Golda Schultz, Musa Ngqungwana and Pumeza Matshikiza.

Today, we have prize winners every year at high-profile international competitions, such as Operalia, Neue Stimmen and Belvedere.

In addition, our alumni proceed to some of the best young artist placements and opera houses around the world, with recent successes including Nontobeko Bhengu going directly to the Bavarian State Opera in Munich; Vuyisa Xipu and Thando Zwane joining the Mascarade Studio in Florence, Italy; and Mziwamadoda Nodlalyiya joining the opera studio at the Hamburg State Opera in Germany.

This means that our staged productions, concerts and public masterclasses offer the public a unique opportunity to catch a glimpse of these singers on home ground before they spread their wings.

Until recently, opera at UCT produced many operas in collaboration with Cape Town Opera, while preserving a separate and unique identity as the wellspring of the very best talent across South Africa.

As the focus of both institutions developed, our relaunch as **Opera UCT** at the beginning of 2023 was a reflection of the increase in the number of our own independent stagings. Starting with a brilliant new work by South African composer Hendrik Hofmeyr, *Sara Baartman*, we have staged Offenbach's well-loved opera, *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, Sondheim's witty revue *Marry me a little*, Rossini's *L'inganno felice*, the world premiere of Donizetti's *Dalinda*, Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* and Strauss's sparkling operetta *Die Fledermaus*, in addition to a curated concert entitled *The Sound of Freedom*, a concert of baroque enchantment at St George's Cathedral, and numerous other concerts, competitions, book launches and masterclasses which have become a well-loved staple of our seasons.



Opera UCT at the HEAT Festival, August 2025

Mission Statement

The purpose of Opera UCT is:

- 1) to produce accomplished and passionate singing-actors, ready to pursue their ambitions for an international performing career, through high-quality teaching, coaching, preparation and performance opportunities.
- 2) to prepare young artists who wish to pursue different goals, for example teaching, directing, arts management or music therapy to be ready for the next step on their journey.
- 3) to lead the conversation for the provision of world-class opera in South Africa via the breadth and quality of our performances and other events.

Our core values include:

- Dedication to daily achievement
- Emphasis on the humanity inherent in creative activity
- To guide and support all our young artists to find their own success
- To contribute to the cultural enrichment of the wider community



*Enchanted Baroque, Opera UCT & the KT Wong Foundation
at St. George's Cathedral, December 2025*



UCT Summer School: RISING STARS IN CONCERT



Our year began with a showcase performance by a quartet of talented singers from Opera UCT, accompanied at the piano by Jeremy Silver. The programme was meticulously curated to combine popular favourites with moving excerpts from the rich operatic repertoire. The performers also shared insights about the music they performed.

Soprano: Frances van Vuuren
Mezzo soprano: Ntombi Nkosi
Tenor: Vuyisa Xipu
Baritone: Sisa Mjekula

The UCT Summer School is organised by the centre for Extra-Mural Studies, and showcases the world-class, often groundbreaking research and performance done by scholars of the university.

2025 Season Launch

Continuing and cementing our new tradition, we presented a concert and reception at the Baxter Theatre Centre on 25th February 2025. We also shared details of the forthcoming year's activities to a packed concert hall.

19 soloists and 15 additional chorus members performed music from Italian 17th century opera, through 18th and 19th century favourites, to operetta, South African and American opera, and culminating with the finale from Sondheim's 1984 musical, Sunday in the Park with George.

Audience members and artists then mingled in the theatre bar to chat about the plans that had been unveiled for the year ahead.



Schumann & Janáček Unbound

Opera UCT contributed this production to the Opera Shorts Festival – a series of performances and other events, mounted by Cape Town Opera at the Wave Theatre.

This double bill of Robert Schumann's "Frauenliebe und -Leben" and Leoš Janáček's "The Diary of One Who Vanished" was directed by **Christine Crouse**, with musical direction by **Jeremy Silver**.

Production design was led by Allegra Bernacchioni, with video design by Kirsti Cumming and lighting design by Luke Ellenbogen.

7 - 16
MAR
8, 11, 12 & 16 March 2025
Wave Theatre, Long Street,
Cape Town

A FESTIVAL
OF SHORT
OPERAS



Schumann FRAUENLIEBE UND -LEBEN

'Clara':
Molly Dzangare

'Robert':
Mduduzi Nyembe

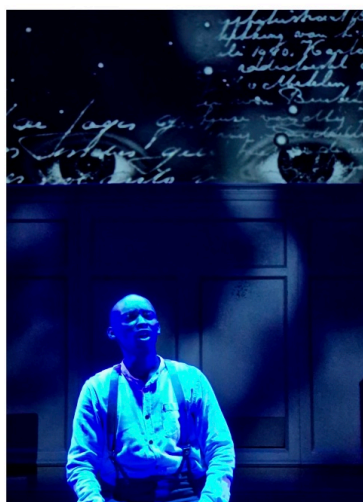


Janáček THE DIARY OF ONE WHO VANISHED

Tenor:
Vuyisa Xipu

Zefka:
Nica Reinke

Three offstage voices:
Buhle Swelindawo
Marvellous Mahlangu
Phoebe Andrews



GUEST RECITAL
GRETA DOVERI
in recital with Matteo Pais

In a collaboration with the Italian Cultural Institute in Pretoria, Opera UCT hosted a recital by exciting young Italian soprano, Greta Doveri and pianist Matteo Pais, artistic director of the Academy of the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino.

Greta Doveri studied in Florence and Milan, and has sung on the main stages of both cities. She has received 1st Prize and Best Young Singer in the Nicolai Ghiaurov International Competition and Best Female Voice in the Spiros Argiris Opera Competition.

The recital explored the passion and elegance of Italian vocal repertoire given by two exceptional artists at the heart of the European opera scene.

13 May 2025

Fiasconaro Room, South African College of Music, UCT



London Fundraising Concert

St George's Hanover
Square, London
13 June 2025

Hosted by the University of Cape Town Trust, Opera UCT recent alumni Moloko Letsoalo and Luvu Maranti (National Opera Studio) and Siphe Kwani (Royal Opera House) joined Jeremy Silver for a fundraising concert in the centre of London.

In a surprise addition to our programme, three of our singers taking part in the Garsington Opera Summer Festival (Vuyisa Xipu, Yonwaba Mbo and Thando Zwane) made the journey to London and made their own contribution to the concert!



Left to right: Jeremy Silver, Moloko Letsoalo, Luvu Maranti & Siphe Kwani after a rehearsal at London's National Opera Studio



Vuyisa Xipu, Thando Zwane & Yonwaba Mbo

OPERA IN CONCERT

Il Trovatore



In an exciting new collaboration, Opera UCT, the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra and the Afri-Arts Chorus presented a thrilling concert performance of Verdi's iconic opera, *Il Trovatore*.

Simply sensational



Concert of the season!

So much talent, so much
Hard work, so much for the
Audience to marvel at and enjoy!!!

It was brilliant – the voices!!!!

A proudly South African moment

Excellent singing and playing!

Characters in order of vocal appearance

Ferrando MONDE MASIMINI
Inez DINEO BOKALA
Leonora NONTOBKO BHENGU
Count di Luna THEO MAGONGOMA
Manrico MKHANYISELI DYANTYI
Azucena BONGIWE NAKANI
Ruiz THANDOLWETHU LONGO

AFRI-ARTS CHORUS
Conductor JEREMY SILVER

26 June 2025
Cape Town City Hall



HEAT

WINTER ARTS FESTIVAL



After a highly successful inaugural year for the **HEAT** Festival in 2024, Opera UCT was invited back in 2025 to give two concerts at the Alliance Française in Cape Town.

The festival was created to boost visitors to galleries and live events in the city centre in the quieter winter months.

Through their themed programme and map, **HEAT** provided the context to unite art galleries that are walking distance from each other, and bring together art forms which only occasionally interact.

Our programme, **DREAMS AND DESIRES**, was meticulously curated to give musical and textual expression to the overarching theme of the 2025 Festival: Other Worlding.

8 & 12 August 2025
Alliance Française, Cape Town

A CELEBRATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN ART SONG

Opera UCT joined forces with the vocal division of Stellenbosch University for our 5th annual collaboration.

25 AUGUST
ENDLER
CONCERT HALL,
STELLENBOSCH

26 AUGUST
BAXTER
CONCERT HALL,
CAPE TOWN

More
Klatzow
Fagan Hofmeyr Jona
Khumalo Mnisi
Villiers Mnomiya Watt
Grové May Mbali
Ellis Njeza Lemmer
Nepgen

Following the previous successes of *Die Winterreise*, *Le poète disait*, *Great Lieder Composers and their Operas*, and *Canciones españolas*, 2025 saw an exploration and celebration of the rich diversity of South African Art Song in all its variety of languages, styles and periods.



LANGUAGES, SING!



In a special partnership with the School of Languages & Literatures, Opera UCT presented a concert of Italian, German and French songs and arias. Singers from across all years of study coached their music and text with members of both faculties, and some even introduced their items in the foreign language!

4 September 2025, Chisolm Recital Room, SACM

Opera Friends of Cape Town Soirée

Featuring the winners of the 2025 FoCTO Bursary Competition, this gracious event in the heart of Bishopscourt assembled opera lovers for a concert, followed by wine and canapés.



21 September 2025,
Bishopscourt

UCT Legacy Society Lecture Recital

UCT Legacy Society President, Hugh Amoore, hosted a lecture-recital presented by Director of Opera UCT, Jeremy Silver.

Jeremy talked about the rich tradition of opera at UCT, and the exciting developments of the past few years which have cemented Opera UCT as one of the most renowned opera training programmes in the world. The company has simultaneously extended its performance activities and taken its place as a central pillar of Cape Town's world-class arts scene.

Guests were treated to musical highlights from *Die Fledermaus* in advance of Opera UCT's fully staged production later that month.



JOHANN STRAUSS

Die Fledermaus

On the occasion of the bicentenary of the composer, we performed on Strauss's actual birthday, which also happens to be World Opera Day!

22 - 25 October 2025,
Pam Golding Theatre
at the Baxter



‘Stunning performances – vocally and theatrically... Opera UCT is doing astounding work’
THE CAPE ROBYN

‘Fizzy, flirty and gloriously extra... The cast is young, the staging is proudly Cape Town, and the energy is for everyone – date-night people, fashion people, music people, first-timers, and yes, families (U18s are free...). Oh, and it’s a world-class production too.’
MAP MY WAY

‘Youthful exuberance, sharp humour, and jaw-dropping style... “upcycled couture with street-smart swagger... a marriage of sustainability and spectacle... By rooting the production in Cape Town’s urban culture and infusing it with sustainability and inclusivity, Opera UCT has shown how the art form can evolve without losing its essence.’
MYOLISI GOPHE - UCT NEWS

‘A stylish and charming triumph... Sparkle and frivolity’
BEVERLEY BROMMERT -
WEEKEND SPECIAL

CAST

ALFRED

Iviwe Boms (Thurs, Sat)
Mkhanyiseli Dyantyi (Fri, Sun)

ADELE

Carmen Traut (Thurs, Sat)
Siphosihle Letsoso (Fri, Sun)

ROSALINDE

Setsoane Ntseki (Thurs, Sat)
Molly Dzangare (Fri, Sun)

GABRIEL VON EISENSTEIN

Sisa Mjekula (Thurs, Sat)
Riaan Hunter (Fri, Sun)

DR BLIND

Simbongile Ntlahla (Thurs, Sat)
Daniel Hughes (Fri, Sun)

DR FALKE

Themba Mdlalose (Thurs, Sat)
Sandile Zitha (Fri, Sun)

FRANK

Jaco Koegelenberg (Thurs, Sat)
Eric van Rooyen (Fri, Sun)

IDA

Lilitha Nkuku (Thurs, Sat)
Marvellous Mahlangu (Fri, Sun)

PRINCE ORLOFSKY

Nica Reinke (Thurs, Sat)
Rosa van der Dussen (Fri, Sun)

FROSCH

Alan Committie
CONDUCTOR

Jeremy Silver
DIRECTOR

Christine Crouse
SET DESIGNER

Allegra Bernacchioni
COSTUME DESIGNER

Gavin Rajah
supported by
Pick 'n Pay Clothing's
Futurewear programme
MAKE-UP AND HAIR DIRECTION

Raine Tauber with support
from Nars Cosmetics
LIGHTING DESIGNER

Josh Lindberg
MOVEMENT DIRECTOR
& CHOREOGRAPHER

Ananda Fuchs
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
Liam Jaftha

CAPE TOWN PHILHARMONIC
ORCHESTRA

OPERA UCT CHORUS

RÉPÉTITEURS & COACHES

Lisa Engelbrecht
Samantha Riedel

Ean Smit

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Kieran McGregor

STAGE MANAGER

Whiren van Niekerk

HEAD OF WARDROBE

Widaad Albertus

DRESSER

Jennifer Williams

SOUND DESIGN

Izan Greyling

SOUND OPERATOR

Kurt Hartzenburg

JAZZ MUSICIANS

ALTO SAXOPHONE

Andie Stewart

GUITAR Cole Krieling

BASS Ryan Jacobs

JAZZ ARRANGEMENTS

Andrew Ford

SURTITLES

Jeremy Silver (English)

Sixeko Pakade (isiXhosa)

SURTITLE OPERATOR

Megan Naude



With gratitude to the following supporters
for their contribution to this production:
Kenneth Jones, in association with the UCT Trust;
Pick 'n Pay Clothing's Futurewear programme;
Nars Cosmetics; Bill van Rensburg;
the Rupert Music Foundation for their generous sponsorship of
the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra for this production.

GLOBAL CONFERENCES

2025 Cornerstone Conference Cape Town, South Africa

Ubuntu: I Am Because We Are

Few places in the world embody the spirit of connection and collective humanity quite like Cape Town – a city of resilience, transformation, and vibrant culture. This extraordinary gathering was a powerful celebration of global connection and sisterhood, with conversations spanning the global economy, geopolitics, innovation, and the arts.



On the occasion of the International Women’s Forum Cornerstone Conference in Cape Town, we hosted a group of delegates at the South African College of Music in the afternoon with a performance and Q&A session, followed by another performance at a special function in the evening.

6 November 2025



In what has become a yearly tradition, Opera UCT gave a gala concert at the Fish Hoek Friends of Music to great reception and applause.

Molly Dzangare - soprano
Nica Reinke - mezzo soprano
Mkhanyiseli Dyantyi - tenor
Themba Mdlalose - baritone
Jeremy Silver - piano

29 November, 2025



Following our contribution to a silent auction at an Amy Foundation Gala Fundraising dinner, we performed a special house concert of Lieder, arias and music theatre in Cape Town. The Amy Foundation’s mission is to provide a safe environment in communities which are challenged and vulnerable, and to develop emotionally well-rounded children and youth who make positive life choices and become contributing members of society.

30 November 2025



To conclude the Opera Friends of Cape Town year, we gave another soirée performance in Bishopscourt.

Featuring operatic favourites, as well as excerpts from operetta, zarzuela and music theatre, the concert ended with the beautiful ‘Brüderlein’ ensemble as a wonderful reminiscence of our recent production of Strauss’s *Die Fledermaus*.

7 December 2025

ENCHANTED BAROQUE



A joint presentation by the KT Wong
Foundation, Gavin Rajah and Opera UCT



GAVIN RAJAH



Our final concert of the year, **Enchanted Baroque** took place in the beautiful and inspiring ambiance of St George’s Cathedral on 19 December 2025, and brought together some of the finest young voices of Opera UCT with a group of specialist Baroque instrumentalists. Audiences were invited to put the cares of 2025 to one side, and bask in the beauty and emotional richness of the music as a portal into the festive season.

The repertoire featured mostly the music of Handel, with some specially chosen Tallis and Rameau towards the end. Patrons were able to attend the concert alone, or choose to stay on after the concert for wine and canapés in the Labyrinth.

Sopranos:	Frances van Vuuren Mia-Lana Slier	Violins:	Annie Shaw Odile Burden
Mezzo sopranos:	Lilitha Nkuku Nica Reinke	Viola:	Janna Khweis
Tenors:	Iviwe Boms Simbongile Ntlahla	Cello:	Matthias Ender
Baritones:	Sandile Zitha Sisa Mjekula	Double Bass:	Henrike Korvats
		Oboe:	Owen Dalton
		Director:	Jeremy Silver



Opera UCT Masterclass Series

Mini Baroque Festival

Philipp Mathmann & Annette Goeres

At the invitation of the South African College of Music, countertenor Philipp Mathmann came on a two-week residency. As a singer of considerable international renown and a baroque specialist, he gave a masterclass on baroque repertoire.

However, it is was mainly in his capacity as a senior attending physician in phoniatics and paediatric audiology at the Münster University Hospital (Germany) that he focused his visit. Together with his colleague, Annette Goeres, a vocal health therapist, they gave individual and joint lectures on vocal pedagogy and vocal health, as well as providing one-to-one sessions on healthy vocal technique with a substantial number of our young singers.



3 - 12 March 2025, South African College of Music

Elisabeth Scholl Residency

Elisabeth Scholl has had a distinguished career as a soprano in the baroque repertoire, with many festival appearances as well as a substantial number of recordings to her name. Since 2009 she has been a teacher of Baroque singing at the Hochschule für Musik in Nuremberg. From 2018, she has also been professor of voice at the Hochschule für Musik in Mainz.

Elisabeth led an inspiring three days of baroque lessons and group sessions with twelve of our singers particularly suited to and interested in the baroque repertoire. They were excited to absorb her stylistic knowledge as well as her methodology.



5 - 7 March 2025
South African College
of Music

Participating singers:

Buhle Swelindawo
(soprano)
Carmen Traut
(soprano)
Daniel Hughes
(tenor)
Ellen Pretorius
(soprano)
Esha Parbhoo
(soprano)
Fazlyn Naidoo
(soprano)
Frances van Vuuren
(soprano)
Iviwe Boms
(tenor)
Lilitha Nkuku
(mezzo-soprano)
Marvellous Mahlangu
(soprano)
Setsoane Ntseki
(soprano)
Simbongile Ntlahla
(tenor)

Opera UCT Masterclass Series

Janet Haney Residencies

Janet Haney made her eagerly awaited return-visit as Principal Guest Coach to work in close detail with several of our young singers on repertoire and vocal development. Following seven days of intensive coaching, she gave a final masterclass in order to share the immense growth our singers had displayed.



Janet has been a busy vocal coach and repetiteur for many of the leading opera companies in the UK. Overseas work has included Wexford Festival Opera (Ireland), Islenska Opera (Iceland), Opera Africa and Gärtnerplatz Munich.

She is in demand from many professional artists as they prepare to sing operatic roles for major Opera Houses throughout Europe, including La Scala, Frankfurt Opera, English National Opera and Munich Gärtnerplatz.

“Janet helped me significantly to improve my breathing and support and sing with greater ease, with more resonance and projection in my voice. I’ve never met a coach that can help a singer so much musically and vocally. Janet taught me much about the Italian bel canto style, which also led to my engagement at La Scala. I deeply recommend Janet to anyone who wants to learn to sing with more potential and greater ease.”

Liviu Holender

Opera Frankfurt, Opera Riga,
La Scala, Salzburg Festival

16 – 23 April 2025 and 25 August – 5 September 2025
Fiasconaro Room, South African College of Music

Opera UCT Masterclass Series

Matteo Pais

Matteo Pais is artistic director of the Accademia del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, the higher education centre of the famous Teatro del Maggio in Florence, Italy.

He was artistic coordinator at the Toscanini Foundation in Parma from 2020 until 2024. For around 25 years he worked as a master collaborator and musical assistant at prestigious theatres and festivals including Semperoper Dresden, Theater an der Wien, Baden Baden Osterfestspiele, Canadian Opera Company and Teatro Comunale di Bologna, working with conductors such as Christian Thielemann, Simon Rattle, Zubin Mehta, Bruno Bartoletti and many others.



Participating in the masterclass were celebrated Opera UCT young singers:

Molly Dzangare,
Nica Reinke, Sandile
Zitha, Dineo Bokala,
Thandolwethu Longo
and Themba Mdlalose.

Opera UCT coach, Dr. Lisa Engelbrecht, accompanied the session at the piano.

12 May 2025, Fiasconaro Room,
South African College of Music

Opera UCT Guest Lecture

Joseph Horowitz

Dvořák's Prophecy – Why it still matters

A talk with film + music clips

In 1893, Antonín Dvořák envisioned a bold future for American classical music rooted in Black spirituals and Native American traditions. Why did this vision fade - and what does it mean today for South Africa and the U.S.A?

With special reference to:

- Negro Folk Symphony by William Levi Dawson
- Porgy and Bess by George Gershwin
- South Africa's own musical voice – from Princess Magogo to Ubuntu

Joseph Horowitz is an American cultural historian who writes mainly about the institutional history of classical music in the United States. His tenure as artistic advisor and subsequently executive director of the Brooklyn Philharmonic at the Brooklyn Academy of Music attracted national attention for its radical departure from tradition. His many books include *Understanding Toscanini: How He Became an American Culture-God and Helped Create a New Audience for Old Music* (1987), *Dvořák in America: In Search of the New World* (2003), *Classical Music in America: A History of Its Rise and Fall* (2005) and *Dvorak's Prophecy: And the Vexed Fate of Black Classical Music* (2021).

27 May 2025, Fiasconaro Room, South African College of Music

Opera UCT Masterclass Series

Bronwen Forbay



Participants:

Iviwe Boms, Marvellous Mahlangu, Lilitha Nkuku, Vuyo Mlawu and Buhle Swelindawo

Durban-born soprano, Dr Bronwen Forbay, a Fulbright Scholar and the first South African woman to earn a DMA in Voice Performance, has earned international acclaim across opera, concert, recital, competition, and academic stages.

As an Associate Professor of Voice at Furman University (Greenville, SC), Dr. Forbay mentors award-winning students who excel in TMTA, MTNA, and NATS competitions, with many advancing to national levels.



6 June 2025, Fiasconaro Room, South African College of Music

Pierre Boulez Saal Song Week

The goal of the Pierre Boulez Saal is to offer “music for the thinking ear”: audiences are invited to listen actively and to experience sound with all senses, letting emotions, thoughts, and visual as well as aural impressions come together to create a complex whole. In our mind, the “thinking ear” does not represent the abstract or cerebral, but rather a sort of sensuousness - not unlike “grasping” a particularly beautiful or unusual object.

At the same time, their extraordinary concert hall provides a space for dialogue in which music can be shared on multiple levels. Many influences - cultural, artistic, humanistic, architectural, and historical - combine to create a place where people should be able to communicate, to listen, and to understand.

In a new partnership between the Pierre Boulez Saal (Berlin), Opera UCT, Stellenbosch University and Cape Town Opera, singers from all three South African institutions worked intensively with soprano Golda Schultz, collaborative pianist Jonathan Ware and a support team from Berlin.

The subject was the German Lied, and all artists in the room delved deep into text and music to find an authentic and insightful response to each song with which to communicate to the audience.

This was a profound engagement born of the luxury of a week of total immersion in the task at hand.

Opera UCT young artists comprised soprano Buhle Swelindawo, mezzo-soprano Lilitha Nkuku and pianist Mikhaila Porter.



Opera UCT Masterclass Series

Professor Guido Johannes Rumstadt

Rumstadt



We were delighted to welcome Guido Johannes Rumstadt and his wife Eva Rumstadt to give some coaching sessions on German language and repertoire.

Guido Johannes Rumstadt is professor of conducting at the Hochschule für Musik in Nuremberg, and is a former General Music Director of the Opera in Regensburg.

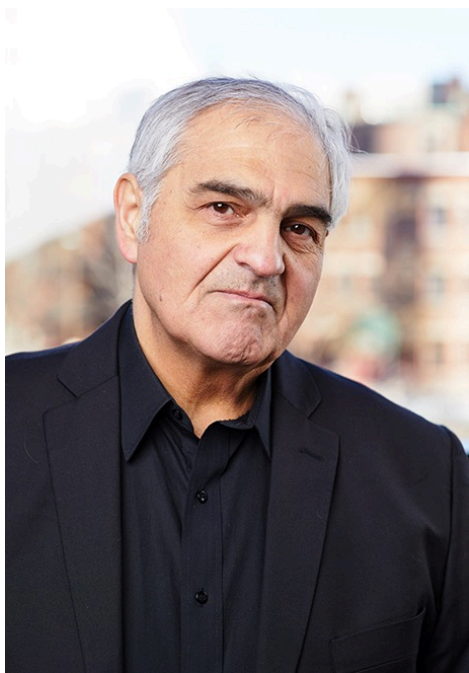
Eva Rumstadt is choir director of the Hainsacker Kirchenchor, a vocal teacher and a former opera singer.

Their sessions focused on current practice in the pronunciation and expression of operatic German.

26 - 27 August, 2025

Opera UCT Masterclass Series

Michael Strauss



Born in Cape Town, Michael Strauss has had a varied career as pianist, conductor and teacher both in Germany and the United States, where he was for many years on the faculty of both the Boston Conservatory and the New England Conservatory. He worked in great detail with several of our singers, sharing his particular expertise in German and Italian song repertoire, recitative, aria, and drama in the score.

Kerry Deal – Music Theatre Masterclass

Kerry is a professor of voice at the Boston Conservatory, with joint expertise in the classical and music theatre repertoire.

We had fun investigating the vocal synergies between different performance styles. Repertoire included When He Sees Me from *Waitress* and the Ballad of Jane Doe from *Ride the Cyclone* as well as more well-known numbers like Cabaret, Memory and You'll never walk alone.



29 & 30 October 2025, South African College of Music

COMPETITIONS



We hold a variety of competitions every year, each one with a distinct repertoire emphasis.

Our competition finals are always exciting public events and are very well attended.

FoCTO Bursary Competition

25 March 2025

Baxter Concert Hall

Audiences savoured the very best of our young talent early in the year with the annual FoCTO Bursary Competition. This year's competition hosted two additional prizes: the Music of Note Prize for a talented upcoming singer, donated privately, and another in memory of Guy Carter, who specified the prize as part of his legacy.

As always, we are grateful to the Friends of Opera in Cape Town for their continued generous support of our singers as they venture forth into the professional world.



Our 2025 winners were:

First prize ~ **Molly Dzangare**

Second prize ~ **Thando Zwane**

Third Prize ~ **Sandile Zitha**

Guy Carter Award ~ **Dineo Bokala**

Music of Note Award ~ **Thembelihle Sokhaba**

David Aldred Memorial Prize for Sopranos

22 April 2025

Baxter Concert Hall



David Aldred was particularly interested in the soprano voice, and Strauss's Four Last Songs was one of his favourite works for this voice type. After his death in 2021, his friends decided to honour his memory by establishing a prize for sopranos studying at the SACM, with each participant being required to include one of the Strauss set in their programme.

1st prize: Frances van Vuuren
Runners up: Dineo Bokala
Linda Mbozi

Aviva Pelham Operetta Competition

4 August 2025

Baxter Concert Hall



Operetta is a staple of the repertoire in German opera houses, and has a long tradition in South Africa too.

This competition, inaugurated and sustained by Cape Town diva, Aviva Pelham, in 2022 is now a firm favourite in the Opera UCT calendar.

2025 prizewinners:
1st Aria Prize: Nica Reinke
Duet Prize: Sinesipho Tokwe & Sandile Zitha
2nd Aria Prize: Sinesipho Tokwe
3rd Aria Prize: Themba Mdlalose
Audience Prize: Sinesipho Tokwe

Now in its 24th year, this competition has introduced the public to some major talent throughout its history, with many of its prize winners now pursuing impressive international careers.

This year's prize winners were:

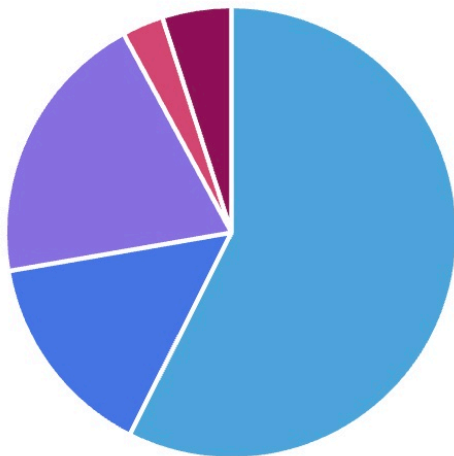
Sandile Zitha
Mia-Lana Slier
Carmen Traut
Themba Mdlalose
Buhle Swelindawo

1st prize and South African Song
2nd prize and Best Oratorio Aria
3rd prize and Best Art Song
4th prize and Best Opera Aria
Audience Prize

28 October 2025, Baxter Concert Hall

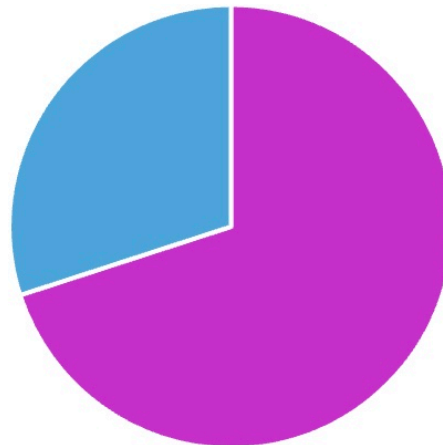
Student Singer Statistics, 2025

Demographic



■ black ■ coloured ■ white ■ indian ■ foreign

Gender Division



■ Female ■ Male

The wider ecosystem

1) TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION

Singers are at the heart of the operatic experience for audiences, and Opera UCT continues to lead the identification and training of young South African talent, as it has for many decades.

However, singers don't work in isolation, and without orchestral instrumentalists, conductors, directors, designers, répétiteurs, stage managers and craftsmen, no opera can fully come to life.

Opera UCT is the only institution in the country that is addressing this need head-on, providing personal training and performance experience to young practitioners in the wider operatic ecology. All our young artists receive training and feedback from our own specialised staff as well as from the national and international guest artists who visit throughout the year.



Liam Jaftha, stage director

In 2025, Masters student Liam Jaftha concentrated on stage direction, acting as assistant director on *Schumann and Janáček Unbound* and *Die Fledermaus*. He also directed some scenes from French operas at the end of the year.

We also worked with young pianist Mikhaila Porter on collaborative piano and coaching skills, and look forward to welcoming her back for more in-depth répétiteur studies.

In addition, a number of our singing students worked as assistant stage managers, assistant make-up artists and surtitle operators – all alongside professional practitioners in their field. Others worked closely with our professional Marketing and PR team, learning skills which are essential to the modern functioning of the arts industry.

2) EMPLOYMENT

Keeping the arts alive!

Opera is the most collaborative of the art forms, requiring a wealth of talents and expertise. In addition to Opera UCT staff, the administrative and technical staff of the South African College of Music and the staff of the Baxter Theatre, we have been able in 2025 to provide freelance employment across the arts sector to 37 individuals and 4 companies:

- 2 Set Designers
- 2 Lighting Designers
- 1 Movement Director
- 1 Costume Designer
- 1 Costume & Wardrobe Manager
- 1 Milliner
- 1 Répétiteur
- 1 Scenic artist
- 1 Projection Designer
- 1 Production Managers
- 1 Stage Manager
- 3 Costume Assistants
- 1 Make-up Artist
- 1 Surttitle Translator into isiXhosa
- 2 Surttitle Operators
- 1 Wigmaster
- 1 Graphic Designer
- 8 Opera Singers
- 1 Actor
- 6 Freelance Baroque Orchestral Players
- 1 Marketing Company
- 1 PR Company
- Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra
- 1 Set Building Company

Reaching out: MAKING CONNECTIONS

Learners *from* Wesbank *in the* Cape Flats

40 young people from Wesbank in the Cape Flats attended our Aviva Pelham Operetta Competition at the Baxter Concert Hall in August.

Cape Flats Stories reported that “the children were profoundly inspired, with some expressing their desire to sing”.

For many of these young people, this outing provided a novel experience of being out at night. Upon arrival, **The Shack Grilled 2 Go** ensured everyone had food and drinks, and our wonderful PR team at **NetworxPR** partnered with **Cape Flats Stories** and a team from **Balls not Guns**, to make sure everything ran smoothly.



Afri-Arts Chorus



We are proud to have partnered with this inspiring choir twice, once in 2024 in our production of *Dalinda*, and again in 2025 in our concert performance of *Il Trovatore*.

The choir is a vibrant collective of 60+ trained Cape Town singers which describes itself as 'An Ode to African Excellence'. With a diverse repertoire, it combines the rich rhythms of African tradition with the soaring heights of opera and choral harmony.

The choir is an initiative of BongiLizwi Music Edutainment, a non-profit company dedicated to providing music education and opportunities to children from disadvantaged communities. Founded in March 2013, the organisation focuses on improving communities through music by teaching children how to sing, play instruments, and read/write music.

Achievements in 2025: Opera UCT current singers & recent alumni Some Highlights

Current soprano, **Molly Dzangare**, reached the finals of the 43rd International Hans Gabor Belvedere Singing Competition 2025 and was awarded an engagement with La Monnaie Opera House in Brussels.

60th Fleur du Cap Theatre Awards



Both awards for opera singers in the 2025 Fleur du Cap Theatre Awards went to Opera UCT artists:

Best Performance in an Opera - Female went to **Nontobeko Bhengu** for her portrayal of the title role in Donizetti's Dalinda (Opera UCT, 2024).



Best Performance in an Opera - Male went to **Thando Zwane** for his portrayal of the role of Acmet in Donizetti's Dalinda (Opera UCT, 2024).

Recent alumnus, **Luvo Maranti** (tenor), joined Scottish Opera as an Emerging Artist for the 2025/26 season.

Vuyisa Xipu (tenor), **Thando Zwane** (baritone) and **Yonwaba Mbo** (baritone) joined Garsington Opera in the UK for their 2025 Summer Season. Special congratulations to Vuyisa Xipu, who received a prestigious Leonard Ingrams award at the end of the season.

Vuyisa Xipu and **Thando Zwane** both joined the Mascarade Opera Emerging Artist Programme in Florence, Italy.

Sanele Mwelase (countertenor), sang the title role in the revival of *Ali*, at the Theatre Royal de la Monnaie in Belgium.

Mziwamadoda Sipho Nodlayiya (tenor) joined the International Opera Studio of Hamburg State Opera

Nontobeko Bhengu (soprano) joined the Opera Studio of the Bavarian State Opera in Munich

Rueben Mbonambi (bass) was appointed a soloist member at the Vlaamse Opera in Belgium.

Sakhumzi Martins (tenor) joined the Nuremberg State Opera as a full-time chorister.

Christine Bam (mezzo) and **Marvin Kernelle** (tenor) joined the Saarland State Theatre in Saarbrücken as full-time choristers.

Sakhiwe Mkosana (baritone) continued for a 2nd year as young artist at Frankfurt Opera.

Dumisa Masoka (tenor) sang the role of Don Ramiro in Rossini's *La Cenerentola* for Hampstead Garden Opera in London.

Tylor Lamani (tenor) sang the role of Marcellus in *Hamlet* at the Buxton International Festival, followed by the role of Nemorino in *L'elisir d'amore* with English Touring Opera.

Ondelwa Martins (soprano) sang one of the Flowermaidens in Richard Wagner's *Parsifal* at the Vlaamse Opera in Belgium.

FACULTY & STAFF 2025

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Director
Projects Manager
Coaches

Drama lecturer
Strategy and Operations
Student Admin Assistants

Jeremy Silver
Christine Crouse
Lisa Engelbrecht
Ean Smit
Ian Bothma
Paul Griffiths
Eriel Huang
Nica Reinke
Marvellous Mahlangu
Aér van den Bergh

UCT STAFF

Dean, Faculty of Humanities
Development & Alumni

Shose Kessi
Sarah Archer (Executive Director)
Sidney Van Heerden
Cindy de Oliveira

SACM STAFF

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Deputy Director
Departmental Manager
Concert Co-ordinator
Administrative Officer
Senior Secretary
Building Supervisor
Principal Technical Officer

Andrew Lilley
François du Toit
Angelisa Scheepers
Fiona Grayer
Shabnam Pansari
Lisa-Marie Diamond
Samuel Kruger
Izan Greyling

VOCAL STUDIES, SACM

Head of Vocal Studies
Vocal Lecturers

Patrick Tikolo
Paulina Malefane
Violina Anguelov
Sipho Fubesi

