

Problems viewing videos?
youtube.com

Kiri Te Kanawa as Countess Rosina in the *Marriage of Figaro*

Kiri diva

One of our most successful and recognised international performers is the opera singer Kiri Te Kanawa. Her fame mostly came from performing music that is not New Zealand made, but she also gained international exposure for traditional and contemporary Maori songs through recordings such as 'Pokarekare ana'.

After winning the prestigious Mobil Song Quest in 1965 Kiri left for the London Opera Study Centre. Her tutor felt that she lacked singing technique but that she had a gift for captivating audiences.

She rose to international prominence after performing at Covent Garden, and she went on to appear in major roles at the world's great opera houses, including London's Royal Opera House, the New York Metropolitan, Milan's La Scala and the Paris Opera. By the time she won the role of the Countess in *The Marriage of Figaro* in 1969, the conductor, Colin Davis, declared that he couldn't believe his ears: 'I've taken thousands of auditions, but it was such a fantastically beautiful voice.'

It is for her performance at the 1981 wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer in St Paul's Cathedral that Kiri Te Kanawa is best remembered by many New Zealanders. An estimated television audience of 600 million people saw her perform Handel's 'Let the bright seraphim'. The following year she was made a Dame of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth

Despite being based overseas since 1965, Kiri Te Kanawa performed regularly at home. As part of New Zealand's sesquicentenary celebrations in 1990 she gave a series of homecoming concerts, and her Millennium Concert in Gisborne in January 2000 was broadcast live to over 80 countries.

Kiri Te Kanawa retired from the opera stage in 2004. In response to the many accolades she received throughout her career, she described singing as 'the reason why I was born'.

This video clip is sourced from the YouTube website. The Ministry for Culture and Heritage does not claim any responsibility for the contents or copyright status of the clip.

How to cite this page: 'Kiri Te Kanawa', URL: <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/media/video/kiri-te-kanawa>, (Ministry for Culture and Heritage), updated 28-Jan-2008

Timeline 1

for 1971

P166

~~Page~~

~~144~~

Community contributions

There are currently no community contributions for this page

MCH 2008

- please fill out the form to the right if you would like to add your story