

# Katrina Waters

Finzi Trust Scholarship Awardee 2009



## Final Report

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## **Final Report – Katrina Waters, 2009 Finzi Trust Awardee**

My initial application to the Finzi Trust was motivated by advice that I received as a member of the English National Opera's Opera Works Programme. The Head of Music, Head of Casting and Head of the Young Singer's Programme at ENO agreed in September 2008 that I should no longer sing low mezzo repertoire, but should study higher mezzo repertoire. Initial suggestions were to study the roles of *Der Komponist (The Composer)* and *Octavian* from Richard Strauss' operas *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Der Rosenkavalier*.

For me these roles involved significant new vocal development and a move into higher, more dramatic and technically more demanding repertoire. This was my "New Direction". I wanted to achieve this goal by studying the roles with a teacher and singer who has experience at singing dramatic repertoire, consequently I wanted to work with Liane Keegan, a dramatic contralto based in Berlin as a principal artist at the Deutsche Oper.

Additionally, I proposed to study German at the Goethe Institut to assist with my preparation of these roles and to enhance my opportunities to work as a singer in Germany, a place suggested as the best training ground for young singers hoping to learn and perform principal roles in opera.

I also proposed to see operas at the three opera houses in Berlin and to coach with members of staff there and was hopeful that I would meet other singers and opera professionals who could give me an insight into how the German operatic system works.

Happily I believe I have satisfied the substance of these goals during the twelve weeks I have spent in Germany.

### **"Newer" New Direction**

As with any new adventure or change of direction, the map is uncharted at the beginning. The biggest change from my initial proposal is that my "New Direction" was larger when the time came to depart for Berlin than it appeared during the selection process.

By June 2009, the end of my time with ENO, both my mentors at ENO and my new teacher Liane Keegan were convinced that my change of repertoire was not confined to singing higher repertoire in the same mezzo soprano voice type or *Fach*, (to use the technical German term recognized in the operatic profession) but should embrace the idea that my vocal development should be to retrain as a soprano. In other words, I

needed to change voice type altogether. This complicated some of my proposal as it was no longer suitable for me to study the roles of *The Composer* and *Octavian* – in time I will most probably sing the roles of *Ariadne* and *The Marschallin* in the same operas, but to sing these as my first soprano roles would not be a sensible approach. Instead, with the guidance of Liane Keegan I have explored this new voice type and worked on a technique that allows me to sing more dramatic, *lyrico spinto*, soprano repertoire. I have used my time in Germany to study and coach this repertoire.

In this final report I aim to detail the technical changes I have made in order to sing in a new soprano voice type and describe some of the new directions I have been taking with repertoire. I hope to give some insight into my experience of learning German at the Goethe Institut and its effect on my singing of German repertoire and interacting with people in Berlin. I will also detail my impressions, gleaned from observations and colleagues, as to how a singer works within a German opera house.

Finally, I hope to be able to describe the impact this journey to Berlin and discovery of new knowledge, so generously enabled by the Finzi Trust, have had on me. I know I cannot put into words how grateful I am to have had this time, but hope to be able to give an insight into how important this time of growth and new direction has been to me, both professionally and personally.

## **Technical Changes and Repertoire**

*Die Natur weiß allein, was sie will* – *Nature alone knows what she wants.* Goethe.

Operatic voices are classified into different vocal types or *Fachs* on the basis of the range, timbre, quality and size of the voice. However, as singers mature physically voices change and may call for reclassification. Initially, I had trained and performed as a mezzo soprano, however, from mid 2007 I had found this *tessitura* (the area in the voice which is most comfortable and should sound and perform the best) harder to sustain.

### **Why did I sound like a mezzo?**

I have spent some time over the last few months thinking about the answer to this question. Particularly in response to questions from friends and colleagues who have enquired as to why it was necessary for me to “take time out” to redevelop my voice.

Firstly, this voice type change is not an unusual occurrence in a female voice of my size, age and timbre. As background I am excerpting some passages from “*The disciplines of vocal pedagogy – towards a holistic approach*” by Karen Sell:

“Sometimes a genuine change in vocal category occurs in mid-career as the voice matures and vocal technique becomes more secure particularly in the area of resonance balancing (voice placement). For example, a mezzo voice may become a dramatic soprano...It will then be necessary to review the singer’s *passaggi* to ensure that the change is legitimate.

...

The young soprano with a big voice, potential *lyrico spinto*, is likely to mature more slowly than her *soubrette* or *coloratura* colleague. Her instrument tends to be more unwieldy and may not so readily access the upper ranges. She may, unfortunately, be classified as mezzo-soprano and not be encouraged to extend and develop her range upwards.

Ultimately, vocal maturity and soundly based secure technical ability will determine accurate vocal classification and this cannot and should not be hurried. Joan Sutherland began as a mezzo and then became a coloratura soprano.” p 107

In essence this passage goes some way to explaining why I was trained and sang as a mezzo soprano. The difficulty with perceiving myself as a mezzo soprano was that I was trying to create a vocal sound, which was not the most natural sound for my larynx to make. In attempting to create a certain timbre I was employing compensatory methods in vocal technique. This compensatory technique allowed me as a “listener” to hear a dark, warm and woofy sound which I equated to being a mezzo sound.

Now that I have the awareness that there is an easier way to sing, and I reflect upon what I was doing technically as a mezzo, it is amazing to me that I could even make a sound. That I got so far into my early career as a mezzo, and had been taught at such renowned institutes such as the Royal College of Music without it being suggested that I was singing in the wrong voice type does surprise me. All I can say now, from the other side of my vocal transition, is that I must have been making a convincing enough sound as a young singer to fool many people, including myself, that I was a mezzo.

Additionally, it was only after the technique I was employing was no longer satisfactory to support the changing size of my voice that I really went in search of answers. Upon reflection, this was one of the reasons I auditioned for the ENO Opera Works course. I needed advice and mentoring as to what repertoire I should be singing as my voice was growing and changing. It is also why I went in search of a teacher who sings dramatic repertoire and had knowledge of how a singer’s technique can support the voice in this repertoire. I feel very lucky that during these changes I was supported in my choices of a new teacher and new repertoire by the advice from ENO and doubly lucky, that at the time these changes were appearing, the Finzi Trust has been able to support my development.

## **Technical development**

This leads me onto a description of the type of development I have been doing with Liane Keegan. Firstly, I felt immediately comfortable in my lessons with Liane where

she explained that the healthy vocal technique she teaches was developed in accordance with *bel canto* technique and modern scientific research into how the voice actually works. As a physical science it is possible to diagnose a singer's technical issues from the sound they are producing and the physical way in which they are producing this sound, and then systematically work through these issues.

This approach appealed to my scientific background. It also appealed to my intuition that in order to sing heavier and higher repertoire I needed a technical approach which would in turn train my muscles like those of an athlete in order to sustain what is a very athletic art form.

In essence, my lessons with Liane Keegan began with a diagnosis:

- I was not a mezzo, but was creating a mezzo sound by falsely depressing my larynx with the root of my tongue to make the sound resonate within my vocal mechanism and throat. In depressing my tongue root I set up a series of physical chain reactions which included:
  - engaging many of the neck and facial muscles in order to keep my tongue down;
  - in order to actually make a sound while my tongue was squeezing my larynx and shortening my vocal mechanism I was pushing a lot of air through my vocal cords and over-energizing my voice creating a 'pressurized' sound;
  - because I was using far too much air I was engaging muscles in my neck in order to keep my cords together;
  - by pushing more air than was necessary through my cords I was over-muscularising my support and engaging muscles in my torso to "push" the air through;
  - because I was pushing more air than was needed in order to overcome the muscles I had engaged, my posture was affected. I was shortening my torso to "push" air and shortening my neck to "reach" for high notes I was having difficulty getting.

These factors led to a falsely warm timbre, a vibrato that was inconsistent and a voice that was not able to sustain the repertoire I wanted to sing.

The solution from Liane was to take away all the false muscular support and bad postural habits I had been using to create my sound, and then work to find a low support that would allow me to use a fine, fast air flow which would allow my vocal cords to stay together as my vocal mechanism slides and tilts through my range to give difference pitches. This work was to allow me to sing with my real voice, unimpeded and unrestricted by vocal tricks and bad habits.

The actual act of doing this has involved many hours of exercises designed to rebalance my voice and retrain old muscle memory. These exercises have helped me to feel how my vocal mechanism can tilt and slide through my range with no added “muscularisation” or pressure. Instead, I am now relying on good posture, and support from my lower abdominal and intercostals muscles to start the sound and sing through phrases. I am also relying on using my singing text in a way that keeps my tongue forward in my mouth and the root off my larynx – the method for doing this is to sing the text as I would speak it, actively using my lips, teeth and tongue. The benefit of this is that it aids in projecting the voice by keeping the vowels and consonants resonating in the front of my hard palate, this ensures clean and accurate diction.

This technique appeals to my intuition that making sound is natural for humans, after all one only has to watch and listen to a baby scream to realize that our bodies are built to make huge amounts of sound which does not tire the vocal mechanism if the breathing and muscles in the torso are being used correctly.

This sounds so simple - and in essence it is - but muscle memory being what it is this new approach has required many hours of disciplined exercises and vigilance when it comes to putting this new technique into practice while singing songs and arias. I am grateful that I have found a teacher who has such a well researched knowledge of the vocal mechanism gathered from developing her own technique, listening to other singers while working in the profession and attending many seminars at the British Voice Association. I am also grateful that Liane is a teacher who is tough and uncompromising when it comes to harmonically desirable vocalism and that she is instilling this discipline in me.

## **Repertoire**

“As technical ability and security develop, and as physical maturity occurs, accurate vocal categorization should emerge” p 106

This quote from Karen Sell’s book has certainly been true of my experience while working over the past year on this vocal transition and particularly true of the intensive time I have spent here in Berlin. As mentioned in the introduction, my

initial advice at the time of applying to the Finzi Trust was to sing higher mezzo repertoire. As time has gone on and my larynx is sitting in a higher position in my throat (a more natural position for my laryngeal structure) and I have learnt to manage my airflow, support and text, it became apparent that this mezzo repertoire was no longer suitable. The journey was then to discover what type of soprano I am.

In the German Fach System there are 8 different recognized voice types in the Soprano voice type:

Soubrette  
Lyric Coloratura  
Dramatic Coloratura  
Full Lyric Soprano  
Spinto Soprano  
Charakter Soprano  
Dramatic Soprano  
Wagnerian Soprano

Since I have been working on this voice type change I have been singing repertoire from the *Full Lyric* Soprano voice type with some crossover to the *Spinto* Soprano voice type.

I have excerpted descriptions of these voice type from [www.ipasource.com/soprano](http://www.ipasource.com/soprano) as background for the following discussion of repertoire:

**“LYRISCHER- (HOHER) SOPRAN (c' to c'")**  
**Full Lyric Soprano**

A supple voice with a beautiful mellow quality and a noble line, the ability to sustain lines with more voice and a fuller legato line than the singers of the *spiel* Fach. A young singer of the *Jugendlicher-dramatischersopran* Fach often will sing some of the roles of the *Lyrishersopran* repertoire.

**Roles include:** Mimi (*La Boheme*), Countess (*The Marriage of Figaro*), Antonia (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*), Zdenka (*Arabella*). Michaela (*Carmen*), Laretta (*Gianni Schicchi*) Margarethe (*Faust*), Rusalka (*Rusalka*), Liu (*Turandot*).

**JUGENDLICHER-DRAMATISCHERSOPRAN (c' to c ' )**  
**Spinto Soprano**

A metallic voice with good line and power; capable of bring moments of dramatic intensity.

This is the Fach which is most important for the German repertoire. It is best thought of as a heavy spinto soprano. They require great emotional intensity, and, above all he ability to sing long vocal lines in heavy ensembles without becoming tired or strained.

**Roles include:** Agathe (*Die Freischutz*), Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*), Elsa (*Lohengrin*), Desdemona (*Othello*), Leonora (*Il Trovatore*), Arabella, Marie (*The Bartered Bride*), Tatyana (*Eugene Onegin*), Rezia (*Oberon*), Elizabeth (*Tannhauser*)”

Interestingly, as a side note, the Strauss roles I was proposing to learn over this time fit into the German Fach system under the heading, *Charakter Soprano* and are sung

by both mezzos and sopranos, however, in consultation with my teacher and mentors, we decided that learning these roles at my stage of development would encourage me to hold onto my “mezzo muscle memory” and would therefore not enhance my vocal development at this time. As can be seen from the description of this voice type below from [www.ipasource.com](http://www.ipasource.com), it is not a beginner’s voice type:

**“CHARAKTERSOPRAN (b to c”)**

**A Zwischenfach voice with fine characterization ability.**

The Charaktersopran is a speciality Fach that one very seldom encounters in all but the largest opera houses in Europe. The term Zwischenfach means the voice combines the lyric qualities of the Lyrischersopran and the dramatic ability of the Jugendlich-dramatischer voice. It is often the case that the Charaktersopran may have started her career as a mezzo and moved up to the soprano roles. This is not a beginner's Fach but is arrived at only after many years of professional singing.

**Roles include:** Manon, Mimi, Tosca, Butterfly, Carmen, Melisande, Mignon, Salome, Färberin in Die Frau ohne Schatten and the Komponist in Ariadne auf Naxos.”

The repertoire I have been preparing in Berlin has included Mozart’s *Countess* and *Donna Elvira*, Britten’s *Governess*, Puccini’s *Liu*, Beethoven’s *Fidelio (Leonore)* and some of the Slavic repertoire, *Rusalka* and *Tatyana*. Along the way there have been some casualties, I was engaged to sing my first *Pamina* in early 2010, however, as my voice has been developing, the natural timbre and tessitura is not suitable for *Pamina* (classified as Lyric Soprano in the German system, but often sung by Soubrettes elsewhere in the operatic world). At present I am focusing on Beethoven’s *Leonore* and Tchaikovsky’s *Tatyana*.

The role of *Leonore* is requiring of me an almost Mozartean discipline with regard to clean onsets of phrases and classical legato phrasing. It is a *Zwischenfach* role requiring a good negotiation of a wide range and a strong middle and lower register as well as good high notes. The German language requirement of the role requires me to give incredible attention to detail with regard to the sound of the text. This role is allowing me to put to good use my hours spent at the Goethe Institut. The character of *Leonore*, who spends years dressed as a man, *Fidelio*, in order to save her husband who has been wrongfully imprisoned, is also teaching me a lot about tenacity and determination.

The role of *Tatyana* seems to fit my voice very well as it requires a chocolatey timbre in the middle voice (something which reminds me to be grateful for my years spent as a mezzo). Of course this role has the added difficulty of being written originally in Russian. I did learn some of it in English translation, however, the music works so well with the original Russian text that the piece seems to sing itself when the text is right – consequently I am now learning the Russian phonetically as well. This discipline is feeding into my new technique from Liane, that if the text is being

pronounced correctly the chances are it is on the lips, teeth and tongue then the larynx is free to slide unencumbered by the root of the tongue and the singing is easy!

I have started to coach some of my new repertoire while here in Berlin. I have been working with Douglas Brown, an English répétiteur and coach, who has been a member of staff at the Deutsche Oper for almost 20 years. We have worked on parts of the roles of *Donna Elvira*, *Rusalka* and *The Governess*. The role of a coach, as opposed to a teacher, is to work on the musical and linguistic requirements of the role. I initially wanted to have about the same number of coachings as lessons, however, as my change of voice type required a more intensive reinvigoration of my technique I decided it was more important to have more lessons during this period. I am glad I had the chance to establish contact with a very talented and well respected coach at the Deutsche Oper and I look forward to continuing this connection with Douglas in the future.

### **Goethe Institut and the German language**

My reasons for spending time learning the German language were three fold:

Many of the roles my voice is suited to are in German, a fixed-contract in Germany would require me to speak German, the opportunity of living in a foreign country and practicing the language was too good to give up.

I enrolled in the Goethe Institut Abendkurs, which enabled me to attend intensive language classes for 3 evenings a week of over 9 weeks. After my entrance test I was accepted into the A.2.2 course, which I successfully completed. While I am by no means fluent, my familiarity with the language is growing steadily. I am now able to listen to conversations with native speakers and understand the gist of the conversation. I am particularly proud of my comprehension in familiar situations where I know the context, happy examples of this were attending yoga in German (including attending a 2 hours Kopfstand/Headstand Workshop) and attending Weihnachts/Christmas services at the Hohenzollerndamm Kirche/Church (the 9 readings from Genesis to Luke were already familiar, but I was happy to be able to put my language skills to the test and learnt much new vocabulary in the process).

I have excerpted a few lighthearted moments regarding my discovery of the German language which I first described on my blog:

“Learning a new language in the country of where that language is spoken quickly makes one very humble, after all the 3 year old children speak more fluently than you do. Traveling in France one doesn't easily forget the sound of children pointing and expressing their delight in something or other with a musical: "Ooh la la Maman".

Still, like a child learning to walk and getting great pleasure out of every step, I have begun to see progress. For instance we are currently in class doing a chapter on cars - sadly for me I don't know most of these words in English, let alone German.

However, the staff at my local bike shop were very congratulatory when I was able to explain (for the 2nd time in two weeks) that "*Der Reifen am mein Fahrrad ist Kaputt*" (The wheel on my bike is broken). This provoked lots of laughter, and a bit of head shaking (translation "weren't you here last week?"). I remained strong and with the help of lots of pointing said: "*Lezte Woche der Reifen, hinter, ist Kaputt, diese Woche es ist der andere*" (Last week the back wheel was broken, this week it is the other one). Smiles and nods all round!

In German class we also had a free discussion on cars which touched on *das Benzin* (petrol) and specifically whether Benzin in Deutschland was *mit Blei oder Bleifrei* (lead or lead-free). This segued into another discussion: *Ist das Wasser in Deutschland Bleifrei?* (this is of course a side issue, but as I am drinking it straight from the tap I was quite interested...?).

The result of all this discussion was that on my way home I could understand the ad (see picture, right) for a new Krimi (Crime drama) on die Fernsehen (TV). It's the little things!"



*Television advertisement in Berlin  
"Nicht Bleifrei aber Super"*

In order to keep the language skills I have learnt and to improve them I intend to continue regular German lessons in London – my current goal is to come back to Germany for the September 2010 audition seasons and I would like to be able to conduct all my auditions and negotiations in German.

### **Singing in a German Opera House**

While in Berlin I have had the opportunity to meet new colleagues and regularly go to the opera and concerts. I have worked very hard to tap into the cultural life of the city and the people who work in it and am grateful to have been made to feel welcome. Like London, Berlin is a city where many people come to work for a time and then make it their home, as opposed to being born and bred in the city, it is a cultural melting pot where creative artists congregate because artists and culture are seen as important to the life of the city. In my experience people who call themselves Berliners come from all sorts of places and have been encouraging and forthcoming with information to a young singer. Through my contacts at the Deutsche Oper and the Berlin Staatsoper I have met many singers who are on fixed contracts or young artist programmes. I was also lucky enough, through an ENO contact (tenor Dwayne Jones), to meet Ian Storey, a British Dramatic Tenor who was singing *Tristan* in Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* at the Deutsche Oper. It was fascinating to hear a realistic account of the tenacity and time it takes to work successfully as a dramatic voice in opera and thrilling to hear the result of all that hard work at my first *Tristan und Isolde* – I happily still have the heavy, and dark sound of the 8 double basses of the Deutsche Oper at the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> act ringing in my ears.

I have also been lucky enough to meet and hear what working in a German Opera House is like for many of the orchestral members, stage technicians and even the *Souffleuse* or prompter. It was so interesting to learn how a prompter assists the conductors and singers in repertory companies throughout Germany to deal with the confusion of singing up to five different roles in different operas during the week. I was grateful for this insight from Heike Behrens who is a staff member of the Deutsche Oper and has been prompting the Wagner Festival in Bayreuth for the last 11 years and regularly steps in at the Staatsoper, most recently to assist Barenboim and Domingo in delivering the opera, *Simon Boccanegra*.

Berlin seems to be teeming with conductors and I have been fortunate to meet and discuss matters of career and repertoire with conductors Tobias Foscett, Paul Fitzsimmons, Paul Kildea (formerly the Head of the Britten-Pears Young Artist Programme) and Zubin Mehta's assistant, Klaus Sallmann. I also was able to spend time discussing the Berlin Philharmonie and the Deutsche Oper with Sir Donald Runnicles' assistant. Sir Donald Runnicles is the chief conductor at the Deutsche Oper and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and guest conductor for the Berlin

Phil. His assistant, Jessica Cottis happens to be a friend of mine from school in Australia and from my undergraduate music degree at the Canberra School of Music. It was fascinating to have discussions about the exceptionally high quality of music making in Berlin, the quality of the Berlin Phil, the acoustic of the Philharmonie concert hall and how a singer or conductor makes important steps in their career by working here.

From these musical connections, I have been told many inside stories from backstage and behind the footlights and have been given realistic accounts as to what life is like as an opera singer on a fest contract (fixed contract) or a guest contract in a German opera house. Many of these accounts stress that during a year long contract a singer will work very hard. Companies in Germany work on a repertory system and it may be the case that singers and conductors are under prepared for *Wideraufnahme* (repeat) productions – sometimes being given as little as 3 hours rehearsal. Conductor Tobias Foksett, told me that he recently had his debut in Leipzig conducting *Don Giovanni* at the Opera House, as this was a *Wideraufnahme* production he never saw the orchestra until the performance! In essence, opera in Germany is a business and as such singers need to be well prepared and business minded. However, if a singer's technique is solid and they are careful about singing roles within their voice type then Germany is still the best training ground for young singers to build up a repertoire and get experience.

Additionally, while I have been changing my technique I have necessarily been redeveloping my perception of what is a desirable sound. Consequently, it has been important to my new vocal development that I have reinforced what is a desirable sound by listening to as many singers as possible singing live under the pressure of the German House system. These experiences have allowed me to assess for myself which singers are delivering the most desirable sound, with the greatest amount of technical ease. This in turn has helped me to accept and integrate my new technique.

My regular trips to the opera have allowed me to see a range of different performers and performances. I have experienced performances at all three of Berlin's opera houses and the two main concert halls – the Konzerthaus and the Philharmonie. It is interesting that the city of Berlin supports three opera houses that produce a diverse bodies of work that are both challenging and traditional. At every performance that I went to, the houses were almost completely full.

Some of the highlights of productions I have been lucky enough to see have included, traditional productions of *Der Rosenkavalier* and *La Boheme* in the gilded beauty of the traditional Staatsoper. This smaller sized house suits the classical repertoire. The Deutsche Oper, a modern building with a huge stage and wide orchestra pit, which is suited to the more romantic and dramatic repertoire, contrasts the Staatsoper. At the

Deutsche Oper I have seen, among others, productions of Strauss' *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (the Woman without a Shadow), Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, Verdi's *Falstaff*, and *Il Ballo in Maschera* (with star singers Dimitry Hvorostovsky, Marcelo Alvarez and Angela Marambio). I also saw the Deutsche Oper's production of Orff's *Carmina Burana*, this secular oratorio is not traditionally staged, but was done in the most spectacular "German *Regietheatre*" fashion which gives the Director complete freedom to ignore the composer's original stage directions and resulted in the most bizarre night I have ever spent in the theatre.

I also managed to attend Barrie Kosky's acclaimed production of Cole Porter's *Kiss Me Kate* at the Komische Oper. Never have I seen so many sequins on one stage! It was strange to hear this musical in German (particularly the duet, *Brush up your Shakespeare*), but exciting to see how the Folk's Opera in Berlin caters to another audience of music lovers.

The Deutsche Oper also does performance of opera for children and I was intrigued to see Kinder productions of *Die Zauberflöte* (The Magic Flute) and *Hänsel and Gretel*. These performances were completely sold out and full of children enthralled by the trials of *Tamino* and *Papageno* and frightened for *Hänsel* and *Gretel*. These experiences gave me hope for the future of an opera going public and possibly go some way to explaining why Germany can still offer such good opportunities to singers and other opera professionals and how Berlin continues to support three opera houses.

Like the opera houses, the two main concert halls in Berlin, the Konzerthaus and the Philharmonie, are very different spaces. The Konzerthaus in Gendarmenmarkt is a traditional long, rectangular concert salon with gilded walls and chandeliers which suited the almost chamber-music rendition of Strauss' *Vier letzte Lieder* (Four Last Songs) I saw conducted by Zubin Menhta and sung by Anja Harteros. In contrast to this, I managed to get a scalped podium ticket to a performance of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra under Sir Simon Rattle at the Philharmonie in Potsdamer Platz. The performance was Schoenberg's *Erwartung* with the soprano Evelyn Herlitzius (who also sang the Deutsche Oper's *Isolde*) and Schoenberg's orchestration of Brahms' *Piano Quartet No.1*. There was nothing chamber music-like about these performances or this venue. The venue, designed by the architect Hans Scharoun, puts the music right in the centre of the venue with the audience on all sides. My podium ticket, directly behind the Timpanist, gave me a glimpse of how Sir Simon Rattle encourages the most sumptuous sound out of his orchestra.

### **Berlin a place of regeneration and reinvigoration**

The opportunities granted to me by the Finzi Trust have provided me with the most freeing experience of my life and given me the space to regenerate and reinvigorate my artistic practice. My time here in Berlin and the changes I have made to my singing have been essential for my career development.

Often as I have ridden home along the bike paths here I have reflected upon how strange it is to feel so free in Germany, particularly in Berlin, a place that just over 20 years ago, because of stories of the Stasi and the Berlin Wall, was viewed as the antithesis of freedom. This is a town that wears its scars:



*Bricks in Potsdamer Platz showing the location of the Berlin Wall*

From Checkpoint Charlie to Potsdamer Platz to the Brandenburg Gate you can follow the line of the Berlin Wall as bricks cemented into the street, en route you pass the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe designed by Peter Eisenmann.

I was incredibly fortunate that my time on the Finzi Trust scholarship coincided with the celebrations commemorating 20 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November. A temporary wall was erected from human sized dominos along the old line of the Berlin Wall and I and many others were given a small insight into the terror and frustration of the old regime when we were stopped from passing from the West to the East by riot police.



*The painted Domino Steins which were pushed over in a symbolic reenactment of the fall of the Berlin Wall in front of the Reichstag (Parliament Building)*

When we did reach the outdoor concert space under the Brandenburg Gate it was fascinating to see the effect musicians in Berlin have had and continue to have on the politics of Berlin. The band Bon Jovi performed in remembrance of their concerts at the Wall 20 years ago. Daniel Barenboim conducted Placido Domingo and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra in music of Schoenberg to commemorate not only the Fall of the Wall, but Kristallnacht, which occurred on the same date in 1938. This was a reverent as well as a joyful celebration. Being able to stand in the crowd and bear witness to Berlin's past was truly moving and has added to my understanding of the German culture and its composer's music. The world events I have been lucky enough to experience and learn about in Berlin have affected me as an artist and as a human being.

Berlin is a town built for 5 million people but now only inhabited by 3 million, leaving it with less a feeling of emptiness and more a feeling of space. From my short experience here the people left in this space seem to have an energy to create a new city that is diverse and tolerant, that is keen to move on while acknowledging the past.

Berlin seems to be full of metaphors for regeneration, it is attempting to rebuild itself to recreate some of its former glory but many of the rebuilt buildings combine modern styles of architecture with remnants of the original, sometimes partially destroyed, building. The best example of this for me is the bombed out church on Kurfurstendamm - at first glance you wonder when they might rebuild the structure,

but upon closer inspection the Church and Bell Tower have been rebuilt around the half destroyed original - incorporating the scars of the past into the function of today.



*The old and new church on the  
Kufurstendamm*

What better city could I have come to in order to regenerate my singing. The time and space I have had here has enabled me to challenge my old ideas regarding my technique and repertoire away from the pressures of London. Like the church on Kufurstendamm I have a new structure for how I sing that looks and sounds different. In stretching the metaphor I like to think it is more solid than the old one and will be standing strong for some time to come. On a personal level this freedom to shake off old habits and accept and integrate something new has given me a flexibility I did not think I had and with that has come a sense of possibility that I know will sustain me throughout my career.

### **What's next**

I return to England on 11 January. While the reality in the short term may be that I have to temp in law firms again for some months in order to continue funding my singing training, my overarching goal for 2010 is to have coached and practiced my new repertoire so as to be ready for the German audition season in September 2010 (and to have saved enough money to fund my audition tour!).

I have loved the experience of living in Berlin so much and during this time have met so many colleagues who have demystified the process of working in a German opera house. I am no longer frightened of living and working as a singer in Germany. I used to think the idea of singing in Germany was “a necessary evil” in order to have enough experience to sing principal roles in England and Australia. However, thanks to this exciting journey I have been on, I now see it as an integral, exciting and truly stimulating element in my career.

I am also looking forward to singing my new repertoire for ENO again as they had initially encouraged this voice change. Moreover I am looking forward to retaining the sense of freedom, possibility and flexibility I have found in my singing and also in myself.

I carried with me to Berlin a little box of affirmations that often gave me a quote to sustain me through the challenges of this new direction. I would like to end this final report with a quote from one of the affirmations that resonated with me during this journey:

*“We don’t receive wisdom, we must discover it for ourselves after a journey that no one can take for us.”* Marcel Proust

It is true that only I could take this journey for myself, but I am exceedingly grateful to the Finzi Trust for having given the generous financial assistance for me to take this new direction.

### **Katrina Waters, Finzi Trust Final Report, Balance Sheet**

	Euros (€)	Pounds (£)
Rent	1,200	1,090
15 x Lessons Liane Keegan @ £ 55 per lesson	907.50	825
2 x Coachings Douglas Brown @ € 40 per lesson	80	73
9 week Evening Course at the Goethe Institut	692	630
Transport (bicycle and U-bahn)	320	290
Scores & Recordings	194	176
German Texts and Stationary	114	103
Practice Rooms	150	135
Printing	40	36
Operas and concerts	140	127
Food	960	872
Insurance	60	54
Flights to and from Berlin	220	200
Taxis to and from the airport	40	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,117.50</b>	<b>4,647</b>

The conversion rate I have used in this budget is £1 = €1.1, which is approximately the average rate of exchange while I have been in Berlin. All costs except Lessons were paid in Euros.