



Deirdré Blynn-Rautenbach (soprano) is a professional singer and voice teacher/lecturer born in Vereeniging. She obtained her Performer's Licentiate through UNISA in 2001, the same year in which she was awarded the Absa KKNK Kanna for Best Production of Serious Music. Deirdré made her debut as the First Lady in *Die Zauberflöte* for ProMusica Theatre in 2006. She has become well-known as an oratorio and concert singer with recitals for the UNISA Music Foundation, amongst others. Her opera repertoire includes *Fiordiligi* in Mozart's *Così fan tutte* and *Eurillia* in Vivaldi's *Serenata a tre*. A singing student of Eugenie Chopin, she completed her MMus at the University of Pretoria in 2013 with cum laude, where she lectures.



Jo-Nette LeKay (soprano) is a full time opera/classical singer who hails from the Winelands town, Paarl, in the Western Cape. She studied singing at the University of Stellenbosch and obtained a 'Licentiate in Musical Performance' and attended Theatre Art classes at the College of Music at UCT, where she studied and performed operatic roles like *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Donizetti), *Adina* from *Don Pasquale* (Donizetti), *Gilda* from *Rigoletto* (Verdi). Jo-Nette is a qualified music teacher and she loves working with the voice and calls herself a vocal technician. She also recently performed in a Verdi Festival held at the Brooklyn Theatre in Pretoria, where she also participated as part of a Verdi concert series.



Aukse Trinkunas (mezzo-soprano) was born in Vilnius (Lithuania) and holds several degrees which include a Masters Degree in Opera and Concert Singing from the Lithuanian Academy of Music. In 1998 she relocated to South Africa after being awarded a bursary by the Committee of International Studies to further her vocal studies with Emma Renzi, who has been her singing teacher ever since then. She made her debut as The Third Lady in *Die Zauberflöte* (Mozart) with the ProMusica Opera Company in 2006 and her repertoire includes roles such as *Carmen* (Bizet) from the opera with the same name, *Anius* in *La Clemenza di Tito*, *Dorabella* in *Così fan Tutte* (all from Mozart), *Marta* in *Faust* (Gounod), *The Sorceress* in *Dido and Aeneas* (Purcell), *Prince Orlofsky* in *Die Fledermaus* (Strauss) and *Niania* in *Eugene Onegin* (Tchaikovsky). Aukse is a singing teacher at Crawford College School in Johannesburg.



Linette van der Merwe (mezzo-soprano) was born in Polokwane and is a lecturer at the University of Pretoria's department for Afrikaans and the Department Education for Humanities. She is also the executive chair for the Wakkerstroom Music Festival since August 2014. She made her debut as *Alisa* in *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Donizetti) in 2002, after which she became a sought-after opera, oratorio and concert singer. Other roles in her repertoire include *Flora Bervoix* in *La Traviata* (Verdi), *Ida* in *Die Fledermaus* (Strauss) and *Giovanna* in *Rigoletto* (Verdi). She also specialises in contemporary Afrikaans Lieder. Linette is a singing student of Emma Renzi and married to Chris Mostert (tenor).



Johan Coertzen (tenor) has an honours degree in accounting and works as financial manager for a well known law firm in Pretoria. He received singing lessons from Ravonne Swart for numerous years. He sang in various opera productions as part of the PACT and Black Tie Ensemble opera choruses. He is the Music Director of the Dutch Reformed Church Mootvallei in Pretoria and performs as freelance soloist throughout Gauteng. Johan is currently a singing student of Deirdré Blynn-Rautenbach.



Coert Grobbelaar (tenor) made his debut in the Transvaal première of Beethoven's *Fidelio* in 1988. He left for Germany in 1995 to further his studies in opera. In 1999 Grobbelaar sang his last Lieder recycle consisting of Afrikaans art songs under the title *Onder die Suiderkruis* in Germany. Since the year 2000, he established himself besides opera, as a Lieder and light classical performer. He was also involved in quite a few crossover productions between drama and art songs. Besides his own vocal training studio, Coert is also involved with two upliftment programs in singing in the Vaal Triangle. The two projects involve work with the Fezili Dabe Municipality and an ensemble for underprivileged talented voices. He is also well known as an adjudicator at various eisteddfods and singing competitions.



Chris Mostert (tenor) was born in Johannesburg and is a consulting Electrical Engineer by profession. He made his debut as Nemorino in *L'Elisir d'Amour* (Donizetti), after which he continued to perform roles which include Alfred in *Die Fledermaus* (Strauss), Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte* (Mozart), Don Ramiro in *La Cenerentola* (Rossini), Triquet in *Eugene Onegin* (Tchaikovsky) and Flavio in *Norma* (Bellini). Chris sang for three seasons in Switzerland, St. Gallen at the Konzert und Theater St. Gallen. He returned to South-Africa in 2007 and is a singing student of Emma Renzi. Chris is married to Linette van der Merwe (mezzo-soprano).



Rex Nigrini started his musical training in 1986, playing the trumpet under the tuition of Hanzel von Brughan at the Pretoria School for Art, Ballet and Music. Since 1987 – 2003, he performed in various bands and orchestras, ranging in styles from Light Music, Jazz, Latin American, Sacred Music, Classical Music, Rock and even Reggae. In 1991, Rex started with singing lessons under Inka Polič and in 1992 he joined PACT ad-hoc chorus. He began his formal studies at the Pretoria Technikon Opera School in 1993 under Hans van Heerden and was awarded his National Diploma in Opera in 1995 and made his professional début as a soloist in 1994 at the Roodepoort Civic Theatre, singing the role of Paris in *Romeo et Julliette* (Gounod). During his studies he appeared as a soloist in various student and professional productions i.e.; *Die Fledermauss* (Strauss) at the Pretoria State Theatre and *La Boheme* (Puccini), *Gianni Schicchi* (Puccini), *Fidelio* (Beethoven), *Die Lustigen Weiber von Windsor* (Nicolai), and *Le nozze di Figaro* (Mozart) at the Roodepoort Civic Theatre. In 1999, he was awarded his Higher Diploma in Concert Singing, majoring in Lieder and Oratorio, under the tuition of Louis Botha at the Pretoria Technikon Opera School. Other roles Rex are known for includes Coline, Benoit and Alcindoro in *La Boheme* (Puccini), Marchese d'Obigny in *La Traviata* (Verdi). Rex is currently performing countrywide as a musician in both the classical and jazz vocal genres and this is his first performance for



Soprano Erin Heisel's performances have been described as "brave, vivid" (The New York Times) and "clear, flute-like...beautiful" (Daily Hampshire Gazette, MA). In New York City, she has performed at the Cornelia Street Café with Jed Distler and the Composer's Collaborative series "Serial Underground," the "Friends and Enemies of New Music" series with composer David Del Tredici at the piano, and at the Brooklyn Library and Brooklyn Museum in concerts sponsored by the Brooklyn Philharmonic. She has also performed at the Galapagos Artspace and The Tank as a member of the PROTEUS Ensemble. Beyond New York City, appearances include performances with the Springfield Symphony Orchestra (MA), the Arcadia Players Baroque Orchestra (MA), the Middletown Chorale (OH), the Lisa Leizman Dance Company (MA), the Downtown Sinfonietta in White Plains, NY, and on the Chapel by the Sea's chamber music series in Ft. Myers, Florida. International performances include concerts with the Orquesta Sinfónica Juvenil in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, a recital at the Theatrum Kuks Baroque Festival in the Czech Republic, and a program of American song at the Official Residence of the American Ambassador in Bratislava, Slovakia. Opera roles include: The Queen of the Night and The First Lady in *The Magic Flute*, Cunegonda in *Candide*, The Princess in *The Bewitched Child*, Miss Pinkerton in *The Old Maid and the Thief*, and Anna Gomez in *The Consul*.

Also interested in physical theatre, she has performed a wide variety of music and performance art pieces including "Philip Glass Buys a Loaf of Bread" from David Ives' *All in the Timing*, Yoko Ono's "Scream," and *The Tropical Fish Opera* by Ramon Sender. In New York City, she was seen as a rat in a world premiere staging of John Corigliano's "Pied Piper Fantasy" with the Brooklyn Philharmonic. At NYU, she sang and danced in "inner voice," performed as part of the Master's Dance Concert sponsored by the Program in Dance Education, and was also seen in the physical theatre piece "Mother is Breath," part of the Women's Project of the Ethno-Cultural Theatre Forum, sponsored by the Program in Educational Theatre. She has studied movement improvisation with Tanya Kane-Perry, Nan Smithner, and through the Northampton Theatre Workshop.

Heisel has participated in the Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival in Fairbanks, Alaska, the Elysium-Between Two Continents Summer Program in Bernried, Germany, the American Song Conference in Philadelphia, PA, and the Oberlin Baroque Performance Institute at the Oberlin Conservatory, OH. She holds degrees from Butler University, IN, the University of Massachusetts (Amherst), and is an ABD candidate for the Ph.D. in Music Performance in New York University's prestigious Steinhardt School, where her research interests include the music of Johannes Brahms, German Expressionism, Play Theory (especially the work of Johan Huizinga), and the recent song cycles of David Del Tredici.



Dr. Walter Fourie, tenor, has resided in Nelspruit since 2009. Prior to this Fourie studied in the United States and performed not only in the States, but also in Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic, singing diverse roles such as Yakuside in *Madama Butterfly*, Herr Eiler in *Der Schauspieldirektor*, Max Detweiler in the *The Sound of Music*, The Barber in the *Man of La Mancha*, Matt in the *The Fantasticks*, the tenor solos in Handel's *Messiah*, *Christmas Oratorio* by Saint-Saens and *Magnificat* by Durante, as well as preparing the under study for Don Ramiro in *La Cenerentola* under the direction of Gregory Buchalter of the Metropolitan Opera.

On his return to South Africa in 2009, Fourie established the Lowveld Chamber Music Association, a non-profit entity with the mission to promote the classical arts in the Nelspruit region. The Association regularly hosts recitals with local, national, and international artists, and has also presented two sold out operas in the last two years.

She has studied voice with Janet Cananda Fritsch, Steven Stolen, Jon Humphrey, Oren Brown, and is a current student of Dr. Robert C. White, Jr. A committed teacher herself, Heisel has taught voice and music related courses at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, the Northampton Community Music Center, Bay Path College in Longmeadow, MA, as a guest artist in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, and she currently teaches at Adelphi University and at NYU.