



## Marlena Devoe, soprano

Marlena Devoe discovered her passion for music at a very young age. In 1998, she was part of the Opera New Zealand Children's Chorus and was involved in their productions of La Boheme, Cavalleria Rusiticana, I Pagliacci and The Pied Piper.

In 2004 to 2005, she was a member of the New Zealand Secondary Students Choir, which toured America and Canada. It wasn't until she completed her studies at Baradene in 2005, that she realised her true passion was opera. She graduated from the University of Auckland with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Italian and German in 2009 and is currently completing her Bachelor of Music Honours in Performance Voice with Carmel Carroll and Rosemary Barnes.

Marlena was awarded a Lilburn Trust Performance Award in 2010 from the University of Auckland.

*Douglas Lilburn Trust (Published February 2011)*

### **Classical music: The Birth of a New Star?**

Classical music is not about hours of Meaningful Music. It is about pleasant music for everyday listening, interspersed with the occasional moment of utter elation. To experience this it is usually necessary to completely discard your boundaries and go to as many live concerts as possible. I experienced one such moment a few days ago.

My partner and I were at the end-of-year concert at the Auckland Opera Factory. Just a brief intro to the Opera Factory because it would seem that it is unique in the world. It is an organisation which gives young vocalists – generally from primary school to tertiary level, but also beyond – the opportunity to perform on stage in front of a paying audience. It is also a training ground for back-of-stage staff, again from a very young age. Last Thursday night's concert was superb. The youngest performers would have been around 10 years of age, and the oldest a well-known New Zealand identity who did a reading. It was no amateur production! All the performances were of a very high standard and most enjoyable. Then an unknown (to us) soprano, Marlena Devoe, came out of the chorus to sing that old warhorse, Vilia. (From Lehar's The Merry Widow.) It is a beautiful aria but has been done to death. Except this time. Marlena had a presence on stage that can only be described as electrifying. Her voice had the quality of an experienced soprano but with an extra-special "creamy" character that in all my years of attending opera, I have never experienced before. When she finished the aria, the audience – all of them opera fans – just exploded with acclamation. The road to the world opera stage is long and very rocky and requires a mixture of talent, careful management, hard work and good luck to reach the destination. Marlena is just starting her journey along this road. She is young, she is beautiful, she is modest and she has a voice to die for. Given her natural talents this is a lady with a huge future. For me, Thursday night was one of those moments of utter elation that classical music fans live for.

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