

An Afternoon with Samuel Sakker, 21 January 2018

2.00pm: An afternoon with Samuel Sakker

In January in an exciting impromptu event, we were lucky enough to have rising young tenor, Sam Sakker, come and talk about his life singing on the opera stages of the world.

In town for rehearsals for Brett Dean's Hamlet in Adelaide, I hadn't heard Sam since he sang in a pop up Messiah performance in Lindfield, which I helped to organise some years ago.



Samuel Sakker and Tahu Matheson

His extended family joined him, since many of them also hadn't heard him sing recently. He told us about attending Sydney Grammar and indeed, one of his teachers was in the audience. Sam had attended the Queensland Conservatorium and had sung in Opera Queensland and Opera Australia choruses and toured as Don Ottavio to regional Australia. But a freelance career on that level wasn't his idea of life! Sam went to Berlin on a holiday and reached the finals of the auditions for the Staatsoper, but headed back to Melbourne to study and complete a Commerce degree. Success finally came to Sam when he gained a

place in the prestigious Covent Garden, Royal Opera House Jette Parker Young Artist Program (as had several of his Australian colleagues). The young tenor spent several years in the program singing on the stage of Covent Garden and appearing before Royalty. Now he is singing principal roles around the world.

Sam's voice featured in the duet he played from the documentary about *Sardanapalo*, an unknown Franz Liszt opera recently found in Weimar. Liszt had spent nearly seven years composing this opera based on Lord Byron's 1821 tragedy. The great composer abandoned his incomplete draft in 1852 shortly after conducting Wagner's *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* in Weimar. Act 1 of the opera has been "rebuilt" by Cambridge University academic. Dr. David Trippett.

Sam interspersed his chat with a selection of three Tchaikovsky Songs, Opus 6, No.1 (Do not believe, My friend), No. 5 (Why) after Heine, and No. 6 (None but the lonely heart) after Goethe. He also gave us a Wagner treat, Erik's *Willst jenes Tag's du nicht* from *Der Fliegende Holländer*, and *Der Trunkene im Frühling* (The Drunkard in Spring) from Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*.

Sam was accompanied by accomplished pianist, Tahu Matheson, Head of Music at Opera Australia, who had just the previous weekend conducted, at very short notice, the iconic Sydney event, *Opera in the Domain* to an audience of thousands.

It was extremely exciting to hear Sam open up about his life in such an amusing way and we wish him the greatest success in his future career.

By Leona Geeves