



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
TEACHERS
of **SINGING**

South Africa Chapter

2025 CONFERENCE
POTCHEFSTROOM





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**TEACHERS
OF SINGING**

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NATS South Africa Chapter Conference 2025

Featherhill Boutique Hotel and Conference Venue
11–13 June 2025

Welcome Note from Prof Conroy Cupido

As President of the National Association of Teachers of Singing (South Africa Chapter), it is my great pleasure to welcome the Board of the South Africa Chapter, all our presenters, students, and guests to the 2025 NATS South Africa Chapter Conference. After two successful conferences in Stellenbosch and Gqeberha, we are thrilled to bring this year's conference to Potchefstroom, the home of North-West University. I would like to thank the director of MASARA, Prof Chris van Rhyn, the research entity at the NWU School of Music, for assisting in making this conference possible. This vibrant academic and musical hub offers the ideal setting for meaningful engagement, learning, and collaboration among educators, performers, and scholars. We look forward to the exchange of ideas, the joy of music-making, and the inspiration this gathering will bring.

A warm welcome to all – may this be a memorable and enriching experience for each one of you!



Conference Schedule

Day 1: Wednesday, 11 June

Time	Session	Venue
08:30–09:00	Welcome Coffee/Tea	Suikerbosch
09:00–09:15	Registration	Suikerbosch
09:15–09:30	Welcome – Prof Conroy Cupido	Suikerbosch
09:30–10:30	Prof Chris van Rhyen – <i>The construction of White African-ness in Priaulx Rainier’s Art Songs</i>	Suikerbosch
10:30–11:30	Prof Waldo Weyer – <i>Enhancing the engagement with contemporary repertoire: a deep reading of In Transit by Jaco van der Merwe</i>	Suikerbosch
11:30–12:00	Mid-morning Coffee/Tea Break	Suikerbosch
12:00–13:00	Dr Eulandri Venter – <i>Snippets from 10 Afrikaans art songs as vocal exercises for classical voice training</i>	Chapel
13:00–14:00	Kate Watson – <i>Compositional diversity in South African art songs: A lecture recital</i>	Chapel
14:00–15:00	Lunch	Dining Area
15:00–16:30	Dr Bronwen Forbay – <i>Classical Masterclasses</i>	Chapel
16:30–17:30	Dr Sarah Holman/Dr Carole Blankenship – KEYNOTE: Conveying Critical Collaboration: Guidance and Counsel for the Voice Practitioner	Suikerbosch

Day 2: Thursday, 12 June

Time	Session	Venue
08:30–09:00	Welcome Coffee/Tea	Suikerbosch
09:00–10:00	Thomas Erlank – <i>Resilience in Opera Singers: Recovering from Workplace Trauma During the COVID-19 Pandemic</i>	Suikerbosch

10:00–11:00	Prof Johan Snyman – <i>Power, ethics, and Well-being: A Talk on the Vicissitudes of Well-Being as a Moral Concept Illustrated by Operatic Characters as Popularization of some Moral Concepts</i>	Suikerbosch
11:00–11:30	Mid-morning Coffee/Tea Break	Suikerbosch
11:30–12:30	Dr Michelle Pretorius – <i>A contemporary portrayal and perception of an icon in song as a representation of the past: Judy Garland's 'Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas' in the 21st century</i>	Suikerbosch
12:30–13:30	Lunch	Dining Area
13:30–15:00	André Schwartz – Musical Theatre Stagecraft Masterclasses	Chapel
15:00–15:30	Afternoon Coffee/Tea Break	Suikerbosch
15:30–17:30	NO CHAPEL USE (Set-up for Inaugural Lecture)	—
17:30–18:30	Prof Conroy Cupido – Inaugural Lecture: <i>Singing and Well-being, exploring applications towards flourishing</i> (RSVP only)	Chapel
18:30 onward	Reception	Chapel Garden and Suikerbosch

Day 3: Friday, 13 June

Time	Session	Venue
08:30–09:00	Welcome Coffee/Tea	Suikerbosch
09:00–10:00	Dr Antoinette Olivier – <i>Offering extended support and care throughout the recovery journey from vocal strain</i>	Suikerbosch
10:00–11:00	Panel Discussion – <i>Encouraging research-engaged teaching among voice teachers, composers, and collaborative pianists</i>	Suikerbosch

11:00–11:30	<i>Mid-morning Coffee/Tea Break</i>	<i>Suikerbosch</i>
11:30–12:30	Dr Laetitia Orlandi – <i>Connecting with the divine: An autoethnographic exploration of spiritual music-making experiences</i>	Suikerbosch
12:30–13:30	Dr Carole Blankenship/Dr Sarah Holman – KEYNOTE: <i>Why NATS? Why now?</i>	Suikerbosch
13:30–14:30	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Dining Area</i>
14:30–15:00	Depart for Lekwena (Game Drive)	Shuttle Area
15:00 onward	Game Drive (RSVP only)	Lekwena Wildlife Estate

DAY 1

Prof Chris van Rhyn



Title: The construction of White African-ness in Priaulx Rainier's Art Songs

Biography:

Chris holds BMus, BMus (Honours), MMus and PhD degrees from Stellenbosch University. He is an Associate Professor of Music Theory and Composition at North-West University and the Director of the research entity Musical Arts in South Africa: Resources and Applications. His research focuses on the works of South African and other African composers of art music (score analysis, critical theory and philosophy), with a special interest in the British-South African composer Priaulx Rainier. Chris is also engaged in practice-based research in Composition, with a focus on electronic music and interdisciplinary engagement in the Visual Arts. Chris has presented research papers at conferences in South Africa, Serbia, Ireland, Chile, the United Kingdom, the United States and Germany. He has published articles and reviews in *South African Music Studies*, *Musicus*, *Critical Arts*, *Musicology Australia*, *Perspectives of New Music*, the *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, the *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift* and the *World New Music Magazine*, and a book chapter in *Ritualised Belonging: Musicing and Spirituality in the South African Context* (Peter Lang Verlag). Chris's compositions have been performed locally and abroad, including Harvard University's Paine Hall in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and at the World New Music Days in Johannesburg. He has been a visiting lecturer at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, and has presented guest lectures or seminars at Stellenbosch (SA), Harvard (US) and Lincoln (UK) Universities. Chris represented NewMusicSA, the South African chapter of the International Society for Contemporary Music, as a delegate at their annual assemblies in Slovakia, Austria and Poland. Chris is an Associate Editor for the US-based journal *Perspectives of New Music*.

and guest edited an edition on Africa. He holds a Y2 rating from South Africa's National Research Foundation.

Presentation:

The composer Priaulx Rainier (1903-1986) was born in Howick in the British colony of Natal, now the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal, which encompasses the Zulu Kingdom. She moved to England at age 20 to pursue violin studies but turned to composition after injuries from an accident robbed her of her livelihood as a violin teacher. Rainier wrote seven art songs or song cycles for solo voice with accompaniment: *Three Greek Epigrams for Soprano Voice and Piano* (1937), *Fair is the Water* for soprano and piano (1938), *Dance of the Rain* for tenor or soprano and guitar (1947), *Ubunzima* for tenor or soprano and guitar (1948), *Bee Oracles* for tenor or high baritone, solo flute, oboe, violin, cello and harpsichord (1969), *Vision and Prayer* for tenor and piano (1973) and *Prayers from the Ark* (1947-75) for tenor and harp. Despite emigrating at a relatively young age, it was suggested that Zulu music and the natural environment surrounding her childhood home significantly influenced Rainier's works. These influences are said to have unconsciously manifested in her compositions rather than being explicit emulations of Zulu music. Such statements potentially free the (White African) composer from allegations of appropriation and is perhaps a clever marketing ploy to carve out a niche in a rather saturated compositional scene compared to her country of birth. Suppose one considers the contemporary UK-based White South African composer Robert Fokkens's statement that he hopes his music suggests he is not European (to give only one example). In that case, one may conclude that at least one of his goals is to write music that displays a White African musical identity. If one retroactively applies my conclusion here to the statements regarding the Africanness of Rainier's compositions, it brings forth the question of how she aimed to musically display such an identity. In this paper, I will explain musical characteristics in Rainier's art songs—where relevant—that could potentially be considered White musical Africanisms through music-theoretical analysis; by extension, these analyses should contribute to an understanding of what a White African musical identity could be.

Prof Waldo Weyer



Title: Enhancing the engagement with contemporary repertoire: a deep reading of In Transit by Jaco van der Merwe

Biography:

Waldo began piano studies at the age of eight and shortly after, he started to accompany choirs while still in primary school. He appeared on the honorary roll of UNISA's performance examinations on several occasions, including the final examination, for which he won the Robert Clough scholarship. He was invited by the SABC at the age of seventeen to record for the radio programme *Ons jeug maak musiek*. Waldo enrolled for a BMus degree at the North-West University in 1991 to study piano with Prof Gerhard Koornhof. He majored in piano performance, music history, pedagogy and mathematics and received several scholarships as a student. Having passed the ABRSM Grade 8 examination with highest distinction, Waldo was awarded an international scholarship to study at the Royal Academy of Music in London where he completed a BMus degree in piano performance under Hamish Milne and Patsy Toh and also obtained the LRAM with honours. On his return to South Africa, Waldo obtained a BMus *cum laude* at the North-West University, the UNISA Performance Licentiate with distinction and completed a MMus degree in piano performance, *cum laude* in 2004 under Truida van der Walt and Prof Bertha Spies. He participated in master classes with Helmut Deutsch (Austria), Joseph Banowetz (USA), Frank Heneghan (Ireland), Thomas Hecht (NZ), Timothy Ehlen (USA) and Caroline Oltmanns (USA). In 2007, Waldo also performed in master classes at Princeton University (USA) presented by Ilya Itin of the Golandsky Institute. He often receives great critical acclaim as chamber musician and as an accompanist at arts festivals in Grahamstown and Potchefstroom as well as in Mimi Coertse's *An die Musik Lieder* series. In 2005 and 2006, Waldo served as an official accompanist during the National and International UNISA Singing Competitions, and performances with orchestra include concerti

with the *Pro Musica* orchestra and the former COSA (Chamber Orchestra of South Africa). He recently released a recording on his YouTube channel of miniature pieces for violin and piano with his colleague, Prof. Piet Koornhof (violin). Waldo obtained a DMus in piano performance in 2014 and is an Associate Professor in Piano and Piano Pedagogy. He is also a postgraduate supervisor focusing on practice-based and practice-led research and has delivered papers nationally and internationally on topics such as pianism, learning theories, and philosophies of interpretation.

Presentation:

This paper aims to provide insights into the performance practice of *In Transit*, a song cycle by South African composer Jaco van der Merwe, advocating for its inclusion in the broader classical vocal canon. I will address practice-based considerations for both singers and pianists to achieve a well-integrated and expressive interpretation of each song. The poems by Joan Hambidge will be analysed briefly to understand the poet's intent and historical and cultural context. Background will also be provided on Hambidge as a significant literary figure in South Africa. By discussing examples from a live recording of the song cycle by myself and baritone, Jacques Imbrailo, I will continue this exploration by illustrating how specific musical devices underline the poetic dimensions of the cycle. To maintain stylistic authenticity the focus will be to explain how contemporary elements were integrated into the composition as a whole. Furthermore, the collaboration between both parties (singer and pianist) will be addressed to ensure a convincing map of the cycle's emotional journey and to maintain dramatic intensity throughout a performance. *In Transit* is a cycle that will benefit greatly from a deep reading; a multifaceted approach to achieve a balanced interpretation in terms of textual and musical expression, vocal technique and pianism. Finally, by bridging tradition and innovation, this presentation is an attempt to position contemporary repertoire in relation to familiar classical works that may help audiences to connect and engage with new music on a more meaningful level.

Dr Eulandri Venter



Title: Snippets from 10 Afrikaans art songs as vocal exercises for classical voice training

Biography:

Eulandri Venter is a South African-born, Afrikaans-speaking soprano, classical voice lecturer, and vocal pedagogue. She is passionate about helping South African singers discover their voices in creative ways and has been teaching classical voice and vocal pedagogy at the University of Pretoria since 2016. Aspects of voice science and vocology, such as semi-occluded vocal tract exercises and kinaesthetic singing tools, underscore her teaching practices. Eulandri completed her MMus in Vocal Performance and her DMus in Musicology, both at UP under the supervision of Prof Hanli Stapela. Her doctoral research centred around Afrikaans art songs as teaching material within a repertoire-based approach to teaching classical singing. Workshops using Afrikaans art songs as a means to make practical vocal pedagogy accessible is a prominent aspect of Eulandri's academic career. Other research interests include phonetic transcriptions of Afrikaans art songs, kinaesthetic singing tools, singing and motor learning, and time management interventions in the voice studio. Eulandri enjoys performing and is involved in concerts with small ensembles in and around Gauteng. She has performed roles such as Papagena from Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* (Brooklyn Theatre) and Lucy from *Heggie's Again: An opera in 10 minutes* (MMus Recital). Upcoming performances for 2025 include the role of Frasquita in Bizet's *Carmen* at the Wakkerstroom Music Festival and at the Joburg Theatre, both as a member of *Sempre Opera*.

Presentation:

The Afrikaans art song is a genre of vocal music for solo voice with piano accompaniment which is set to texts in Afrikaans. The genre originated in South Africa just over a century ago and it has been researched from various perspectives. However, there is a significant

research gap in research on the Afrikaans art song conducted from a practical voice training perspective. Such pedagogical investigation of the songs is necessary because (a) they are still prescribed to students today, as seen in the examination curriculum at a number of South African tertiary institutions, (b) the genre remains listed as a separate category in Eisteddfods and competitions throughout the country, and (c) prominent South African composers including Niel van der Watt, Hendrik Hofmeyr, and Martin Watt still contribute noteworthy repertoire to the genre. Voice teachers therefore need to know how to use repertoire from this genre to teach their singing students. This presentation is a practical step towards bridging a portion of the research gap and providing voice teachers with new and unique material to use in their studios when working on vocal technique. From a pedagogical investigation conducted as part of my doctoral research, a total of 96 potential vocal exercises taken from the vocal lines of ten Afrikaans art songs were documented and categorised. Each song contains unique structural characteristics appropriate to target various principles of vocal technique. These vocal line exercises serve to address general aspects of a classical vocal technique in a systematic manner, in a similar fashion to how the renowned voice pedagogue Richard Miller approached voice training. These exercises are melodically and rhythmically driven and contain unique Afrikaans-language sounds that could facilitate vocal and musical development when used as technical exercises. During this presentation, the execution of some of these exercises will be demonstrated and explained from a literature-based and teacher-informed perspective, while drawing on audience participation. Semi-occluded vocal tract exercises and kinesthetic singing tools will also be implemented during the execution of the vocal line exercises to demonstrate the incorporation of voice science and vocology principles.

Kate Watson



Title: Compositional diversity in South African art songs: A lecture recital

Biography:

Kate Watson completed her Bachelor of Music (2021) and Master of Music (2024) degrees in piano performance *cum laude* at the University of Pretoria School of the Arts. A versatile performer, she has earned ABRSM Gr 8s for piano, flute and voice, all with distinction. Kate has excelled in various national competitions and festivals and has received bursaries from the University of Pretoria, UNISA and SASMT. She is a singing student of Emma Renzi and has received vocal masterclasses from Rachelle Jonck, Marelize Gerber, German collaborative pianist Daniel Heide, and American soprano Carol Chapman. Kate also attended *Lieder* lectures at the Royal Academy of Music, lectured by Richard Stokes. Kate's Masters research discussing South African composer Amy Crankshaw's chamber opera *The Apothecary* has led her to present at the 2023 and 2024 SASRIM conferences and the 2024 NATS conference.

Presentation:

This lecture recital seeks to explore the musical and poetic diversity of South African art songs by exploring compositions by the following acclaimed South African composers: S le Roux Marais, SBP Mnomiya, Arnold van Wyk, Hendrik Hofmeyr, Amy Crankshaw and Motshwane Pege. Discussions of a composer's art song style may include exploring melodic contours, the composer's musical influences, chord progressions and extremes in register (Viljoen & Drennan, 2013). Another important aspect of art song analysis is exploring the

themes of the cycle and the interaction of the music and text (Claassen, 2012). Although the art song genre stems from European musical traditions, South African art songs have developed to encompass South Africa's official languages and a variety of musical influences (de Villiers, 2023). Several of these features will be discussed throughout the lecture recital to demonstrate each South African composer's unique style. Specific art songs have been curated to display the stylistic variety present in the South African art song genre. The lecture recital includes pieces from song cycles such as *Vier Weemoedige Liedjies* (van Wyk, 1934) and *Die stil avontuur* (Hofmeyr, 2003). More recent works, such as extracts from *End of Season* (Crankshaw, 2022) and a newly commissioned work (Pege, 2025) will also be performed. The songs will demonstrate three of South Africa's official languages, namely isiZulu, Afrikaans and English.

References

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- Forbay, B. M. (2011). *Afrikaans art song: A stylistic study and performance guide*. University of Cincinnati.
- Viljoen, N., & Drennan, I. (2013). Tonality and texture in Arnold van Wyk's Vier weemoedige liedjies: musical, poetic and personal considerations. *Acta Academica*, 45(2), 228-261.
- De Villiers, N. (2023). On Migration, Exile, and Cosmopolitanism: A Brief Survey of South African Art Song. *Journal of Singing*, 80(2), 145-156.

Dr Bronwen Forbay



Title: Classical Masterclasses

Biography:

Dr. Bronwen Forbay, a South African Fulbright scholar, is a renowned soprano and esteemed voice professor. Described by *Opera Magazine* as having ‘a powerful, radiant, timbrally beautiful, and balanced’ voice, Forbay has earned critical acclaim for her operatic performances. Her roles include Mozart's Queen of the Night (*The Magic Flute*) with Wolf Trap Opera, Eugene Opera, and Tulsa Opera, as well as Orasia (Telemann's *Orpheus*), Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*), Velmyra (*Wading Home*), Violetta (*La traviata*), and the title role in *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Cape Town Opera. She has also performed in concert works including Bach's *B Minor Mass* (Santa Fe), Handel's *Creation* (Cincinnati), Mozart's *Requiem* (Italy), Mendelssohn's *Elijah* (Dallas), Beethoven's *9th Symphony* (Plano), and more.

An accomplished recitalist, Forbay has performed across South Africa, the U.S., and Europe, including at the American Cathedral in Paris and with Dr. Stephen Pierce at the University of Southern California. She has been a finalist in several competitions, receiving the 2007 Standard Bank Young Artist Award and winning the 2005 UNISA Southern African Voice Competition. As an educator, Forbay is a highly respected adjudicator and clinician, with

many of her students succeeding in NATS and TMTA competitions. She was selected for the NATS Intern Program in 2013 and has presented at numerous prestigious conferences.

In 2023-2024, she performed as a featured soloist with the Johannesburg and KwaZulu-Natal Philharmonic Orchestras and Greenville Symphony Orchestra. Recent performances include a recital with organist Dr. Charles Tompkins and the role of Contessa Almaviva in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* with the Greenville Symphony Orchestra.

Dr. Forbay is an Associate Professor of Voice at Furman University, where she also serves as President of the Black Faculty and Staff Association (BFSA). She has taught at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, University of Mary-Hardin Baylor, Sam Houston State University, and McLennan Community College. Holding degrees from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Manhattan School of Music, Southern Methodist University, and the University of Cincinnati, Forbay is the first South African woman to earn a DMA in Voice Performance. Her academic contributions include co-authoring articles on Afrikaans Art Song Literature, which will be published by Oxford University Press in 2025.

Students accompanied by Prof Tinus Botha, Ms Jana Mathee, and Prof Waldo Weyer

Dr Sarah Holman



Title: KEYNOTE: Conveying Critical Collaboration: Guidance and Counsel for the Voice Practitioner

Co-presenter: Dr Carole Blankenship

Biography:

Mezzo-Soprano Sarah Holman, a passionate vocal artist and educator, is a Professor of Voice and Opera at Wheaton College Conservatory. Her captivating mezzo-soprano voice in the Dean Wilder Singers was heard throughout the United States, South Korea, and Mexico in sacred and secular concerts. She has appeared on stages across the country with regional opera companies, portraying diverse characters ranging from the mournful Mother in *The Consul* to the tragic Elizabeth Proctor in *The Crucible*. Her concert repertoire spans centuries, from Baroque masterworks by Bach and Handel to the Romantic symphonies of Mahler. In 2024, she released an album of newly commissioned sacred art songs featuring works by Wheaton College poets and composers. Her dedication to the vocal arts extends beyond performance, having served most recently as the National Association of Teachers of Singing International Region Governor, where she has fostered connections between voice professionals worldwide.

Presentation:

As seasoned voice professionals with several decades of experience as performers and studio teachers, Blankenship and Holman will provide guidance and counsel for new and established teachers of singing. Voice studios are often silos of knowledge, shrouded in mystical secrets with a magical voice teacher, who denounces any outside critique of the

singers with whom they work. In recent years, a new collaborative attitude has begun to emerge among studio teachers. The advantages of learning from and with each other have produced creative performances, residencies, and helped to establish the studio teacher as a Teaching Artist. In this session, they will convey practical and critical tenets for voice practitioners in the private and academic studio that are engaging, energizing, and enduring.

DAY 2

Thomas Erlank



Title: Resilience in Opera Singers: Recovering from Workplace Trauma During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Biography:

Thomas Erlank is a lecturer at North-West University in Potchefstroom, South Africa, where he teaches Vocal Pedagogy, Vocal Literature, Lyric Diction, and Applied Singing, in addition to supervising students. Currently pursuing a Doctorate in Music Performance, his research focuses on Music Performance Anxiety and its mitigation through Emotion Regulation strategies. Erlank holds a range of academic qualifications, including a Diploma in Practical Music from the University of Stellenbosch, a Graduate Diploma in Vocal Performance, a Master of Performance in Opera Vocal Performance, and an Artist Diploma in Opera from the Royal College of Music in London, UK. He is a member of the Board of the National Association of Teachers of Singing South Africa Chapter, where he oversees membership recruitment and manages social media profiles. Since returning to South Africa, Erlank has contributed to the local music scene by presenting masterclasses at institutions such as the Cape Town Songmakers' Guild, Cape Town Opera, the *Neues Lied* Festival competition, and Stellenbosch University. He was also a jury member for the *Neues Lied* Festival competition in 2022. In 2023, Erlank presented a paper titled *Exploring How Emotion Regulation Strategies Could Mitigate Music Performance Anxiety Through Action Research* at the NATS South Africa Chapter's inaugural conference. Throughout his career, Erlank has been awarded several prestigious scholarships, including the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust Bursary, the Gisela

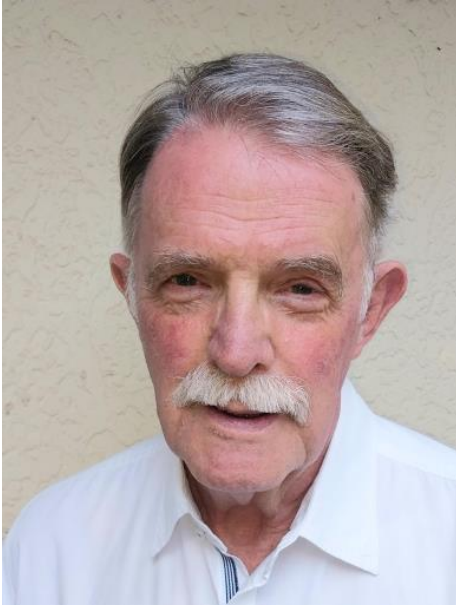
Gledhill Scholarship, and the Annie Grice Grant. He was also the winner of the Mable Quick Singing competition at the Stellenbosch University Conservatory. Erlank has an extensive performance history, having appeared in concerts, operas, and oratorios across South Africa, Europe, and Asia. After completing his postgraduate studies, he joined the Zürich Opera Company as a soloist, performing a broad repertoire that includes works by composers such as Pergolesi, Handel, Beethoven, Monteverdi, and Wagner. Notable performances include Hans Zender's *Winterreise* and Poulenc's *Le Chevalier* from *Dialogue des Carmélites*. Throughout his career, he has collaborated with renowned conductors and directors, including Gianandrea Noseda, Markus Poshner, Francesco Ivan Ciampa, and Andreas Homoki. Erlank's diverse expertise and international experience contribute to his standing as a respected educator, performer, and scholar in the field of vocal performance.

Presentation:

The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 created an unprecedented disruption to global society, including the closure of theatres worldwide (Holmes et al., 2021). As a professional opera singer, this period marked a profound sense of loss regarding my purpose and place in society. On top of this, I became collateral damage in a #MeToo incident at my workplace, which had a lasting negative impact on both my career and personal life. The experience was psychologically traumatic, as defined by Straussner and Calnan (2014), who describe trauma as emotionally painful or distressing experiences that overwhelm an individual's capacity to cope. This prolonged exposure to trauma from early 2020 through mid-2023 further compounded the distress. Resilience, described as an ongoing process of adjustment when faced with adversity (Nel, 2020), became a focal point in my recovery. According to Graber (2015), resilience plays a crucial role in psychological adjustment after sustained trauma, leading to personal development and well-being. My primary research interest is to explore how resilience facilitated my recovery in this specific context of trauma and workplace distress. Notably, there is a gap in research regarding resilience among opera singers, particularly in relation to recovering from workplace trauma during the pandemic. While resilience has been explored in classical musicians (Arbinaga, 2023; Ascenso, 2022), opera singers' specific experiences remain under-researched, particularly considering the #MeToo movement and high-profile cases such as Plácido Domingo and David Daniels (Berumen & Ibarra, 2019). This highlights the need for more focused research on how opera singers navigate the psychological aftermath of such events. This autoethnographic study investigated the role of resilience in my recovery, framed through my personal experience as

a professional opera singer in a European opera house during and after the traumatic #MeToo incident. Autoethnography, which blends personal experience with cultural context (Chang, 2008), allowed me to examine the resilience process within the specific culture of opera singers working in European opera houses during the pandemic. This research aimed to fill a critical gap in the literature and contribute to understanding the psychological resilience of opera singers facing trauma in their professional environments.

Prof Johan Snyman



Title: Power, Ethics, and Well-being: A Talk on the Vicissitudes of Well-Being as a Moral Concept Illustrated by Operatic Characters

Biography:

Prof Johan Snyman is a retired professor of Philosophy, formerly of the University of Johannesburg. He studied at the former University of Potchefstroom, Rand Afrikaans University and the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany. Having studied in Frankfurt, aesthetics, Adorno (with his wide knowledge of music) and Critical Theory became, philosophically speaking, second nature to him. But a good dollop of Kant and Beethoven provides some idealist(ic) balance in his make-up, together with teaching the gamut of Philosophy from Hesiod to Habermas according to the exacting demands for trendy Philosophy at an Afrikaans university. If he found time to write (on Sunday afternoons, public holidays, and during most school holidays), the results were published in South African, Czech (!) and English journals, mainly on Adorno, Kant and general aesthetics, and the occasional small treatise on ethics. He currently enjoys gardening, catching up on the literature he has referred to in his published work, and watching his granddaughter growing up.

Presentation:

Aristotle is the father of the concept of 'the good life'. The major tenets of his view on a good or morally well lived life are flourishing, education and an enabling community. I will fuse Aristotle with Kant's moral maxims – 'never treat other people always as means, but as goals

in themselves' and 'always act in such a way that your actions can become a universal rule for humankind' in order to sketch a philosophical background for dealing with how power is abused in society. A brief survey will show some different ways in which these notions could be understood. These understandings manifest themselves in culture, and a few examples from music will illustrate these various understandings when they deal with the issue of power – a popular theme of dramas and *dramma per musica*. The focus will be on the struggle with power such as Rigoletto (Verdi), Florestan (Beethoven) and Turandot/Calaf (Puccini).

Dr Michelle Pretorius



Title: A contemporary portrayal and perception of an icon in song as a representation of the past: Judy Garland's 'Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas' in the 21st century

Biography:

Dr Michelle Pretorius is a South African singer, actress, researcher and lecturer. She has recently been appointed as Senior Lecturer in Contemporary Commercial Music at NWU School of Music, after returning from the UK, where she held the role of programme leader of the BA Musical Theatre at the University of Chester. Michelle holds a BMus from the University of Pretoria, an MMus from the South African College of Music, an MA Musical Theatre from the Guildford School of Acting in the UK, and a PhD in Musicology from Wits University. She is a passionate researcher within the studies of theatre, audience, celebrity and fandom. In 2024, Michelle also did a TEDx talk in the UK, entitled 'Breaking the Us and Them Barrier'. Michelle's performance credits include *Sister Act* the musical at Joburg Theatre (2015), the role of Ursula the Sea Witch in the production of *The Little Mermaid* at the People's Theatre in Johannesburg (2015) for which she received a nomination for a Naledi Award for best actress in a children's musical, and the Afrikaans pantomime, *Sneeuwitjie*, at the Marcealous Theatre at Emperor's Palace in Johannesburg (2016). After relocating to the United Kingdom, she took part in the development of a new musical, *The Crocodile of Old Kang Pow*, with Bunker Theatre Productions in London, in the workshop as the role of Momolow (2017). In 2021, she performed in *South African Stories Through Song* at the Ludlow Fringe

Festival in the UK. As a director, she directed *Carrie the Musical*, *Ruthless the Musical*, and her own song cycle *UnSeen* at the Walker Theatre in Shrewsbury in the UK between 2022 and 2024. She also directed and performed in *Fred the Musical*, a new work, at the Liverpool Theatre festival in 2023. Furthermore, she performed in her own musical song cycle, *UnSeen* (for which she is the lyricist and book writer) at the Arena Theatre in Wolverhampton for the LEAP Festival.

Presentation:

Certain songs become inseparably linked to the icons who sang them for the first time. These songs then become representations of the events and attitudes of their time. Just as the song sung by the iconic Miriam Makeba, 'Qongqothwane (Click Song)', represents a specific time and attitude in the history of South Africa, so Judy Garland's 'Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas' provides a window to American attitudes during WWII. This song, sung by Garland in the classic Hollywood Musical film *Meet Me in St. Louis* in 1944, is haunting in its intensity but was a symbol of hope and togetherness in a time when many young men were away at war. The repurposing of this song in twenty-first-century films highlights Garland's unbreakable connection with this song, making her persona a vital part of the understanding of the perception of the original recording. In this paper, the underlying message and perception of this song and Garland as a symbol and icon are explored within two particular films, *The Monuments Men* (2014) and *The Family Stone* (2005). Garland's crafted persona as an American icon presents her as a personification of innocence, tragedy and triumph: three states that are simultaneously observed in her performance of 'Merry Little Christmas' in 1944. This allows for an interesting dynamic in how her star persona plays into the reading of 'Merry Little Christmas' from a twenty-first-century perspective. The perceptions of Garland in song have been utilised in various films as the pin upon which a particular narrative element hinges. *The Monuments Men* (2014) draws on the image created in *Meet Me in St. Louis*, to resurrect a sense of American patriotism through 'Merry Little Christmas' and Garland's connection to it as an American icon. This gives us, as a twenty-first-century audience, insight into the function and experience of this song in 1944, whereas, in *The Family Stone* (2005), Garland's unique relationship with suffering and her triumph over this in song is utilised as a narrative element. This experience can be more vividly felt through a twenty-first-century perspective, when we look at Garland's turbulent life retrospectively.

André Schwartz



Title: Musical Theatre Stagecraft Masterclasses

Biography:

South African-born Andre Schwartz is one of this country's leading and best-known entertainers. Andre matriculated in Johannesburg at Hoërskool Linden. He studied law at the University of Stellenbosch, as well as receiving vocal coaching under internationally renowned Professor George van der Spuy. As a recording artist, he has released 17 albums, of which many have reached gold status. The albums vary between Afrikaans, Pop, Big Band Jazz, and Musicals.

Andre composed and wrote lyrics to many of the songs that have now become national property. His musical theatre experiences include - Joseph in *Joseph and his Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, Jesus in *Jesus Christ Superstar*, Frederick in *The Pirates of Penzance*, The Phantom in *The Phantom of the Opera*, and Captain von Trapp in *The Sound of Music*. He carries the Andrew Lloyd Webber seal of approval for the latter.

Andre is a highly accomplished TV presenter with cooking programs being his forte. He has presented more than 60 TV programs that are food and lifestyle related. Andre also hosted his own game show.

He is currently touring and performing with a variety of productions:

- *Any dream will Do – My Pad met Webber*: Aardklop best musical production nomination. two Naledi theatre nominations
- *Grensloos*: With Coenie de Villiers
- *Brel, Piaf 'n Kabaret*: With Amanda Strydom; four Naledi theatre nominations.
- *Merry Krismis Elvis*: Kanna nomination
- *Gesigte*: Aardklop and Fiesta nominations
- *Katrien, die King en die Kween*: With Elzabé Zietsman and new music written by David Kramer.

He is looking forward to engaging with the learners during the NATS conference. Let's tell the story.

Students are accompanied by Dr Catrien Wentink

Inaugural Lecture: Prof Conroy Cupido



Title: Inaugural Lecture: Singing and Well-being, exploring applications towards flourishing

Biography:

Prof Conroy Cupido completed a music degree at Stellenbosch University, a master's in music degree, and an Artist Certificate at Southern Methodist University in Dallas Texas, and he was the first South African to complete a Doctorate in Vocal Performance, which was conferred at the University of North Texas. In 2024, he was awarded the Masters of Arts in Positive Psychology from North-West University with distinction. He has performed roles in operas, oratorios and has sung in many recitals in South Africa, the United States and in Europe. He has also been published in peer-reviewed journals. His research mainly concerns music, emotion, positive psychology, and well-being. He is an NRF C-2 rated researcher, president of the South Africa Chapter of the National Association of Teachers of Singing, a Director on the Board of Cape Town Opera, and he is the Director of the School of Music at North-West University.

During his studies abroad, he was awarded the Sue Johnson Prize for Best Male Opera Singer, and he was a finalist in the National Opera Association Voice Competition and the Shreveport Opera Singer of the Year Competition. He was awarded many merit-based scholarships for international study, including the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust Bursary, the National Arts Council of South Africa Award, the Schollmeier Foundation Bursary, the Dean's Camerata Opera Scholarship from the University of North Texas, and the Bruce Foote Foundation

Bursary. He is currently an Associate Professor at North-West University and teaches Applied Voice, Vocal Pedagogy, Vocal Literature, and Italian and French diction. His students have won major competitions such as the ATKV *Musiqanto* Competition, the Phillip Moore Competition, the Mimi Coertse Singing Competition, and the UNISA National Singing Competition, and they have also been finalists and semi-finalists in the Belvedere International Singing Competition, the Hertogenbosch Singing Competition in Amsterdam, The Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, the Mirjam Helin International Singing Competition in Finland, the Galina Vishnevskaya International Opera Singers Competition, the Stenhammar Competition in Sweden, the SAMRO Singing Competition and the Emmerich Smola Förderpreis Competition in Germany. They have performed at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, La Scala Milan, Opera North (UK), Utah Opera (US), the Staatsoper Unter den Linden in Berlin, Wuppertal Opera House, Theater Chemnitz, the Staatstheater Meiningen, Cape Town Opera, and in the Nordrhein-Westfalen Opera Studio in Germany. In 2013, he was awarded the Prestigious Award for Teaching Excellence from North-West University, and in 2017, he was awarded two Institutional Research Excellence Awards for Creative Outputs (IRECO). He is a Director on the Board of Cape Town Opera, where he chairs the Strategy Committee, and he has also served as Interim Vice-Chair. His productions at the Aardklop National Arts Festival have been nominated for a Fiësta Award on two occasions. He was appointed as the first president of the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) South Africa Chapter in 2022.

Presentation:

This inaugural lecture explores the transformative potential of music in fostering emotional well-being, personal transcendence, and self-actualised teaching. Drawing from research in positive psychology, music and well-being, the presentation examines how musical engagement nurtures human flourishing and meaning making. The lecture highlights music's capacity to transcend the ordinary, offering a reflective lens through which we can understand ourselves and our connection to others. Featuring live performances by students and staff of the NWU School of Music, the event offers a synthesis of scholarly insight and artistic expression. Hosted by the Faculty of Humanities and the Executive Dean, this official NWU event invites all conference attendees to RSVP and share in this celebration of music's power to elevate and transform.

DAY 3

Dr Antoinette Olivier



Title: Offering extended support and care throughout the recovery journey from vocal strain

Biography:

Dr Antoinette Olivier studied music at the University of the Witwatersrand and completed a Master's in music (*cum laude*) and PhD in visual and performing arts with music at NWU. Before joining the NWU as a full time lecturer, she was a member of Pact Opera in Pretoria as company manager before joining the Opera Chorus. She furthered her singing studies in Los Angeles, and with Emma Renzi. She is a recipient of numerous NWU awards such as three individual awards in 2015, 2016 and 2018 by NWU for Excellence in Music Performance for Creative outputs. In 2015 Antoinette was awarded the NWU for Excellence in Teaching. In collaboration with her colleagues of the voice department at the NWU School of Music, they were recently nominated by KykNet for a Fiësta award for the RSG *Dis Opera* production which involved all the singing students at the Aardklop and KKNK arts festivals. They jointly each received an award for Excellence in Creative Outputs by NWU in 2018. Furthermore, she has served as adjudicator on the Mimi Coertse voice competitions as well as on the DVD screening panel at the Unisa National and International voice competitions. Antoinette is a regular external examiner for practical and academic post-graduate studies at tertiary

institutions in South Africa. She is a member of The South African Society of Music Teachers (SASMT), the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS), and the International Society for Music Education (ISME). She presented papers at international conferences and has published in academic journals such as *Koers* and *SAJCH*. More recently, Antoinette presented a paper at the first NATS South Africa Chapter conferences in Stellenbosch (2023) and Gqeberha (2024). In 2024, she acted as adjudicator for NATS International Region student auditions in the primary round.

Presentation:

In a studio setting, a vocal pedagogue can effectively assess and address a singer's vocal challenges, ensuring healthy vocal development. However, a teacher's role is not confined to direct instruction; it also includes providing ongoing support and guidance beyond the studio. This presentation shares my journey in 2024 of offering vocal and emotional support to a young novice singer—whom I had never met—suffering from severe vocal fold strain. The lack of proper guidance from trained musical directors during rehearsals for a student musical production worsened the issue, ultimately necessitating medical intervention.

Keywords: Vocal strain, vocal health, challenges, advisory and emotional support.

Panel Discussion

Title: Encouraging research-engaged teaching among voice teachers, composers, and collaborative pianists

Presentation:

This panel discussion brings together voice teachers, composers, and collaborative pianists to explore ways of fostering research-informed teaching practices within the South African context. The session aims to share practical ideas on how to integrate research into our daily teaching and artistic work, enhance our pedagogical craft, and build a stronger community of reflective practitioners. Panellists and attendees are invited to exchange experiences, highlight innovative approaches, and consider strategies for encouraging more active research engagement among voice professionals. This collaborative space seeks to inspire dialogue and support the growth of a vibrant and connected artistic-academic network.

Dr Laetitia Orlandi



Title: Connecting with the divine: An autoethnographic exploration of spiritual music-making experiences

Biography:

Laetitia Orlandi started her early piano studies with Elsabe Feldtmann. She completed the Doctor of Music with Music Performance degree at North-West University with Prof Liesl van der Merwe as her promotor. As a graduate of the University of Pretoria, Laetitia completed her BMus, BMus (Hons), and MMus degrees in Performing Arts *cum laude* as well as the UNISA Teacher's and Performer's Licentiates in Piano, Chamber Music, and Vocal Accompaniment under the tutelage of Prof Ella Fourie. She is the recipient of numerous awards and scholarships and has received Masterclasses from Andrzej Jasinski, Joseph Banowetz, and Pascal Rogé. As a répétiteur in the Department of Performing Arts at the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), she accompanied staged productions of more than 17 operas. Laetitia acted as an official accompanist for various national and international events, such as the 5th and 6th UNISA International Voice Competitions and the 35th International Hans Gabor Belvedere Singing Competition. She served as chairperson of the shadow jury for the 5th and 6th UNISA National Piano Competitions, the 13th & 14th UNISA International Piano Competitions, as jury coordinator for the 3rd UNISA National Strings Competition, and as an adjudicator for the 2022 UNISA South African Music Scholarship Competition and the 7th UNISA National Piano Competition (2023). Laetitia regularly performs as a collaborative pianist. Highlights include *The Carnival of the Animals* (Saint-Saëns) and *Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 7* (Clara Schumann) with the Gauteng Philharmonic Orchestra. Laetitia is currently Assistant Dean (Teaching & Learning) in the Faculty of Arts & Design at TUT, an at-large board member of the National Association of Teachers of Singing, South Africa Chapter (SANATS),

and a Steering Committee Member of the International Network for Music Spirituality and Wellbeing (MSW). She resides in Pretoria with her husband and their two teenage sons.

Presentation:

Although the investigation of spiritual music-making experiences has become increasingly more prevalent, the exploration of musicians' individualised music-making experiences remains largely underrepresented in the literature (Foxcroft 2014; Holmes & Holmes 2013; Orlandi 2021). Very few studies explore the spiritual music-making experiences of professional pianists (Orlandi 2021). Muncey (2005) emphasises the value of the individual's identity and narrative in research. Through this autoethnographic exploration, I aim to add my voice to broaden existing knowledge in this field of study. As a classically trained pianist from age five, I have more than 40 years of experience in solo and collaborative playing, teaching, and vocal coaching as a repetiteur. Through this autoethnographic exploration, I aim to take a holistic view of my experiences of a sense of connection to the divine during music-making. In this study, I made use of Muncey's (2005) four approaches, namely snapshot, artifact, metaphor, and journey. By employing these four techniques, I enhanced the credibility of my research by pre-empting the disjunction caused by fragmented memories (Chang 2016; Muncey 2005). In autoethnographic analysis, the premise is that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Our life stories are complex; therefore, our explorations must include various personal perspectives. To meet this requirement, snapshots and artifacts describe specific moments, while metaphors and journeys aim to sketch a holistic picture (Muncey 2005). By telling my story and adding my voice to the existing body of knowledge, I hope to create an enhanced awareness of the spiritual music-making experiences for professional pianists. In conceptualising this autoethnographic study, I intended to focus on specific stories of music-making experiences. However, the experience became an existential journey, discovering truths and unearthing new questions. Through analysing the threads of my journey as they emerged from the snapshot and artifact stories, several themes were woven together. These themes highlighted the important roles identity, meaning, flow, and connection play in my tapestry. Therefore, this autoethnographic exploration revealed that my music-making journey could not be separated from my existential journey and that both are deeply rooted in my spiritual journey. As the tapestry of my life continues to be woven, the journeys draw ever closer together, and my experiences of identity, meaning, connection, and transcendence begin to merge.

Dr Carole Blankenship



Title: KEYNOTE: Why NATS? Why now?

Co-presenter: Dr Sarah Holman

Biography:

Carole Choate Blankenship, soprano, is Professor of Music, and Chair of the Department of Music at Rhodes College, Memphis, Tennessee. Dr. Blankenship is a frequent performer of art song, chamber music, and oratorio. Additionally, she has performed solo recitals in Sintra, Portugal; Marktoberdorf, Germany; The Foundling Museum, London; The Cell Theatre, New York, NY; The American Legation in Tangier, Morocco; and on many other concert series. She has presented papers and lecture recitals at the University of Lisbon, Portugal; Queensland Conservatorium, Brisbane, Australia; The Royal College of Music, Stockholm, Sweden; and in the U.S. at Dartmouth and Providence Colleges and on a tour of the American Language Centers of Morocco (2019). Dr. Blankenship has taught voice masterclasses throughout the United States and in Australia. Carole's research is focused on the songs composed for the Composers Forum Laboratory in New York, 1935-1939, and the unpublished songs of Paul Frederic Bowles, 1910-1990. With Irene Herrmann (Executor of the Paul Bowles Music Estate), she co-edited two sets of songs by Paul Bowles for Classical Vocal Reprints and maintains research in American Song. Carole has served the National Association of Teachers of Singing in many positions including President of the Memphis Chapter (2002-2010), National Vice President for Auditions (2012-2016), President Elect (2018-2020), NATS National President (2020-2022), followed by Past President on the NATS Executive Board (2022-2024).

Presentation:

As visionary leaders within the National Association of Teachers of Singing, Holman and Blankenship have initiated numerous strategic elements that have significantly advanced and improved the association. This in-depth session will explore the latest developments and

valuable resources offered by NATS. They will delve into key areas, including repertoire selection strategies, recent discoveries in voice science, expanded student audition opportunities with international access, a plethora of professional development options, and the growing global alliance with fellow educators.

NOTES

