



# THE JUNIPER PASSION

A dramatic opera in three acts

**Music**

**Michael F Williams**

**Libretto**

**John G Davies**

An information package for hosts and funders.



# CAST

**Matt Landreth**

as Joe, a New Zealand soldier

**James Ioelu**

as Bruno, a German army officer

**Stephanie Acraman**

as Jessie, Joe's wife

**Darren Pene Pati**

as Carlo, a Benedictine monk

**Lilia Carpinelli**

as Maria, Carlo's sister

**Julia Booth**

as Helen, Joe and Jessie's daughter

# PRODUCTION

**Director**

John G Davies

**Design**

John Parker

**Lighting Design**

Michael Knapp

**Choreography**

Moss Patterson

**Producer**

Natalie Maria

*Production features extended sequences of computer generated imagery & cinematography, and choreography danced by Unitec School of Performing and Screen Arts, Contemporary Dance students.*

# A CAPTIVATING STORY

## Monte Cassino: A significant event in New Zealand history

*The Juniper Passion* is set amidst the protracted warfare of Monte Cassino, 1944. The battle of Monte Cassino stands as a significant event in our history and claimed the lives of 343 New Zealanders. Many of our people have personnel connections to those who served in the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force.

The opera shifts between 1944 war torn Italy, and the melancholic peace of the New Zealand war graves at Monte Cassino, 1960. The opening is set on ANZAC day where the cenotaph in a small New Zealand town yawns up its dead. These ghostly figures re-enact, through the medium of contemporary dance, the stories of their demise.

Meanwhile Helen, the daughter of a fallen soldier, walks the line of graves with her mother, Jessie, searching for their late father and husband. Thus the two women fortuitously meet with their German and Italian counterparts.

Previously, in 1944, the Germans have built fortifications around the Abbey. Ancient artefacts are being removed to preserve them from the controversial American bombing. Bruno, a German officer, decides he will gift the Juniper Madonna statue to his commander – however one of the monks, Carlo, replaces it with a log of wood. When Bruno discovers this, he returns to seek revenge. Joe, Helen's father and Jessie's husband, interrupts the tryst. Thus, in the bombed out crypt of the Abbey of Monte Cassino, these three men must confront one another which in turn causes them to scrutinise their differing philosophies and beliefs. This conflict builds to a dramatic and tragic final scene, and the opera closes with an epilogue between Jessie and the ghost of Joe.



## Remembering NZ armed forces



John Davies' libretto is dedicated to Richard Ferguson Davies – John's father who fought in the battles. Almost four years in the making, *The Juniper Passion* remembers New Zealand's armed forces, and is dedicated to soldiers from all sides who fought at Monte Cassino.

## Opera informed by historical fact



University of Waikato Distinguished Alumnus Dr Chris Pugsley provided valuable historical insights about the battle, the bombing of the abbey and its aftermath. This information was translated into the musical retelling of the story through chamber orchestra, electronic sound effects and the new Auckland Town Hall organ. The overarching story is based on fact, while the characters – a Benedictine monk, a German officer and New Zealand soldier – are fictional.

## A visit to Montecassino



In 2008 Michael Williams visited the city of Cassino and the Monastery on Monte Cassino. Williams wanted to experience first hand the place he would be composing about. He kept a journal of his impressions, which have had a real impact on the creation of *The Juniper Passion*.

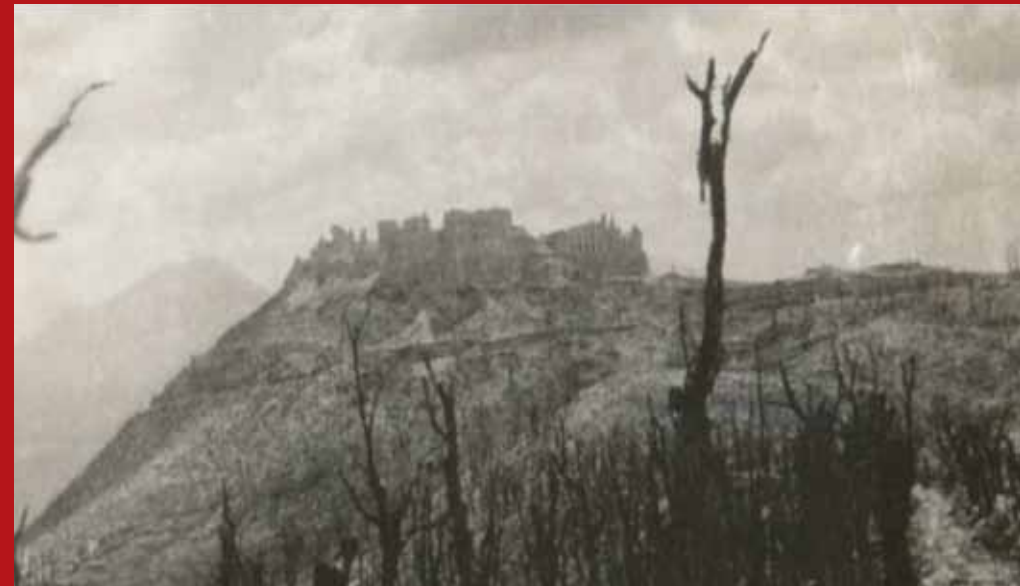
*"28 November, 2008: Arrive in Cassino late afternoon; warm and wet. Stayed in a B & B replete with war memorabilia. A severe thunderstorm on this night. Torrential rain and lightning. The first glimpse of the Abbey is through mist and clouds, perched at the top of the mountain. Impressive, ominous and austere."*

# PREMIERE

## The Recording and Launch of the CD

With funding assistance from the University of Waikato, Creative New Zealand and The Lilburn Trust it was recorded throughout 2011. The CD was produced by Wayne Laird and released through Atoll Records in December 2011. On ANZAC Day 2012 a launch of the CD took place at Waikato University. With funding assistance from Unitec, Moss Patterson, artistic director of Atamira Dance Co, created a 30 minute choreography which was performed to the pre-recorded sound track. Sean Castle created corresponding computer generated images. This performance was presented to more than 200 members of the public at the University of Waikato's Gallagher Academy of Performing Arts. The evening was a great success.

Please refer to the enclosed DVD for excerpts of video footage from the premiere.





# PRODUCTION & DESIGN

## Classically inspired opera, created for contemporary audiences

Written in three acts, the opera has six principle roles and a chorus. It is scored for chamber orchestra including string quartet, bass, flute, clarinet, trumpet, trombone, piano and organ. Contemporary digital sound effects and percussion instruments are interwoven with the classical instruments to create an unique contemporary-classical sound.

## Drama through sight and sound

Some of New Zealand's finest voices are joined by the powerful and striking choreography by Moss Paterson. The contemporary dance compliments the dramatic opera format creating a range of atmospheres and theatrical dynamics.



The opening sequence is an extended choreography performed by a dance company of 12 men and three women. This company is reminiscent of the traditional Greek chorus, who thereafter enact the drama alongside the singers.

## Design that reflects culture: New Zealand and Monte Cassino

A War Memorial Cenotaph in each New Zealand town and city is an iconic part of our identity and heritage. The Juniper Passion begins and finishes at such a cenotaph.

Lighting design by one of Australasia's finest designers catapults audiences into the bombed-out crypt of the Abbey of Monte Cassino. Stylish imagery is projected to re-create the majestic architecture, contextualising the opera in space and time. Striking reds refer to blood that was shed, while cool blues are reminiscent of the quiet calm of death, the icy European winter.



# THE PEOPLE

## The team behind The Juniper Passion

### Michael F. Williams - Composer



Michael Williams is a well-known figure in New Zealand composition. He has received commissions from most of the country's major musical institutions including the NZSO, NBR New Zealand Opera and Chamber Music New Zealand and his music is regularly broadcast on Radio New Zealand Concert. He has recorded a number of works through the Atoll label.

His music covers a wide range of genres including chamber music, orchestral, concerti and opera. Polystylistic in his approach to composition, many influences can be heard in his music from Gregorian chant to the use of pitch class sets.

Michael maintains an interest in the digital manipulation of acoustic instruments which is evident in a number of his works. His Chamber Opera *The Prodigal Child* has enjoyed great success with productions in Taranaki, Auckland, Christchurch and Hamilton and is now available on CD.

*Piercing the Vault* for oboe and orchestra was commissioned by the NZSO in 2005 and has toured the country twice since. His *Triple Concerto* which was a commission from the Opus Chamber Orchestra with the New Zealand Chamber Soloists was premiered in September 2008.

Michael's latest work *The Juniper Passion* is an opera in three acts based on the battle of Montecassino Italy in WWII and was recently released through the Atoll label. This work is scheduled for its premier live performance on location in Cassino Italy as well as Rome 2013.

His work is in demand internationally including Vietnam, Italy and Ireland. *Piercing the Vault* was recently performed in Vietnam with the HBSO under the baton of Colin Metters who is director of conducting at the Royal Academy of Music in London.

Current projects include a piece for harp and electronics for NZSO harpist Carolyn Mills; a saxophone quartet for Italian group *Saxophia* and a piece flute, viola and harp for Irish flautist Bill Dowdall.

He is co-founder and artistic director of the University of Waikato contemporary performance ensemble 'Okta'. Michael teaches across a number of areas including composition, orchestration, computer music, aesthetics and harmony and counterpoint.

[www.michaelfwilliams.co.nz](http://www.michaelfwilliams.co.nz)

## John Davies - Libretto

John Davies studied the art of acting at the New Zealand Drama School. Following his training, he went on to perform with Red Mole Enterprises in New Zealand, Mexico, The U.S.A. and The United Kingdom.

John's first professional appearance was for the Court Theatre in Christchurch Square in 1974. In 1984, John made the first of four study trips to the Kongo Noh Theatre in Kyoto. He has subsequently presented four original Noh plays as director of the New Zealand Noh Theatre Company.

Working in partnership with composers Michael Williams and David Griffiths, John has been involved with opera production, writing libretto and directing through the University of Waikato. In 2010 he was appointed Curriculum leader of Live Performance at Unitec. He lives in Auckland with his wife and three children.

*The Juniper Passion* is a particularly exciting project for John because of his personal connection with the story, which is dedicated to his father who served in the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force.



## Julia Booth - Vocals of "Helen"

Soprano Julia Booth is an alumna of the New Zealand Opera School and completed her Masters of Music (First Class Honours) from the University of Waikato in 2010.

A recipient of the Price Waterhouse Coopers Dame Malvina Major Emerging Artist Award (with the NBR NZ Opera in 2007/08), Julia is also a Sir Edmund Hillary Scholar Medal Winner. Her competition successes include first place for the New Zealand Aria and third in the Lexus Song Quest.

Julia's previous roles include premieres of David Griffiths' opera *The White Lady* and Anthony Young's *Angle of Reflection*, which she performed and recorded with the APO. Julia has also performed the role of Barena in NBR NZ Opera's production of Janacek's *Jenufa* and last year played Laetitia in *The Old Maid and the Thief*.



## Lilia Carpinelli - Vocals of "Maria"



Italian soprano Lilia Carpinelli completed her music degree at the Salerno Conservatory, Italy, in 2001. At age 21 she studied the 'Estill Voice Training System' with Elisa Turlà, during which time she was invited to participate in master-classes with the famous Italian singers Luciana Serra and Bruno De Simone.

Lilia performed for the Inauguration of the Olympics Beijing, China in 2005 with Nuova Orchestra Scarlatti. She has also sung with the Orchestra Giovanile di Roma in Austria. Her operatic roles include: Eleonora in Salieri's *Prima*

*La Musica Poi Le Parole* (Orchestra Giovanile di Roma conducted by Luigi De Filippi, Vienna); Lulù in Raffaele Viviani's *Eden Teatro* (Trianon Orchestra conducted by Renato Piemontese, Naples); O Nino in Manuel de Falla's *El Retablo de Maese Pedro* (Salerno); *Dirindina* in Scarlatti's *La Dirindina* (Nuova Orchestra Scarlatti, Caserta); and Dorilla in Hasse's *La Serva Scaltra* (Labirinto Ensemble conducted by Mariano Patti, Naples).



### Stephanie Acraman - Vocals of "Jessie"

Stephanie studied at the Australian National University (Canberra School of Music), receiving a BMus, Grad Dip (HD) under the tutelage of renowned Operatic voice teacher Anthea Moller. She has performed extensively throughout Australia and New Zealand including classical, jazz and musical theatre repertoire. Stephanie has recorded for ABC, 2MBS Fm, Concert Fm (NZ) and Radio NZ, and sung the role of Mary in Michael Williams' opera *The Prodigal Child*.



Stephanie has also had the pleasure of appearing as soloist for a number of artists, which include Teddy Tahu Rhodes, Elisabeth Campbell, Catherine Carby, Hayden Tee, Virgilio Marino, Henry Choo, Stephen Bennett, Tiffany Speight, Anthony Calea, Katie Noonan, Bic Runga, Hayley Westenra, Tim Beveridge, Jose Carbo, Douglas McNicol, Zan McKendree-Wright, Tim Dufore, Tobias Cole, Patrick Power, Kirsti Harms, Jud Arthur, Warwick Fyfe, John Brunato, Paul Whelan, Sally-Anne Russell.

### Darren Pene Pati - Vocals of "Carlo"



Darren Pene Pati is a 22yr old Samoan-born tenor. He is in his final year of his BMus(Hons)/BA at the University of Auckland, under the tutelage of Patricia Wright and Rosemary Barnes.

Pene was named 'Young Performer of the Year' for 2010, following his 2009 win of the New Zealand Aria and receiving the 'Most Promising Voice' award. Pene was one of four New Zealanders competing in the prestigious Sydney Sun Aria competition and was one of eight finalists. Pene has also been the recipient of the inaugural 'Iosefa Enari memorial' scholarship from Creative Arts

NZ, the Seamus Casey Memorial Award, and many more from the University of Auckland such as the Pears Britten and Marie D'albini.

Pene has just performed the incredibly difficult role of Elvino in *La Sonnambula* (Auckland Opera Studio), which plays again next year. Pene sang with the Auckland Chamber Orchestra in a highly praised performance of Britten's *Serenade* displaying "full-on, unstinting performance" (NZ Herald). In April 2010, Pene sang the demanding tenor solo in Rossini's *Stabat Mater* with the Hamilton Civic choir. A regular performer with Opera Factory, Pene sang the title role in their production of Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld*. Pene also performed in masterclasses with Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, Dame Malvina Major and Sir Andrew Davis in 2009.

### James Ioelu - Vocals of "Bruno"



One of New Zealand's finest young Bass-Baritones is James Ioelu, a New Zealand-born Samoan currently studying at the Manhattan School of Music (MSM) in New York. James plans to pursue postgraduate studies in Voice at MSM in September this year.

A recent highlight for James is the opportunity to perform in the Caribbean Islands. He is particularly grateful for the generous support of a number of New Zealand organisations including Kiri Te Kanuwa Foundation, Creative NZ, Dame

Malvina Major Foundation, James Wallace Trust, The Auckland Opera Studio, The Jack McGill Trust and Auckland Opera Factory.

## Matthew Landreth - Vocals of "Joe"

A baritone originally from Owaka in the Catlins, Matthew Landreth is a member of the infamous University of Otago Capping Sextet. Matthew was the winner of the ODT Aria Competition in 2004, and also reached the semi-finals of both the 2005 and 2009 Lexus Song Quest.

Singing with the TOWER New Zealand Youth Choir, including tours through America and Europe, has definitely been a major highlight for Matthew. On the stage he has performed many roles including Don Alfonso (*Così fan tutte*), The Count (*The Marriage of Figaro*) and Forester (*Janacek's The Cunning Little Vixen*). He has also performed with the Auckland Philharmonic as soloist for Vaughn Williams Fantasia on Christmas Carols, Finzis *In terra pax*, and in a concert performance of *Madame Butterfly* (Yamadori).

In 2008 Matt completed an internship in the NBR NZ Opera Price Waterhouse Coopers Dame Malvina Major Emerging Artist program, and is currently one of their Resident Artists.



## Moss Patterson - Choreography

Moss began his performance career as a musician, and went on to study acting at The New Zealand College of Performing Arts. He then trained at UNITEC Performing Arts School in Contemporary Dance. For the past twelve years Moss has danced and choreographed for Atamira Dance Company, Black Grace Dance Company, Footnote Dance and Touch Compass.

His choreographies include: *Raving Fad* and *Koru* for Black Grace, *Manawa* for Touch Compass, *Pitau*, *Te Ngaru*, *Kura*, *Kokowai* and *Kokowai#2* for Footnote Dance, *Tonu*, *Te Whenua* and *Toa* for Styles Pacifica Fashion Awards, *Puhoro* for UNITEC Performing Arts School, *Te Paki* and *Whakairo* for Atamira Dance Company.

Moss was awarded *Best Choreography* by TEMPO Dance Festival and *Best New Choreographer* in the NZ Listener 2007. Moss has also been the recipient of the CNZ *Tup Lang Dance* scholarship with Atamira Dance Company and also the *Te Whakahaungia* choreographic award by Toi Maori Aotearoa.



# AWARDS & MEDIA

## Radio NZ Concert Review - The Critics Chair, 7th October 2012

"*The Juniper Passion* is a new three-act opera by New Zealander, Michael Williams in collaboration with librettist John Davies, and was a finalist in the recent SOUNZ Contemporary Awards competition. Thanks to the wonderfully vivid realizations by Atoll Records of both composer's and librettist's intentions, this multimedia work comes across with great force and atmosphere as a sound-only production. By the time I reached the beautiful *Epilogue*, I was properly caught up in the tragic beauty and strength of the whole. *The Juniper Passion* is a beautiful work that I very much suspect is here to stay."

## Nominated for APRA | AMCOS "SOUNZ Contemporary Award"

The *Juniper Passion* is one of three finalists for this award, which recognises creativity and inspiration in contemporary classical composition. The winner will be announced 13th September 2012.

## Review: The Waikato Times, Saturday 17 May 2008

"With the Benedictine text accompanied sparingly by piano trio; the mood evoked by Stephanie Acraman with a rich and intense vocal patina with the focused Williams score enabled immediate engagement by the audience. If this opening scene sets the standard; the remainder is eagerly awaited."

-- Reviewer Andrew Buchanan-Smart.

## Article: The Listener, June 16 2012

"Laird is thrilled with his latest release, *The Juniper Passion* opera, based on the Monte Cassino incident in 1944 involving Kiwis in the destruction of an ancient and important abbey that was in the way of their advance to Rome. "It doesn't surprise me that Italy wants to stage it," he says, enthused. "It's a powerful story told with extensive modern means, including acoustic instruments, voices and electronics." To which I would add that John Davies's searching libretto makes us think. The opening Benedictine chant is almost a replica of what you hear at Monte Cassino abbey.

Apposite excerpts from Dante's *The Divine Comedy* and the Bible pepper the libretto at exactly the right places and expose the soldiers' conflicting views on Christian concepts of forgiveness, eternal life and resurrection, when confronted with the finality of death. Michael Williams's music broadens out eloquently in the latter half. The simple yet potent diatonic writing in his expansive chorus "Women create life and men destroy it" epitomises the entire work as *Everyman's* opera. Pene Pati's Carlo the monk and James Ioelu as the German officer stand out among fine casting, all controlled by Laird's assured production.

"I like the fact it's about New Zealand's place in the wider world".

-- Article by Ian Dando



# PROPOSED TOUR:

## From NZ to Italy

### Auckland Museum – March 2014

Plans are underway to present *The Juniper Passion* in an outdoor setting in front of the Auckland Museum. This ambitious project is scheduled for March 2014.



### Il Teatro Romano, Cassino Italy – June 2013

This majestic amphitheatre theater is located inside the ancient city of Casinum. The theater was unearthed in 1936 and restored for the first time in 1959. It is still the subject of continuous restoration.

The Teatro Romano is an enchanting place in summer. It is often used for performances of classical theatre, and as such is a fitting place to stage the opera *The Juniper Passion*.



### Festa Europea della Musica, Rome – June 2013

The *European Music Festival in Rome* showcases over 150 free concerts and more than 1,000 musicians, in more than 90 venues. A wide range of musical genres are on show. The festival is part of an international network of cities dedicated to 21 June music festivals, including Paris, Brussels, Barcelona, Lausanne and Athens.



### Conservatorio di Frosinone, Italy June 2013

*The Juniper Passion* will play in the auditorium at Il Conservatorio Di Frosinone. The Conservatory has been involved with international projects since 2005 and has a strong music programme linked with more than 30 musical institutions in Europe.



### Auditorium Ennio Morricone, Univerità Tor Vergata di Roma Italy – June 2013

The Auditorium Ennio Morricone is a concert and performance venue within The University of Rome II.





The Juniper Passion needs generous gestures of financial support in order to complete its proposed ANZAC Day showing and tour of Italy in 2013.

For more information on **The Juniper Passion** please contact:

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