

Verbier,  
Switzerland  
17<sup>th</sup> July 2013

Dear friends,

I hope life is treating you well. My apologies, I have been a very poor correspondent recently. I will try to make amends by bringing you up to date with what has been going on in my life this past year. I have just completed my first season as a freelance artist based in Dresden. It has been an incredibly exciting time. I finished my two years as a member of the *Junges Ensemble* at the Dresden *Semperoper* last July. It was a wonderful experience both personally and professionally and I am now a Guest Artist at the *Semperoper*. The Dresden lifestyle suits me well and I am very happy here.

Last summer I was a member of the *Young Singers Project* at the *2012 Salzburg Festival*. What an incredible two months we enjoyed in such a beautiful city. I sang **Pamina** in *Die Zauberflöte für Kinder*, covered **Pamina** in von Winter's *Das Labyrinth*, performed in concert at the *Mozarteum* and at the inaugural *Festspiel Ball*, and sang in masterclasses given by such great artists as Christa Ludwig, Thomas Hampson and Michael Schade. All the young singers were encouraged to attend the other Festival performances and we definitely made the most of this opportunity!



*Die Zauberflöte für Kinder – Pamina with Papageno*



*Left: Mozarteum Concert bows*

*Hannah Glawari & Count Danilo - Festspiel Ball*

In September I returned to Sydney for a holiday. It was so good to catch up with many friends, to go swimming and to walk along the beaches in the sunshine ☺. The time seemed to fly and soon we were beginning rehearsals for *Rodelinda* with Maestro Richard Bonyngé. This period and the performance of such beautiful music at the City Recital Hall with wonderful colleagues in front of a hometown audience full of many friends and luminaries is one of the highpoints of my life. Huge thanks to the Joan Sutherland & Richard Bonyngé Foundation for bringing such a worthwhile project to fruition. Maestro Bonyngé's experience, generosity and ability to share his knowledge of the true bel canto style of singing is invaluable. It was a great honour to prepare and sing a role which Dame Joan also sang under his direction.



*Above & left:  
Maestro Bonyngé & the  
Sydney Lyric Orchestra,  
colleagues Fiona Janes &  
John Longmuir, and the  
after party with the  
Governor-General  
Quentin Bryce AC CVO*

*Below:  
Royal Opera House  
Muscat and 'MV Europa'*

In November I was privileged to represent the *Semperoper* at the *Stella Maris International Singing Competition*. Each year several international opera houses are invited to nominate a member of their Young Artist Program to compete in a competition over three rounds covering opera, oratorio and song. The major prize is 15,000 Euro generously donated by the Hapag-Lloyd cruise line. The whole affair takes place on board a luxury liner, this time sailing from Dubai via exotic Arab ports then across the Indian Ocean to the idyllic Seychelles. It is judged by the audience who are guided by a panel of experts. The other singers came from the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Canadian Opera, Frankfurt Opera and Hamburg Opera. I was thrilled to be announced the winner on top of spending 10 fabulous days on my first ever cruise!



*and the idyllic Seychelles Archipelago*



Once back in Europe I hardly had time to unpack before I was asked to stand in for an indisposed Susan Gritton to sing the little known Liszt *Graner Messe* with *deFilharmonie* and the *Collegium Vocales Gent* under Philippe Herreweghe in Belgium. The first concert (& radio recording) was exciting to say the least as I virtually sight-read my way through proceedings. But all went well and the recording went to air. In December I toured Italy and France with Maestro Herreweghe and *l'Orchestre des Champs-Elysées* & *Collegium Vocales Gent* performing the first soprano in the exquisite Mozart *C minor Mass* in some truly magnificent venues.



Antwerp early morning (Lizst)



Kristus Koning Church – Ghent



Perugia – Basilica di San Pietro



Mozart *C minor Mass*

A quick trip to London followed for the Barrandov Opera Christmas Gala concerts. These were lots of fun. Then it was off to Rome for Christmas and the start of rehearsals in Naples for a new production of *Rusalka* at the *Real Teatro di San Carlo* where I sang **First Woodsprite**. It was humbling and exciting to make my debut at the oldest continuously active opera theatre in Europe under the baton of Maestro John Fiore. It is a truly beautiful venue and the production was very well received.



Real Teatro di San Carlo from the stage



Left: *First Woodsprite*  
*Rusalka – Finale*  
*Day off on Isle of Capri*

After all this excitement, singing and travel it was time for a holiday including one week in the bewitching city of Venice during the annual

fun-filled *Carnivale* ☺. In March, I returned to Dresden and the *Semperoper* for some *Zauberflöte* performances and to begin rehearsal for the world premier of the children's opera *Prinz Bussel*. Unfortunately the devastating floods caused the final three sold out performances to be cancelled, but we will be performing this action packed comedy again next season.

Recently I have been asked to sing some beautiful song cycles with various chamber ensembles in more intimate venues. This has been a new musical experience for me and one which I have enjoyed very much indeed. I will be further exploring this repertoire during the 2013-14 season and hope to make a recording. Another wonderful new experience was singing with the London Cello Orchestra on a tour of Switzerland and South Korea during June and early July. The Korean audiences are very warm and enthusiastic. It was such a privilege to sing Villa-Lobos' haunting *Bachianas Brasileiras No.5* with the rich support of 20 cellos in the magnificent Concert Hall of the Seoul Arts Centre.

So, now I am here in the stunning Swiss Alps for the 20<sup>th</sup> Verbier Festival - I really am very fortunate indeed! I will be soprano soloist in a Beethoven Concert under the baton of Maestro Charles Dutoit, participate in Masterclasses with Barbara Bonney, Simon Keenlyside and Claudio Desderi, and sing **Rosina** in the Academy production of *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. I can hardly wait to start ☺.



I hope this letter finds you well. I intend to visit Sydney in early 2014 and am very much looking forward to seeing as many of my friends as possible.

Very best wishes,

Valda.