

Singers To Listen For

SINCE 2015, the Rotary Club of Wellington, NZ, has hosted a unique opportunity for outstanding young New Zealand singers to display their talent.

Held at St Andrews of the Terrace, international opera singer Rodney Macann helps design a program of highly accessible opera and lighter music excerpts to suit the voices of the talent taking part. The audience enjoys gourmet canapés before and after the concert, with singers available to talk about their music and hopes for the future.

Part of the evening sees a charity auction for an important cause, and last year a total of \$28,000 was raised

for the Gillies McIndoe Research Institute for cancer and the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation.

The event is now held in association with the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation. Dame Kiri has even lent her personal support by donating one of her oil paintings and the cover of her shooting script for *Downton Abbey* to be sold by auction.

All singers who took part in the event's first year have gone on to become prize winners in the Lexus Song Quest, with performer Benson Wilson winning the top prize. Benson has won many other awards since, including the 2018 Joan Sutherland Quest. From the second year, Jonathan

Abernethy, now with Australian Opera, and Sydney mezzo Anna Dowsley, were principal singers in the recent Opera New Zealand production of *The Mikado*. Two other singers have been accepted into the prestigious Kiri Program.

Beneficiaries include Rotary's centenary project Give Every Child a Future, which is immunising children in the Pacific. The Dame Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation will support the singers in their overseas studies and the new Wellington Children's Hospital will also be beneficiaries.

The 2019 event will take place on August 6. For more information, visit www.rcw.org.nz.



Manase Latu, left, and Natasha Wilson during the 2017 performance.