

## A 2022 Update for You!

After an incredibly busy and fulfilling year at the Royal College of Music, I think it's time (or even past time!) for an update. I'm writing this in my new flat in North West London, before I head off to audition #3 of the week!

But first, let me take you back to September 2021!

After a trip back to New Zealand that was sadly hampered by COVID, I headed back to London and straight into work. Over the past year I've been the tenor choral scholar at St John's Church Hyde Park. With just five of us in the choir, my first few weeks were a challenge after not singing in choirs for many years. It was wonderful, with full orchestras and ensembles at some carol services, as well as plenty of great chances to sing some fun solo music as well. My colleagues have been an absolute joy to work with, and the scholarship allowed me once again to live within walking distance of College. The St John's choir has now been boosted to eight members, and while I am no longer an official scholar, I still get to be part of the choir.

When College started up again in September, we went straight into rehearsals for *The Magic Flute*. I had the honour of playing Monostatos, the villain who in this production wasn't really a villain. It was so wonderful to get back into a rehearsal room and just play, particularly as this production really tore up the rule book. I was able to add a whole lot more substance to Monostatos, making him human, rather than some sort of nebulous evil sidekick. The production is available to watch on the [Royal College YouTube page](#).

The production also got a couple of nice reviews! In one, I was a 'surprisingly likeable Monostatos', and another said, "Harry Grigg's rascally Monostatos was similarly much more of a multi-dimensional character: tribute to both production and performance." How lovely!

After *Magic Flute* came the College's Opera Scenes, in which we performed a double serving of Britten. I got to revisit dear Albert from *Albert Herring* and had a blast as one of the mechanicals, Flute, in a hilarious scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. I was also lucky enough to take part in two masterclasses, one with renowned Baritone Sir Thomas Allen and



A post service stroll with fellow scholars Ed Jowle and Clover Kayne

the other with tenor Nicky Spence. I presented some Handel, Ginastera and Schubert and had such fun working with both of these absolute titans.



With my Pamina, Hyoyoung Kim

A lovely treat before Christmas was winning the Maureen Lehane Vocal Competition! It was the most bizarre experience. A week before the competition, my accompanist had to self isolate and my dear friend and collaborative pianist Lucy Colquhoun jumped in to save the day. The finals were pre-recorded, so the finalists spent a day at Jackdaws headquarters (they run the competition) in Somerset. Due to COVID, I

hadn't had the chance to meet many non-College singers, so it was a real treat to hang out with my phenomenal peers.

We recorded our 20 minute programmes in a small studio with three judges present, and that was it! We had to wait until it was aired on Facebook and YouTube two weeks later to find out the results. Waiting was absolute torture, and it was an incredible out of body experience watching myself compete, and then WIN!

2022 started with a snotty and coughy bang. At the beginning of February I was finally struck down with the dreaded COVID. My symptoms weren't bad, but it was such a nuisance to be stuck inside for ten days. However it took much longer than I thought it would to get my voice back, which was frustrating! And two days after getting out, I was in the semi finals for the Royal Overseas League Singing Competition. While it was not my best singing, I'm still proud of myself for being selected in the first place.

Once I returned to College, my first performance was for the 'Song Plus' Series. I sang in a delightful concert called 'Love loves to love love!' and had a chance to pull out some old favourites, do a bit of silly comedy and learn some new and interesting pieces.

In the second half of your second year at College you get to choose a stream, Song or Opera. After performing two fantastic opera scenes and a sizable operatic role in September, I chose the song option. It was exciting to explore Spanish, Swedish and Russian repertoire as well as languages I'm more familiar with (German, French, English). Only three other students took this

option, so we all got to sing in every class every week. We churned through so much amazing repertoire and I left College with a desire to explore even more song!

One of my most exciting projects of the past year was the chance to play some small roles in the UK Premiere of Rameau's *Castor et Pollux* part of the Rameau Project up in Oxford. I was completely new to Rameau and getting a chance to play in this space was so eye-opening. Rameau's music is so incredibly complex and an absolute joy (and challenge!) to sing, and I hope more of it comes my way.

Other concert work also came my way through the wonderful Josephine Baker Trust, a group designed to help fund community choirs to hire high quality soloists. This means not only do the choirs get good singers, but the soloists get a solid fee and more chances to perform.

I also continued the early music scene by dipping my toe in the Bach pond for the first time! I did my first B Minor Mass with the Waverly singers out in Aldershot and performed his Lutheran Mass in G Minor along with Handel's Dixit Dominus with the Nonsuch singers in London.



Telling off Jack Lawrence-Jones and Hillary Cronin in *Castor et Pollux*

To top off my time at College, I had my final recital in June. I was so proud of what I presented; a mixture of NZ Composers (Dame Gillian Karawe Whitehead and Douglas Lilburn) and my favourites, Schubert and Britten. It felt like the perfect way to finish my time at College, although it's bizarre that the reason I came to London in the first place has now been completed.

It hasn't always been easy. Even this year, for all its good, has been incredibly tough. I have felt isolated, alone, depressed and anxious through a lot of it. I say this not to garner sympathy, but to be honest about my time. I think that speaking about it makes it less of an evil and nebulous thing, because like it or not, many of us have gone through something similar. My goal for the year ahead is getting better at reaching out when I'm not feeling my best, and I have to say a massive thank you to all the truly marvellous people who listened, hugged, and thoroughly chastised me for not reaching out sooner.



An intrepid whānau catches their breath on Stac Pollaidh

But now to the future! After spending an amazing six weeks with Mum and Dad travelling around the UK, I have now moved away from Central London and into a lovely little flat with two very good friends in Willesden Green. It's a wonderful space and truly feels like our wee home. I am now on a Graduate visa, meaning there are no restrictions to my ability to work! I have been auditioning like crazy for various fun things next summer. As I said above, I am about to rush out the door for my third audition this week!

Next week is my first performance at the iconic St Martin-in-the-Fields, my first repeat oratorio performance of the Mozart Requiem. I cannot WAIT to sing in that gorgeous space. Following that, I am performing in a modern chamber opera *No Way Out* as part of the Barnes Opera Studio Festival.

Then in December I'm performing a recital in the London Song Festival, focused on the relationship between W. H. Auden and Britten with some truly luscious music. Looking into 2023, there are a few plans a-brewing, with a French song recital in the works, as well as other musical treats.

I promise to keep you all up to date much more regularly than the past 12 months! I've given my website a much needed tidy and it now has schedule and media pages where you can [find out about my goings on](#) and [hear some snippets](#) from my recent performances.

This year would not have been possible without the support of St John's Church, the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation and the Kiwi Music Scholarship I received. Thank you all for the encouragement you have shown me over my years studying. Thank you also to anyone who even shows a mild interest in my attempt to make a career out of this. Any and all well wishes truly mean so much to me. I look forward to hearing from you soon and hope you all have a wonderful end to one of the most bizarre years in the books, 2022.

All my love, gratitude and thanks,

Harry x



First Class!



An honorary Hooper for Christmas with Catherine and Mary



Exploring Kew Gardens with Sophie Sparrow



A chilly night carolling with the St Johns Crew